

*Experiences from twenty years of consociationalism in
multi-ethnic North Macedonia*



Radboud University



Pyke Haans

S4638247

Supervisor: dr. H. W. Bomert / dr. Mathijs van Leeuwen

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Abstract

In 2001 North Macedonia signed the Ohrid Framework Agreement which laid the foundations for a consociationalist system explicitly centred around ethnic identity. Thus, ethnicity became important in state institutions. During these two decades of power-sharing: how has the OFA power-sharing agreement impacted ethnicised policy making? I found that Macedonia's consociationalist system shows many of the challenges associated with consociationalism in the literature; lack of democratisation, further division, instrumentalism, corruption, but also that the system has held through multiple crises. There has not been a resurgence of inter-ethnic violence. On the ground I found a situation where the two main ethnic groups, already divided by geography and religion, also get more divided by language as learning Macedonian language is not mandatory anymore. The groups rarely interact and leave the situation ripe for instrumentalist leveraging of ethnic issues. Similarly patronage networks benefit from the central position of ethnicity-based political parties in the system: the parties in government have the ability to appoint lucrative government jobs to reward loyalty. The system often seems in a state of dysfunction but nonetheless continues to stay intact because political elites of the relevant ethnic groups have a stake in its functioning. Based on my findings in North Macedonia I carefully recommend consociationalism as a method of conflict resolution in divided societies if the goal is to prevent violent conflict and create a modicum of stability. While the division between groups is arguably deepened it has not necessarily affected the functioning of the system which has actually improved in recent years.

| | |
|---|-----------|
| CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1 The case of North Macedonia | 1 |
| 1.2 Research objective & research questions | 2 |
| 1.3 Societal relevance | 4 |
| 1.4 Scientific relevance | 5 |
| 1.5 Note on terms used | 7 |
| CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK | 8 |
| 2.1 Consociationalism | 8 |
| 2.1.1 Consociationalism and its characteristics | 8 |
| 2.1.2 The debate | 10 |
| 2.1.3 Operationalisation | 13 |
| 2.2 Ethnic Identity | 14 |
| 2.2.1 The Debate | 14 |
| 2.2.2 Instrumentalism | 17 |
| 2.2.3 Operationalisation | 18 |
| 2.3 Power | 18 |
| 2.3.1 The Debate | 19 |
| 2.3.2 Patronage | 21 |
| 2.3.3 Operationalisation | 22 |
| 2.4 Concluding: operationalisation and conceptual framework | 22 |
| CHAPTER 3 SKETCHING THE CONTEXT | 24 |
| 3.1 A brief history of Macedonian independence and the revival of ‘the Macedonian Question’ | 24 |
| 3.1.1 The Macedonian Question | 24 |
| 3.1.2 The re-opening of the Macedonian Question | 26 |
| 3.2 Inter-ethnic relationship of the politically relevant ethnic identities of North Macedonia | 27 |
| 3.2.1 Ethnic Macedonians | 28 |
| <i>The Ethnic Macedonian identity</i> | 29 |
| 3.2.2 Ethnic Albanians | 32 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| <i>Ethnic Albanian history in North Macedonia</i> | 32 |
| <i>The Ethnic Albanian identity</i> | 33 |
| 3.2.3 Fitting the ethnic identities in the debate | 34 |
| 3.2.4 How do these ethnic groups interact with each other? | 35 |
| 3.2.5 The 2001 insurgency | 37 |
| 3.3 The Ohrid Framework Agreement | 38 |
| 3.3.1 The OFA and consociationalism | 39 |
| 3.3.2 Critiques of the OFA | 40 |
| 3.4 Politics & power in North Macedonia | 40 |
| 3.5 Conclusions: sketching the case of Macedonian consociationalism | 42 |
| CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY | 43 |
| 4.1 Methodological Approach | 43 |
| 4.1.1 Defining the case study and application | 43 |
| 4.1.2 Strengths of the case study method | 44 |
| 4.1.3 General critiques of the case study method | 45 |
| 4.2 Designing the case study | 45 |
| 4.2.1 Cross-Cultural Communication | 46 |
| 4.3 Conducting the case study | 48 |
| 4.3.1 Desk Research | 48 |
| 4.3.2 Internship | 49 |
| 4.3.3 Interviews | 50 |
| 4.4 Analysing the data | 51 |
| 4.4.1 Triangulation | 52 |
| 4.5 Developing conclusions | 53 |
| 4.6 Concluding research design & methodology | 53 |
| CHAPTER 5 RESULTS | 54 |
| 5.1 Findings: how do ethnic identity and politics interact in North Macedonia? | 54 |
| 5.2 Impact on the institutional level | 55 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 5.3 Reality of the ethnicization of politics | 57 |
| 5.4 Impact of ethnicized politics on ethnic relations in daily life | 62 |
| 5.5 Concluding | 65 |
| CHAPTER 6 CONCLUDING | 67 |
| 6.1 Reflection | 67 |
| 6.2 Answering the research questions | 67 |
| 6.3 Findings compared to existing theory | 70 |
| 6.3.1 Consociationalism | 70 |
| 6.3.2 Ethnic identity | 72 |
| 6.3.3 Power | 72 |
| 6.4 Implications and recommendations | 73 |
| 6.4.1 Implications for EU policy | 73 |
| 6.4.2 Implications for local policy | 73 |
| 6.4.3 Recommendations for further research | 74 |
| 6.5 Reflections on the research process | 74 |
| 6.6 Reflections on the findings | 76 |
| FIGURES | 77 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 78 |
| APPENDIX | 83 |
| Interview Guide I | 83 |
| Interview Guide II | 84 |

Figures and Tables

Figures

Figure 1: *Lijphart's typology of democracies*

Figure 2: *Gaventa's power cube*

Figure 3: *Hofstede ranking differences between the Netherlands and North Macedonia*

Figure 4: *Effect of equitable representation on sense of belonging*

Figure 5: *Effect of equitable representation on services*

Figure 6: *Ratings of interethnic relations in state institutions*

Maps

Map 1: *Territory Changes to Ottoman Rumelia after the Balkan Wars*

Map 2: *Ethnic Composition of North Macedonia according to 2002 census*

Tables

Table 1: *Methods of data collection*

Table 2: *Members of parliament by ethnicity*

Table 3: *North Macedonia key economic figures*

Table 4: *Economic indicators for North Macedonia in the period of 2012 to 2020*

Pictures

Illustration cover: *Powerlines in Ohrid*

Illustration 1: *Star of Vergina in Bitola*

Illustration 2: *Monument to 'Warrior on a Horse'*

Illustration 3: *Mural of the Albanian struggle*

Illustration 4: *Statue of Skanderbeg*

Illustration 5: *Old Bazaar Skopje*

Illustration 6: *Plaque to Mother Theresa*

Illustration 7: *Economic inequality in city planning*

Illustration 8: *Macedonian-nationalist graffiti*

Illustration 9: *Alleyway in the Old Bazaar*

Abbreviations

OFA – Ohrid Framework Agreement

EU – European Union

SDSM - *Socialdemokratski Sojuz na Makedonija* / Social Democratic Union for Macedonia

DUI - *Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim* / Democratic Union for Integration

DPA - *Partia Demokratike Shqiptare* / Democratic Party for Albanians

VMRO-DPMNE - *Vnatresha Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija – Demokratska Partija za Makedonsko Nacionalno Edinstvo* / Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NLA – *Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare* / National Liberation Army

KLA – *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës* / Kosovo Liberation Army

UÇK - *Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare* ór *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 The case of North Macedonia

Following the ethnic insurgency in North Macedonia in 2001 a peace-deal was reached between the insurgents and the government with the 'Ohrid Framework Agreement' (OFA), which mandated a power-sharing system that has largely been followed to this day. (Marolov, 2013) The agreement had three main goals; 'securing' democracy in North Macedonia, Euro-Atlantic integration and development of civil society & respecting the rights of all inhabitants of North Macedonia. (Marolov, 2013) It was signed under significant international pressure by the EU, United States and NATO who did not want another large-scale Balkan conflict to break out. The fact that an EU representative also signed the Ohrid Framework Agreement places the agreement as a priority for potential EU accession. (Marolov, 2013)

The Ohrid-mandated consociationalist system of power-sharing is based around representation of ethnic identities. Implicitly ethnic identity now has a place in government, with ethnic quotas, and is thus important for how political processes work in the country. (Demush Bajrani, 2014; Rizova, 2011) This raises many questions, first of all, how has North Macedonia fared the last two decades with this system of power-sharing initially conceived under international pressure to end a conflict? How do politicians make use of the ethnic provisions, and how is ethnicity leveraged in such a consociationalist system? Has this consociationalist system changed the way ethnic groups interact in daily life and does that impact their politics? This leads to the research question:

How has the OFA power-sharing agreement impacted ethnicised policy making?

The consociationalist Ohrid Framework Agreement will be central in this research because it sets the provisions for inter-ethnic cooperation in North Macedonia. (Marolov, 2013; Piacentini, 2019) Consociationalism agreements have been implemented as conflict resolution and in a number of post-conflict situations such as Northern Ireland, Lebanon and Bosnia & Herzegovina. Consociationalism as a practice of conflict resolution and state-building is interesting on paper; the sharing of power to counter grievances of groups (at risk of being) excluded from state institutions. The literature on consociationalism is divided with writers seeing it as a good way to end violence and give minorities a voice in state institutions and others seeing the associated political deadlocks and governance issues. How does consociationalism fare in practice?

North Macedonia is largely absent in consociationalist literature in comparative studies but it is not an unimportant case. The country has been working with its consociationalist system for two decades at the time of writing and that in a society not only divided by religion such as Bosnia or Northern Ireland, but also by geography and language. Authors such as Karajkov (2009) have argued that the differences in ethnic interests in the country likely would not have been resolved if it was not for the war and subsequent implementation of the OFA. Notable is that North Macedonia has had no direct international overseer in implementing the OFA, even though the agreement was signed under international pressure. (Konstantinos, 2020) Generally the consociational agreement for the country has a somewhat looser character than consociationalism in Bosnia, on which it was supposed to be an improvement. Instead of the territorial separation and different ethnic federal entities, as seen in Bosnia, in North Macedonia the focus was on a unitary state and instead to integrate the different ethnic groups in the state institutions. (Ordanoski & Matovski, 2007) What can be learned from the case of North Macedonia?

1.2 Research objective & research questions

The objective of the research is to contribute to the understanding of power-sharing by delving deeper in this underrepresented case of Macedonian consociationalism; the two-fold aim here is to both contribute to literature on consociationalism but also to understand consociationalism as a tool of conflict resolution and governance. This to better judge in what situations consociationalism would be applicable, and what such a system can be expected to look like 20 years down the line.

With the implementation of the consociationalist OFA, power has been put in the hands of the two main ethnic groups, or rather the political parties representing them. To understand Macedonian consociationalism and policy making in this political system we need to understand Macedonia's politically relevant ethnic groups and how they have interacted with each other during the country's history. We will need an understanding of how politicians behave within the confines of the system, how they make use of the tenets of the OFA and what types of effects institutionalisation of ethnicity has had directly on policy making but also on the ethnic groups themselves and their interaction in day-to-day life. After all, interaction in day-to-day life can inform how people see the challenges of the country and how they look at politics: think for instance of how easily narratives about 'the other' can take root when groups only interact negatively or hardly at all. Putting all these themes together will give a detailed view of the case of Macedonian consociationalism.

To explore these different sides and to reach the research objective I have formulated the following research questions:

How has the OFA power-sharing agreement impacted ethnicised policy making?

1. Which ethnic identities are relevant in politics in North Macedonia and how do these ethnic identities manifest themselves in policy making before the Ohrid Framework Agreement?
2. How do ethnic identities manifest themselves in policy making after the Ohrid Framework Agreement?
3. How has the Ohrid Framework Agreement-mandated consociationalist set-up for the North Macedonian government institutionalised ethnic differences?

Below I talk about what answering each sub-research-question will yield.

1. *Which ethnic identities are relevant in politics in North Macedonia and how do these ethnic identities manifest themselves in policy making before the Ohrid Framework Agreement?*

Answering the first research question gives an insight in which ethnic identities in North Macedonia are relevant for the Ohrid Framework Agreement and what their general characteristics are. I describe the relationship of these ethnic groups throughout the years, how the country of North Macedonia was shaped and how this history shapes the way ethnic groups in the country do politics. This will be relevant to understanding how the conflict and consequently consociationalism in North Macedonia came to be; and how these divided groups interact with each other inside and outside of the system.

2. *How do ethnic identities manifest themselves in policy making after the Ohrid Framework Agreement?*

After gaining a background to the relevant ethnic groups and how they have interacted with each other over the years I move on to the present-day. After the conflict and the implementation of consociationalism in North Macedonia ethnic groups had a different framework in which to interact in the political sphere. Answering this research question gives a view of the characteristics of inter-ethnic policy making inside the Macedonian consociationalist system.

3. *How has the Ohrid Framework Agreement-mandated consociationalist set-up for the North Macedonian government institutionalised ethnic differences?*

Answering the third and last research question focusses on the ethnic groups themselves and how they are shaped by consociationalism in the country. With ethnicity having such a rigid place in Macedonian consociationalism, and thus in state institutions, here I discuss what this institutionalisation looks like in the Macedonian context and how this effects ethnic differences in the country.

1.3 Societal relevance

Qi (2009) notes that the results of case studies, such as this thesis, can often quickly be put to real-life use. This quick potential for real-life implementation inflates the potential societal relevance of case studies. The main societal relevance of this thesis lies in the understanding of consociationalism as a means of conflict-resolution. Consociationalism might be considered for ongoing and future conflicts or more generally in divided societies as a way to resolve or mitigate (potential) conflict. Therefore, further understanding of how consociationalism works decades after it was implemented to end a conflict can add to the consideration of whether or not to implement consociationalism in a (specific) conflict situation or divided society.

Further, the societal relevance of the impact of the Macedonian consociationalism on ethnicised policy making lies in the real-world consequences of the shape of the political landscape of North Macedonia. (Demush Bajrani, 2014) Not only for the country and its citizens but also for the broader region: instability in North Macedonia is worrying for the stability of the region as a whole. This was one of the reasons for foreign intervention during the Macedonian insurgency in 2001 and the pressure to the then government to sign the OFA. (Glenny, 2002) Thus understanding the OFA and Macedonian consociationalism can help judge if the political system is exhibiting worrying signals or if it is rather stable and perhaps if it is likely to continue to be stable.

Not unimportant here is that the EU is a signatory to the OFA and it sees implementation as a prerequisite to accession. (Demush Bajrani, 2014; Dobbins & al, 2008; Ilievski & Taleski, 2009) EU membership is something which the Macedonian government has long desired, being one of the longest candidate members (save Turkey) and going as far as changing the name of the country. (Armonaite, 2019; Ilievski & Taleski, 2009) Essentially implementing the OFA and sticking with its consociational tenets will be necessary for the country as long as it wishes to accede. EU accession is important for the economic future of the country, which has

only seen modest growth since independence. (Bartlett, Cipurheva, Nikolov, & Shukarov, 2010) Access to the EU single market would improve the economic chances of North Macedonia, doubly so for an otherwise landlocked country. (Armonaite, 2019) Corruption and bad governance hinder economic development. Does the place that ethnicity has in Macedonia's consociationalist system hinder the country's progress here, for instance with the ethnic quotas which are often alleged to allow for political manoeuvring and nepotism? (Armonaite, 2019; Alpidos, 2020) If consociationalism would be wrought with problems either mitigating measures need to be taken or a situation is created where the EU insists on North Macedonia to go through with its consociationalist system while in actuality it might hamstring the development of the country and its inter-ethnic balance.

Lastly considering the violent past of identity in North Macedonia understanding the influence of the OFA on the politics of the country could be a piece of the puzzle in preventing future violent conflict. Indeed the Ohrid Framework Agreement was on paper conceived as a way of power-sharing that would address the grievances of ethnic minorities. While violent conflict has not taken place, the provisions seemingly have not quelled ethnic tensions. (Demush Bajrani, 2014; Alpidos, 2020; Armonaite, 2019) Is the OFA and is consociationalism the way forward for a stable and prosperous North Macedonia? Or will it lay the foundations for future conflict?

1.4 Scientific relevance

The methodology of this thesis is the case study method. I go into more depth on my methodology and research design in chapter 4. The chosen methodology informs the scientific relevance of this thesis: the results of case studies, as often noted, are not the basis for scientific generalization. However the results of case studies; an in-depth understanding of a single case here the case of Macedonian consociationalism, can be compared and contrasted to other such cases. The case of North Macedonia will become part of an archive of consociational systems and as such can further the understanding of power-sharing or consociationalism.

This is also where the main scientific relevance of this thesis lies: Macedonian consociationalism is often surprisingly absent from discussions of consociational cases. For instance, Boogards et al (2019), who detail the debate around consociationalism throughout the five decades after its coinage, do not mention North Macedonia a single time. The case is perhaps not necessarily under-researched; there is a debate about the OFA and consociationalism focussed on North Macedonia, see for instance Piacentini (2019), Bajrami (2014) and Ordanoski & Matovski (2007); but rather underutilised. Research on the case is there but not always connected to consociationalism, the term power-sharing for instance is

often used, and thus often not taken into account in the general discussion of consociationalism. This thesis seeks to insert the case of North Macedonia into the debate on consociationalism.

So why does it matter that Macedonian consociationalism is not represented in comparative studies on the concept? I find the Macedonian case noteworthy and unique, especially amongst the other European cases, for the following reasons. First off, there is a clear language and geographic barrier between the groups in North Macedonia that does not exist either in Bosnia nor Northern Ireland. Secondly, the Dayton Accords that laid the foundation for consociationalism in Bosnia formed the basis for the OFA in North Macedonia. The point of departure was actually to deviate from and improve on the Accords in Bosnia and the noticeable problems governing that country. The OFA was thus designed to be, amongst other things, less reliant on foreign intervention and it preserved the unitary character of the Macedonian state. (Ordanoski, Matovski; 2007) Even though the OFA was signed under international pressure the country has had to implement the agreement without international supervision. (Konstantinos, 2020) Thus we have a case with an arguably more or perhaps differently divided society and an agreement that was supposed to improve on earlier consociationalist set-ups and largely was to be implemented by the post-conflict country itself. These features of Macedonian consociationalism make it relevant to make the case part of the discussion around the functioning of consociationalism and consociationalism as a concept.

Besides consociationalism there are two key concepts that will be used for the thesis. The concepts are: ethnic identity and power, with the 'sub-concepts' of instrumentalism and patronage. In chapter 2 'literature review and conceptual framework' I go more into depth about these key concepts and how they are defined. While most of the scientific relevance of this thesis will be in its contribution to the understanding of consociationalism, to a lesser degree the other concepts will be discussed as well in the context of their impact on or relation with consociationalism in North Macedonia.

For instance, I will discuss the influence of patronage networks and instrumentalism on Macedonia's politics and if they are linked to consociationalism and if so in what way. In this way I seek to contribute not only to the literature on consociationalism, but also the understanding of these concepts by themselves. As both phenomena are generally considered detrimental to society the interaction between patronage networks & instrumentalism and consociationalism on the other hand also has a societal value.

Further, in social science there is extensive literature on how (ethnic) identity manifests. The ethnic Macedonian identity and nation have undergone different types of identity- and nation-building in modern times. Indeed certain political parties engage in significant shaping of the

Macedonian identity, as seen in the Skopje 2014 project (more about this in chapter 3). A further understanding of how consociationalism influences and interacts with ethnic identity contributes to the discussion around ethnic identity and how it manifests.

1.5 Note on terms used

With an eye on the contentious political situation surrounding identity in North Macedonia a couple of notes on the terms employed in this thesis are warranted. First of all I choose to refer to the country as 'North Macedonia', as that is its official name, but use the adjective 'Macedonian' or 'of Macedonia' as those terms are still officially in use in accordance with the 2018 Prespa Agreement. This agreement signed between Greece and North Macedonia ends the long-standing name dispute.

Further, I took preference to using the terms 'ethnic Macedonian' and 'ethnic Albanian' for a number of reasons. First of all using the terms 'Albanian' and 'Macedonian' can cause confusion between citizenship and ethnicity: ethnic Albanians in North Macedonia did not (necessarily) migrate from Albania or Kosovo and are often born in North Macedonia. The term 'Albanian' can easily be confused with being an Albanian national, which most of them are not. 'Ethnic Macedonian' here describes the Slavic ethnic-group that speaks the Macedonian language. I choose for the term 'ethnic Macedonian' for similar reasons: ethnic-Macedonians are an ethnic group that do not just inhabit North Macedonia nor are they by definition citizens from North Macedonia, and using the term 'Macedonians' can make it seem like they 'own' the North Macedonian state. Other minorities which also inhabit a separate state will similarly be indicated by using the prefix 'ethnic-'; examples include ethnic Turks, ethnic Serbians and ethnic Bosnians.

Chapter 2 Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

This chapter describes the key concepts consociationalism, ethnic identity and power. Each key concept or variable will be defined by addressing the academic debate on that specific concept. Next, the key concepts are operationalised for to quantify them for this research. Finally I briefly describe how the three key concepts interact with each other. The key concepts form the basis for the interview questions. In the next chapter I will go deeper into what the key concepts look like in the Macedonian context to give some background to the concepts discussed in this thesis.

2.1 Consociationalism

Consociationalism as a concept is conceived by the Dutch scholar Arend Lijphart who subsequently has been spending his whole life writing on it. In this section I will describe what the ‘consociationalism’ entails, how it was conceived and defined, and the debate around it. Then I will outline the characteristics of a consociationalist system and operationalise the concept.

2.1.1 Consociationalism and its characteristics

Andeweg (2000) outlines the debate on the concept of ‘consociationalism’ and its related terms and principles. He begins by describing the ‘puzzle of democracy’; essentially the basic paradox that conflict leads to instability in society but that representative democracy presupposes contestation and disagreement. He uses the ‘pluralist theory’ to describe how democracy can nevertheless function: the social cleavages of a society can be rendered more harmless by heterogeneous group adherence. For instance, lower social classes can still adhere to the same religion as elites and middle classes and all groups mix in religious establishments. Similarly, a religious lower social class member might interact with secular members of his class in trade unions. An individual experiences ‘cross-cutting loyalties’ to a variety of different groups, which can moderate their political views. However, when these social cleavages do not or almost never cross-cut, we are dealing with a segmented or divided society. In such a society, often antagonistic sub-cultures develop. (Andeweg, 2000)

In a divided society, as Andeweg (2000) describes, there are a couple of ways to preserve stability within a democratic system. First of all, the political arena can be dominated by a single majoritarian group. However, this will lead to permanent exclusion of minority groups from politics, which is hardly stable nor particularly democratic. In some of these divided

democratic societies a political system is found that is based on elite cooperation instead of competition, balancing the social heterogeneity at the mass level. In democratic theory, this type of political system is referred to as ‘consociationalism’.

| | | Mass Level | |
|--------------------|-------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | | Cross-cutting Cleavages | Segmented |
| Elite Level | Cooperation | Depoliticized Democracy | <i>Consociational Democracy</i> |
| | Competition | Centripetal Democracy | Centrifugal Democracy |

Figure 1 Lijphart’s typology of democracies. (Adapted from Lijphart 1968:38.)

Figure 1: Lijphart’s typology of democracies (from: Andeweg, 2000)

Andeweg (2000) goes on to describe two intersecting continua: social segmentation and elite cooperation, resulting in four different forms of democracy (see Figure 1). In this thesis, the focus is on ‘consociational democracy’. “Consociational democracy means government by elite cartel designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy.” (Lijphart 1969:216) Andeweg (2000) goes on to describe the characteristics of (early) consociationalist analyses. First of all, they all describe the destabilising effects of social segmentation, either through coinciding cleavages, a lack of mobilisation along cleavage lines so vote maximization is impossible for elites, or through “ingroup-outgroup differentiation” as termed by Nordlinger (1972) and Steiner (1974). The role of political elites is important: “[t]he central feature of consociationalism is that the elites eschew decision making by majority. Instead, they seek to accommodate political conflicts through compromise or amicable agreement.” (Andeweg, 2000, p. 511) Lijphart (1975) describes some ways in which this can be achieved: depoliticization of an issue by defining it as a technical, economical or legal problem instead of an ideological one. Another tool is the packaging of deals to include wins and losses for all sides. Yet another non-majoritarian mechanism is giving each group a ‘sphere of influence’, whether over certain policy areas or territorially. Further, a mutual veto is described as a useful device. In addition to a segmented society and political cooperation, inclusivity is important for consociational systems. “Non-majoritarian decision making is institutionally anchored by the inclusion of representatives from all social segments. Thus, consociational

democracies are characterized by grand coalitions and by proportionality in the electoral system and in the distribution of public office and scarce resources.” (Andeweg, 2000, p. 512)

This all is to say that the workable definition of consociationalism by Lijphart (1977) is still relevant: consociationalism is the creation of a power-sharing system for liberal-democratic states, representing all the major parties within a divided society. Consociationalist systems have four main characteristics: a coalition government including political leaders of all major cleavages, mutual veto, proportional representation in all government matters from appointments to monetary matters, and a high degree of internal autonomy for each group. (Lijphart, 1977) To this we can add Andeweg’s (2000) characteristic that consociationalism can only take place in ‘segmented societies’; societies in which the main cleavages do not cross-cut.

2.1.2 The debate

Besides the debate on what exactly consociationalism is I want to get into what governing in a consociationalist system looks like. How consociationalism functions or dysfunctions and the general critiques of consociationalism. This will be necessary to contrast the Macedonian case to established literature. As described in the overview on literature on consociationalism by Boogards et al (2019) there are six classical critiques of consociationalism. These are: poor democratic quality, difficulties in policy making, a tendency to support clientelist behaviour, reinforcement of the societal divisions, a view geared towards elite solutions with the populace being ‘the problem’ and finally the position of minorities and others that are left out of the consociational deal. I will use Peters (2006), talking about Belgium, Taylor (2006) talking about Northern Ireland, and finally Deets (2018) talking about Lebanon, to discuss some of these characteristics and challenges in their respective case studies.

Peters (2006) talks about how distinctive functions of the Belgian government that are seemingly barriers to good governance are tackled with relative success. Belgium is a country (rather intricately) bilaterally federated between groups that are divided based on language and culture in a highly politicised way. This federation highlights and reinforces the division between the two groups, a problem commonly encountered in consociationalism. According to Peters such a federated system’s outcomes are expected to be lowest common denominator or none (gridlock, failure). For the Belgian government’s relative successes he offers the following reasons.

The first reason is the strength of political parties. In Belgium parties are for the most part in control of the allocation of positions, appointing of government functionaries in many government organs (including judges) and policy choices. Party leaders or bosses are also central with them having much agency in negotiating with other elites with relatively little

intervention from their constituency or party membership. Parties also provided coherence in governance; they are a way of uniting different segments of elites. Peters uses the term 'cement'; well-integrated parties make governance viable with these intergovernmental arrangements. (Peters, 2006)

An interesting argument by Peters (2006) is the fact that likely failure and need for cooperation to mitigate that failure can be the right pressure to reach agreements and compromise. Under the shadow of almost certain failure people need to get creative and new (unexpected) alliances and coalitions become more feasible.

The third and even more unorthodox argument by Peters (2006) is for a modicum of corruption in consociationalist systems. Party dominance has led to a system where political criteria are used for appointments to important positions, and certain institutions function as a way to appoint jobs to political allies. It is exactly this trading and shuffling of jobs that presents a way to offer reward for those willing to participate in coalitions for governing. When a decision cannot be reached through conventional politics alone the offering of such rewards can un-jam the log-jam. Thus this form of clientelism or corruption functions to 'grease the wheels' of the system.

Peters (2006) fourth argument for the functioning of Belgium's political system is that of opaqueness of the public sector. Normally considered a bad characteristic as it can conceal corrupt behaviour. His argument here is that opaqueness works for a consociationalist system such as the Belgium one, because consociationalism functions through deal-making. Opaqueness offers further ways of making that deal, with trade-offs that the public might not necessarily approve of; like the above mentioned appointments.

The final argument of Peters (2006) focusses on political instability which he sees as reducing the possibility for deadlock. Holding office for its own sake might simply lead to sub-optimal policy choices available. The fall of a government might clear the brush towards new possibilities.

There are also pitfalls for the Belgian system: the rise of political parties less likely to cooperate like far-right Flemish parties, the growing number of political parties, growing inequality between the different federal divisions and the complexity of policy across federal agencies with lack of inter-agency coordination. (Peters, 2006) Generally speaking we can conclude that Peters argues that many characteristics that are conventionally seen as drawbacks in political systems actually help the Belgian system function.

Rupert Taylor in the article 'The Belfast Agreement and the Politics of Consociationalism' (2006) writes about consociationalism in Northern Ireland and how the consociationalist Belfast Agreement is actually hampering democracy. Taylor is critical of the idea that in deeply

divided societies only consociationalism and not 'liberal democracy' can bring out democracy. He notes a number of ways that, in his words, consociational processes are inimical to liberal democracy.

All members of the Assembly of Northern Ireland must accept a group registration that is either 'nationalist', 'unionist' or 'other'. When cross-community support is required the designation 'other' is practically discounted, privileging the other two national identities at the cost of all others. (Taylor, 2006)

Then there is the formation of the executive power in the form of cabinets. Ministerial positions are allocated to political parties based on number of seats in the parliament. Taylor (2006) argues that this undermines effective opposition, as every party above 10% in the Assembly has at least one ministerial post and that instead of creating a collective character these different ministries become ways of furthering the rights and influence of the communities their parties represent. It is thus less about power-sharing and more about contesting for ministerial power.

Further Taylor (2006) argues that Northern Ireland's electoral system, proportional representation with single transferable vote, has not had a moderating influence. It was designed to make voting across communal lines viable (vote for a smaller party is not thrown away because your transferable vote can still be for the main ethno-nationalist party). However, ethno-nationalist parties still received 95% of the first vote in 2003 and in the 2005 elections the Assembly generally has moved away from the moderate centre.

As such consociationalism in Northern Ireland, and elsewhere, privileges certain pre-supposed groups. There is no freedom to choose to not belong to a group because that in itself is a group ('other' in this case), which Taylor argues is a violation of the individual right from freedom of association. Between these groups the consociationalist Belfast Agreement "...promotes the pursuit of a group-differentiated politics that is reduced to the 'positional logic' of winning and losing, of promoting and maximising communal advantage." (Taylor, 2006 p. 220) Thus, according to Taylor, the mechanisms of consociationalism are opposed to democracy, or rather, tend to pull in a different direction. He argues for a more deliberative approach to politics which he sees in promoting the use of "... deliberative opinion polling, citizens' panels and juries, public issue forums, and multi-option electronic referendums." (Taylor, 2006 p. 223) In other words, to let citizens deliberate outside of the ethno-nationalist group-bargaining frame.

Stephen Deets (2018) in his article on the local elections in Lebanon challenging the consociationalist status quo in the country also describes the links between clientelism and consociationalism. His argument on this link is that consociationalist systems generally contain a couple of social realities, such as close networks within identity groups, few ties

across identity groups and relying on brokers between identity groups. The consociationalism reaffirms these realities by building the political system explicitly around identity groups. Thus you get a system where these networks within identity groups gain more power to exercise their clientelist / patronage behaviour.

As Deets (2018) sees this phenomenon as a weakness of consociationalism, a way for the state to withhold responsibility for governance issues, he has an interesting argument on what could counter this clientelist behaviour. Alternate networks based on a shared sense of citizenship instead of relying yet again on identity group and their established clientelist / patronage networks. He sees cities (in divided societies) as a melting pot of different ethnicities all dealing with similar city issues, like pollution, poor infrastructure and garbage collection, as a way to bridge these societal segmentations. Adding to that, cities tend to have a relatively high population of educated, publicly engaged and economical independent populations. Thus cities have the potential to be a breeding ground for politics that cross the (consociationalism-mandated) group divides.

To conclude, governing in a consociationalist system comes with a set of challenges and from the debate it is clear that opinions on consociationalist systems are divided. Certain writers, like Taylor, are quite critical of consociationalism and rather would move to a different system, whereas Deets looks for options within the system. Meanwhile Peters does see challenges in consociationalism but is on the whole positive of Belgian consociationalism. There is thus no clear consensus on the (lack of) merit of consociationalism. It should also be noted that consociationalism usually arises out of a conflict situation: is ending conflict and preventing future conflict worth the flaws in consociationalism?

2.1.3 Operationalisation

To answer the research question I want to know if 1) the OFA-mandated system is a form of consociationalism 2) has the system *institutionalised* ethnic identity?

Here I describe how I will chart 'consociationalism' in this thesis. First of all I need to know, according to Andeweg (2000), if in Macedonian society social cleavages can be found and if so, if these cleavages rarely cross-cut. If social cleavages do not cross-cut I can say that Macedonian society is a divided one, leaving the situation ripe for a consociationalist outcome.

1. Are there social cleavages in Macedonian society that do not cross-cut?

Lijphart's (1977) clear characteristics of when a political system is a form of consociationalism are useful to operationalise the concept. The characteristics are (a) grand coalition, (b) segmental autonomy (c) proportional representation (d) veto rights. To that we can add

government by 'elite cartel' (Lijphart, 1969) or a shyness of majority decision making: majoritarian decision making could permanently leave out minority groups. (Andeweg, 2000) Thus for analysing consociationalism I will add elite deal-making across groups.

2. Is elite cooperation across cleavage groups part of the Macedonian political system?

This will show us the stage for political interaction between groups in North Macedonia. Thirdly I want to add 'institutionalisation' of ethnic identity to the topics needed to explore. There is no real consensus in the literature but based on the above authors I came up with the following:

- Do we have a system that reinforces differences between groups?
- Do we have a system where political parties represent a single or a few specific ethnic groups?
- Are different ethnic groups needed to create policy?
- Do we see the social realities as described by Deets (2018):
 - *close networks within identity groups;*
 - *few ties across identity groups and relying on brokers between identity groups;*
 - *A consociationalist system which builds the political system explicitly around identity groups.*

2.2 Ethnic Identity

2.2.1 The Debate

(Ethnic) Identity is perhaps one of the most discussed concepts in the literature dealing with conflict. To take apart the concept of 'ethnic identity', we have to take a look at both 'ethnicity' and 'identity'. In their discussion on the social construction of identity, Fearon and Laitin offer a definition of identity as a 'social category':

"We take it that an "identity" here refers to a social category—Serb, man, homosexual, American, Catholic, worker, and so on—and in particular to a social category that an individual member either takes a special pride in or views as a more-or-less unchangeable and socially consequential attribute." (Fearon & Laitin, 2000, p. 848)

Social categories, in turn, are defined as "sets of people given a label (or labels)" (Fearon & Laitin, 2000 p. 848), further set apart by rules of membership that decide who is a member, sets of characteristic distinctions for that social category, and certain expected behaviours attached to the social category: roles. According to Fearon and Laitin, it follows quite naturally that these social categories are socially constructed, and thus changeable and mouldable.

Nonetheless, certain social categories are in general believed to be rooted in human nature and thus unchangeable – this is sometimes termed as everyday primordialism. As an example, they use the social categories homosexual/heterosexual, or man/woman, which seem quite strictly defined, but have changed meaning throughout history and across cultures. (Fearon & Laitin, 2000)

Hale (2004) also offers a definition of identity based on a number of psychological studies: “the set of points of personal reference on which people rely to navigate the social world they inhabit, to make sense of the myriad constellations of social relationships that they encounter, to discern their place in these constellations, and to understand the opportunities for action in this context.” (Hale, 2004, p. 463) He thus speaks of identity in terms of a ‘social radar’; a way to make sense of the ‘human environment’ surrounding an individual. People divide themselves in categorised groups as a way to make sense of the world and avoid uncertainty. Because identity is a way to make sense of the environment, identity changes as the environment around an individual is dynamic. Identities change all the time, by meeting new people, encountering new conditions, and so on. Hale cites studies where the assignment of people to a specific group is enough to induce group-oriented behaviour such as those done by Tajfel (1982) for instance.

‘Ethnicity’ is also a rather nebulous term to unpack, as Tilley describes: “‘Ethnicity’ has always comprised a kind of catch-all term for social features such as language, religion, customs of food or dress, folklore and/or general groupings by country or regional heritage.” (Tilley, 1997, p. 498) Broadly speaking, there are two main views regarding ethnic identity in the literature: primordialist versus constructivist. This division is also controversial, however, with some arguing that both views are complimentary to each other (Tilly, 1997), while others argue that the labels primordialist and constructivist are actually not very helpful at all. (Hale, 2004)

Hale (2004) describes the primordialism viewpoint on ethnicity as follows: there are clear, enduring boundaries between groups, each group having specific features that don’t change and are consistently distributed within that specific group, and the group is held together by extensive kinship relations. A society is made up of several of these groups, that are clearly distinctive from each other. Hale follows this up with a couple of notes; for starters, primordialist scholars do rarely believe that these groups are actually ‘stamped in the DNA’, but they rather see them as created at some point. An exception here is Van den Berghe (1981), who sees ethnicity, held together by kinship ties, as being based on the evolution of nepotism as a survival instinct in humans. Even there, Van den Berghe argues for an instinctive human impulse rather than for the necessity of blood ties within the ethnic group, which, as Tilley (1997) points out, is easily disproven by infant adoption. Shils (1957) argues that within the group, the perception of primordialist connections matters for group identity. Other scholars

likewise find that there is a perception of in-group common blood histories and close cultural bonds, and that this has real effects on the behaviour of people. (Geertz, 1967; Gil-White, 1999)

The constructivist view sees these groups as much less well-defined. For instance, Barth (1969) argues that the ethnic group is not defined by culture or kinship, but rather by the fact that boundaries are perceived between it and other groups. Group membership and criteria change over time, but the group endures as a way of structuring social life. Some constructivists argue that the origins of ethnicity could be modernization or state policy and thus see it as a very recent phenomenon. (Hale, 2004) This also brings up the idea that national or ethnic identities will fade away, because of more intense interaction between groups of people. (Haas, 1986) In line with this, many constructivists see identities as something that can always be changed, albeit with certain costs and constraints attached.

According to Hale (2004), the real distinction between primordialists and constructivists is not that ethnic identity is created; both groups (mostly) agree that identity is created at one point: they generally also agree that that identity is quite stable once created and that identification has variance in intensity across the population. The main difference is that constructivists state that this identity is changeable even after it has 'crystallized' already, while primordialists argue that this is more or less impossible because people think about ethnicity in fixed, primordial terms.

Tilley (1997) describes the constructivist viewpoint, which splits up in roughly two camps. Constructivists would "argue for understanding ethnic identity as an idea or discourse rather than as an empirically observable 'unit' defined by features such as dress, language or customs." (Tilley, 1997 p. 511) The participants in the social system, the ethnic group, themselves set the criteria for that ethnic group. The ethnic identity is 'creatively imagined', to use Tilley's term, in relation to another ethnic identity, which is just as the first one imagined and constructed and also ascribed with a certain value. An example here could be the creation of the African-American identity in relation to their white oppressors. Because of the way ethnic identity is created, according to constructivists, analysis should focus on the examination of the conditions of the establishment of that specific identity.

As mentioned above, according to Tilley (1997) the constructivist views fall into two camps regarding the question of the understanding how this discourse is constructed. According to one camp, which Tilley terms the more anthropological one, ethnic identity reflects ideas that are already interwoven throughout the society's framework of meaning. The more instrumental approach would be that ethnic characteristics are ideas developed by intellectual imagining, especially in situations of inter-group stress and competition. However, Tilley points to a number of failed experiments in identity construction (Soviet collectivisation, for

instance), arguing that a narrow manipulation of cultural features is insufficient – practices are interwoven with beliefs, ideas and values.

Not finding any of the previous viewpoints sufficient, Tilley (1997) argues for a reconceptualization of culture and ethnic identity: “we might understand ethnic identities to reflect the historical experience of elements (groups) engaged in relations (between groups).” (Tilley, 1997, p. 514) She goes on to say that “the internal construction of an ethnic group can be traced along a historical continuum.” (Tilley, 1997, p. 514) Essentially, ethnic identities change and adapt to a constantly changing environment. This environment includes other groups against which the identity can define itself, but also issues like population size, climate, and technological advance. Ethnic identities are thus constructed, albeit based on a complex of conditions experienced by the group and not on autonomous intellectual ideas.

2.2.2 Instrumentalism

Briefly mentioned above is the idea of instrumentalism which, because of the relevance of the concept for this thesis, I work out in more detail. The instrumentalist approach as described by Tilley (1997) in identity *creation* is that identity is developed by intellectual imagining. In inter-ethnic conflict, instrumentalism plays a related but different role. Primordialism, in the context of ethnic conflict, sees different ethnicities of inherently opposed and because of their inherent differences and interests they always clash. (Rizova, 2011) The instrumentalist view is that elites use or manipulate ethnic identities for political or monetary gain. Elites thus put ethnicity in the forefront of politics and set different ethnicities up against each other to centralise more power in their own hands. (Rizova, 2011) Third is the strategic dilemma of which most important for a non-violent situation, like in North Macedonia, is a ‘collective fear of the future’. Both groups fear that the allocation of resources will be in their detriment especially in the future, making it logical to act. (Rizova, 2011)

Oberschall (2000) defines the instrumentalist point of view, using Rosens (1989): “...ethnic sentiments and loyalties are manipulated by political leaders and intellectuals for political ends, such as state creation.” (Oberschall, 2000 p. 983) In Yugoslavia, the example Oberschall gives, it was the grand political goals of ‘Greater Serbia’ and ‘Croat nationalism’ that clashed and tore the two groups apart. It also offered nationalist politicians a way to mobilize huge ethnic-based voter blocs. Simple summarised, instrumentalism is the manipulation of ethnicities by elites for political means.

2.2.3 Operationalisation

Before, I have touched upon some definitions of (ethnic) identity. For Fearon and Laiton, “Ethnic identities are understood to be defined mainly by descent rules of group membership and content typically composed of cultural attributes, such as religion, language, customs, and shared historical myths.” (Fearon & Laitin, 2000, p. 848) This definition will do as a basis for operationalisation, although it doesn’t answer a ‘how’ or ‘why’ question for analysis. Hale (2004), on the other hand, does offer a useful answer to the question of ‘why do people separate in different ethnic groups?’: “Ethnicity, then, serves to structure such action by providing people with social radar that they use to efficiently identify or impose social possibilities and potential constraints in a world of immense uncertainty and complexity.” (Hale, 2004, p. 482) Tilley (1997), in turn, defines ‘ethnic identity’ as the historical experience of ethnic groups engaged in relations with their environments.

Consociationalism sets the political arena for social cleavage different groups and institutionalises these groups. How do we differentiate the groups in the Macedonian context? Based on the above I will be looking at:

- Descent rules of group membership;
- Cultural attributes;
- A social structure for action;
- Shared historical experience with surrounding environment.

Thus to analyse if we can speak of ethnic identities in North Macedonia I will answer the following questions. Are there shared cultural attributes; language, religion, shared historical myth and customs, amongst the different groups found in North Macedonia? Do these groups have a shared historical experience in relation with their environment?

To show that there is ‘ethnified policy making’ in the Macedonian political system I need to know how ethnic groups interact with politics. The main unit of policy making in North Macedonia is the political party. So how can we see if parties are based in ethnic identity? Below I put the factors that I will use to measure if a political party can be linked to an ethnic group:

- The party is composed (primarily) of members of a specific ethnicity;
- The party gains votes (primarily) from members of that ethnicity;
- The party employs discourse primarily centred around the interests of that ethnicity.

2.3 Power

Power is necessary to understand consociationalism, which after all is a form of sharing power between different divided groups. Power is a broad and complicated concept and has been

described, discussed and defined throughout human history by numerous thinkers, ranging from Plato, Machiavelli to Hobbes. (Dahl, 1957) Power is an important concept in this thesis, as it is relevant for all other key concepts described. At first, I summarise some of the academic debate on power, then I describe some of the definitions of power and finally operationalise the concept of 'power' for use in this research.

2.3.1 The Debate

Robert A. Dahl (1957) attempts to define power and make it operational for scientific research purposes. According to him, the concept of power is "... a Thing to which people attach many labels with subtly or grossly different meanings in many different cultures and times is probably not a Thing at all but many Things." (Dahl, 1957 p. 201) Essentially Dahl sees the defining and operationalising of the concept of 'power' as a muddled exercise; 'power' is not really one single concept but rather a whole slew of different concepts. Therefore he sees the rise of a single, coherent 'theory of power' unlikely, and expects a variety of different theories all of which are useful in certain circumstances or specific researches. (Dahl, 1957)

Another debate of the concept of 'power' is found around the works of Hannah Arendt. For instance, Leo J. Penta in his essay-article 'Hannah Arendt: On Power' (1996) describes and expounds on what he calls Arendt's 'radical redefinition of power'. As Penta describes, the classical modern view of power is a view of unilateral domination, whereas Arendt's view of power is based in communication and relation. See the following quote by Arendt:

"Power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together. When we say of somebody that he is "in power" we actually refer to his being empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name." (Arendt, 1970 p. 44)

This clashes for instance with Weber's view on power, as here described by Habermas (1977) as "... the possibility of forcing one's own will on the behaviour of others." (Habermas, 1977 p. 4) What Weber defines as 'power' Arendt sees as 'force', and she differentiates between the two. The first view is also sometimes described as 'power over', as for instance by Patton (1989), as opposed to 'power to'. 'Power over' others (to influence behaviour) or 'power to' get something done. These two concepts are highly interrelated in practice, even if they initially seem clearly defined as Patton demonstrates: you might have 'power over' others due to your 'power to' cajole or beat others into submission. On the other hand, you might have 'power to' because you have 'power over' others to do your bidding.

These conceptions of power are still fairly abstract. Gaventa in his 2006 article 'Finding the Spaces for Change: A Power Analysis' introduces the concept or framework of the 'power cube'.

While he directs his article more at persons or organisations seeking to change distribution of power for the better, his conception of power is also useful for analysis.

Figure 1 The 'power cube': the levels, spaces and forms of power

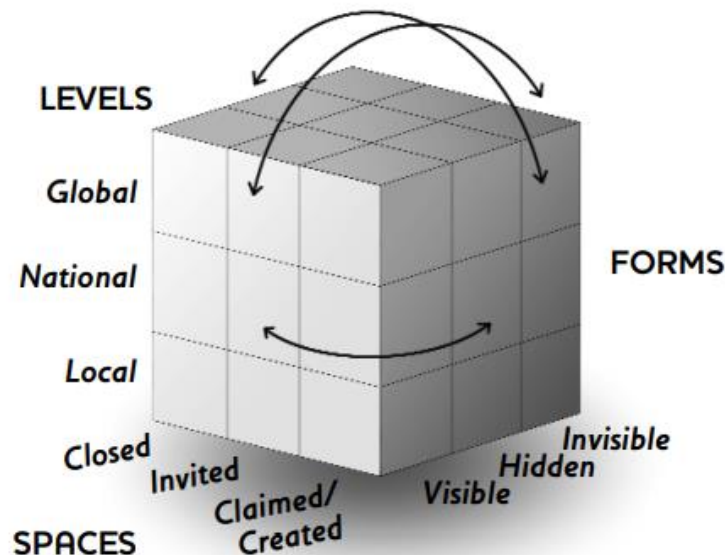


Figure 2. Gaventa's power cube (from: Gaventa, 2006)

Essentially Gaventa divides power in three groups: space, form and level. All of those are divided by three as well (see image) and all are interrelated with each other. '[T]he power cube is a framework for analysing the spaces, places and forms of power and their interrelationship' (Gaventa, 2006) I will not go through all nine subthemes but I will discuss the three main themes.

'Spaces' refers to the places where power rests. Examples given by Gaventa (2006) are institutional channels and political discourses but also social and political channels or 'democratic spaces' which refers to the space for citizens to democratically engage with policy. Closed, invited and claimed / created refers to the accessibility of these spaces.

'Levels' are rather self-explanatory. Power on local, national and global level interact with each other; each level interacts with the other ones. When researching one 'level' of power, it is important to be mindful of the influence the other levels might have on it.

'Forms' refers to the transparency or clarity of power. Visible power is the clearly observable power of for example institutions, leaders, political parties. Hidden power refers to those persons, groups or unwritten traditions that put things on agendas and decide who gets to join in on the decision making process. Finally invisible power is more about internalised beliefs or the self-image. (Gaventa, 2006)

Re-arranging the blocks on the power-cube gives many possible combinations and many possible starting-points for analysis (or for the creation of policy which Gaventa proposes). Think for instance of who gets to set the agenda for the closed-off national parliament, or how international actors influence the visible power in local governments. It reveals possible dynamics of power which differ across level, by space and in form. Note that it is not necessary to find all nine “subthemes” in every possible situation; they are merely all the possible options on the cube. I will use the analytical device of the power-cube in my operationalisation of power.

2.3.2 Patronage

When discussing power and politics in North Macedonia the concept of patronage is relevant for understanding power in the country. This is because of the relation between ethnic identity and patronage networks and the place ethnicity has in policy making. A patronage system can be defined as a network of self-regulated relationships between individuals of different status and power based on reciprocity of mutual gain over a longer period of time. (Bereziuk, 2018) They often have a negative impact on governance in a country because they essentially represent a second government structure with differing interests. Bereziuk mentions that mobilising of patronage networks can be useful or even necessary for the international community to make real change in places where they are deeply entrenched. (Bereziuk, 2018)

Piacentini, using the works of Kitschelt (2000) and Gallego (2015) defines clientelism as: “... personalized dyadic relationships based on loyalty, where patron and client/s may have either a direct or indirect relation characterized by an asymmetrical but reciprocal exchange of favours.” (Piacentini, 2020, p. 102) Thus, a person in a position of power offers another person certain revokable favours in return for loyalty. This system creates a dependence on the giver, but is an often mutually beneficial relationship creating a system of inter-personal networks based on loyalty and dependence. (Piacentini, 2020)

If we look at the definitions of Bereziuk and Piacentini through the lens of power as defined by Arendt, we clearly see the group aspect of her definition back in patronage or clientelist relationships. In a patronage system, the higher up you are in a network the more *power* you have *over* the people below you because you have the *power to* take away their job and livelihood. Because these people keep you in power, “... being empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name.” (Arendt, 1970 p. 44), you again have *power to* do a wide variety of things such as: enriching yourself (and your followers) or gaining votes and thus more political influence.

2.3.3 Operationalisation

To answer the research question: how has the OFA power-sharing agreement influenced ethnicised policy making? Power is key to understand policy making.

The space I am researching is the Macedonian consociationalist system. I want to understand the dynamics within that system. To that end I want to know:

- Within the system which group(s) has / have claimed or created space?
- Which group(s) encounter(s) an invited space (if any)?
- Which group(s) encounter(s) a closed space (if any)?

Answering these questions will show which groups have access to power or policy making within the Macedonian consociationalist system. Then I will want to know if we can discern the different forms of power across the different ethnic groups in the country; visible, hidden or invisible. Answering this shows potentially the power dynamic between groups. Finally I will ask if there is a local, national or international component to these dynamics: for instance are ethnic groups with an independent kinstate influenced by the international dynamics of their ethnic group?

Earlier we described the consociationalist arena in which groups have to share power; which sets the constraints for power and the levers of power. Then we describe the groups that inhabit the system. We understand that because of the consociationalist set-up policy-making has a somehow ethnic quality as different ethnic groups are part of power-sharing. What are the attributes of ethnicised policy making in a consociationalist system? Based on the literature I came up with the following attributes:

- No one group has the power to create policy on their own;
- Policies have to be enacted by power *in concert* with the other groups;
- The groups that create policy have to be based on ethnicity.

2.4 Concluding: operationalisation and conceptual framework

The research question is: *how has the OFA power-sharing agreement influenced ethnicised policy making?* To answer this question I used three key concepts: consociationalism, ethnic identity and power. Adding to this are two sub-concepts: instrumentalism and patronage networks. How do these concepts interact and how will they help me answer the research question?

Consociationalism is the form of power-sharing that sets the arena for inter-ethnic interaction in the political sphere, read policy-making, in North Macedonia. Specifically, the OFA puts power in the hands of ethnic groups: it institutionalises ethnic identity.

- How can we measure institutionalisation of ethnic identity? I describe this under the header 'consociationalism'.
- How do we measure ethnic identity? I describe how I operationalise the concept of 'ethnicity' under the header 'ethnicity'. Similarly I describe how I will show that a party is related to an ethnicity (is an 'ethno-party').
- How do we measure and define ethnicised policy making? I describe how I operationalise when we can speak of 'ethnicised' policy making under the header 'power'. Further, I also describe how I will analyse policy making and power in Macedonia's system under the header 'power'.

In this way my key concepts will interact to answer the research questions. The key concepts fit within the conceptual framework as follows: following the 2001 insurgency in North Macedonia the grievances of the insurgents were addressed by making ethnic minorities, especially the ethnic Albanians, share in the power of the state. The Ohrid Framework Agreement was signed which provided the basis for a *consociationalist* government where *power* was shared between the different *ethnicities* of the country.

Chapter 3 Sketching the Context

This chapter addresses the available research on the key concepts – consociationalism, ethnic identity & power – in the Macedonian context. The goal of this chapter is to sketch the background for the case of Macedonian consociationalism. Macedonian consociationalism did not arise in a vacuum and as such it is necessary to understand the historical context out of which arose the country's current political system. Through desk research I give a brief description of the political history of the region that would become North Macedonia and its politically relevant ethnicities. Further I delve into the ethnic-based insurgency in 2001, the establishment of peace & the Ohrid Framework Agreement and finally I lay the basis for what Macedonian politics look like post-OFA. This chapter gives background to the results of the interviews which are detailed in chapter 5.

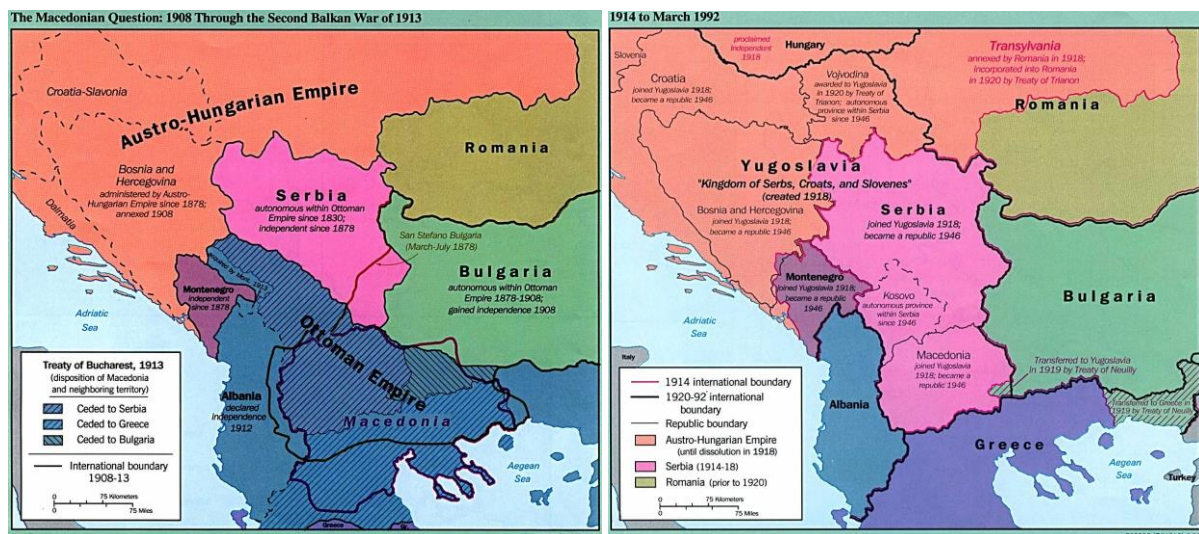
3.1 A brief history of Macedonian independence and the revival of ‘the Macedonian Question’

In 1991 the Socialist Federal Republic of Macedonia seceded from the Yugoslav Federation and thus declared independence as the Republic of Macedonia. For the first time in history, this contested territory, right in the heart of the Balkan Peninsula, formed an independent nation-state. (Rizova, 2011) The independence of North Macedonia re-opened a century-plus old can of worms known as ‘the Macedonian Question’. (Piacentini, 2018) A brief history of the Macedonian Question is necessary here, because it is important for understanding the contestation of the country, the identity and language of (Slavic) Macedonians and how they relate to the other ethnicities in the country.

3.1.1 The Macedonian Question

The Macedonian Question is a narrative of overlapping (and thus conflicting) territorial and identity claims by Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece regarding the territory of Macedonia and its inhabitants, starting with the erosion of the power of the Ottoman empire in the Balkans. In its most basic form it is an issue asking ‘what is the nature of Macedonia and its (Slavic) inhabitants?’ Essentially, each of the above-named nations claim they Macedonia is not in fact an independent identity but rather part of their neighbouring nation. In other words, Macedonia is either rightful Serbian, Bulgarian or Greek – depending on who stakes the claim. (Piacentini, 2018)

The region has historically been a crossroads of cultures, traditions, religions and thus identities. The name of the region of ‘Macedonia’ dates back to the antiquity Kingdom of Macedonia, nowadays mostly famous for its two most successful leaders Philip II and Alexander the Great. During the 6th century, Slavs migrated to the region and subsequently the area was part of various kingdoms and empires including the Bulgarians, Byzantines and the Ottomans. When the Ottomans took over in the 14th century, they grouped different provinces according to their religion – thus, all the Orthodox people were grouped together in the same entity. At this point the name ‘Macedonians’ simply referred to those people inhabiting the region which was called Macedonia. (Piacentini, 2018)



Map 1: the map on the left shows Ottoman Rumelia and how it was divided following the Balkan wars between Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia; the second shows North Macedonia with roughly its present day boundaries as part of Serbia within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. From CIA (1993).

With the rise of nationalism and the Ottoman empire eroding during the late 19th, early 20th century, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece gained their independence from the Ottomans. However, the region of Macedonia was still under tenuous Ottoman control as ‘Ottoman Rumelia’. (Piacentini, 2018) From the 1870s on, all three neighbouring countries laid claims on the region based on language (Serbia), ethnicity (Bulgaria) and territory (Greece). Indeed, the region included people declaring all the above identities, not in the least because of the sometimes violent incursions and partial occupations of Macedonia by these same nations. (Glenny, 2012) All three neighbouring countries sought to influence the people of Macedonia through their respective national Orthodox churches at the same time that signs of a Macedonian *national* identity surfaced. (Piacentini, 2018). This culminated in the 1903 ‘Ilinden Uprising’; a brief but unsuccessful bid for Macedonian independence from the Ottoman Empire that is by contemporary Macedonians often seen as one of the first steps of

Macedonian nationhood. (Piacentini, 2018) This episode is also not without controversy, with some scholars arguing that the uprising was also directed against Bulgarian claims, while others say it was in fact pro-Bulgarian. Either case, during the Balkans Wars the territory was divided between Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece, roughly shaping the form of present-day North Macedonia in the Serbian annexed 'Vardar Macedonia'. (Piacentini, 2018)

After a period of forced 'Serbianization' under the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, during World War 2 the region was invaded and occupied by the Bulgarians. Similarly, the Bulgarians set out to homogenize the population, just as the Serbs had done. (Piacentini, 2018) Meanwhile, the Yugoslav partisan leader, Josef Broz Tito, appealed to Macedonian partisans and gained control of the region, setting-up the People's Republic of Macedonia which would be incorporated into the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a constituent republic, in the process creating the present shape of the country. As part of Yugoslavia the constituent republic would engage in significant state-building, standardising the Macedonian language, writing a national history and later creating a separate Macedonian Orthodox Church. The Yugoslav authorities tried to promote the 'Macedonian identity' over those Macedonian Slavs that identified as Bulgarian. (Piacentini, 2018)

3.1.2 The re-opening of the Macedonian Question

With the 1991 independence these questions rose to prominence again. Both Greece and Bulgaria consider Macedonia a Yugoslav invention. Although Bulgaria recognised the Macedonian independence, it rejected the idea of Macedonian as a language and identity separate from Bulgaria. Greece refused to recognise the country, objecting to the name of 'Macedonia', the use of the 'Star of Vergina' as the national flag of Macedonia, and the claim of descent from antiquity Macedonia. (Piacentini, 2018) This resulted in the country only being internationally recognised under the provisional name of Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). Finally, the Serbian Orthodox Church does not recognise the Macedonian Orthodox Church. (Piacentini, 2018) The official Macedonian stance is that Macedonia is the homeland of the Macedonian people, who form an identity separate from that of their neighbours. (Piacentini, 2018) We can thus see that from the very start the territorial integrity of the new Republic of Macedonia was threatened from the outside. (Rizova, 2011)

A new development in the Macedonian question is the resolving of the long-standing dispute with Greece on the name of the country with the 2018 Prespa Agreement. This agreement essentially boils down to Greece lifting its veto on NATO and EU accession in exchange for

FYROM adopting the name 'North Macedonia', along with about 20 pages of arguing about identity.

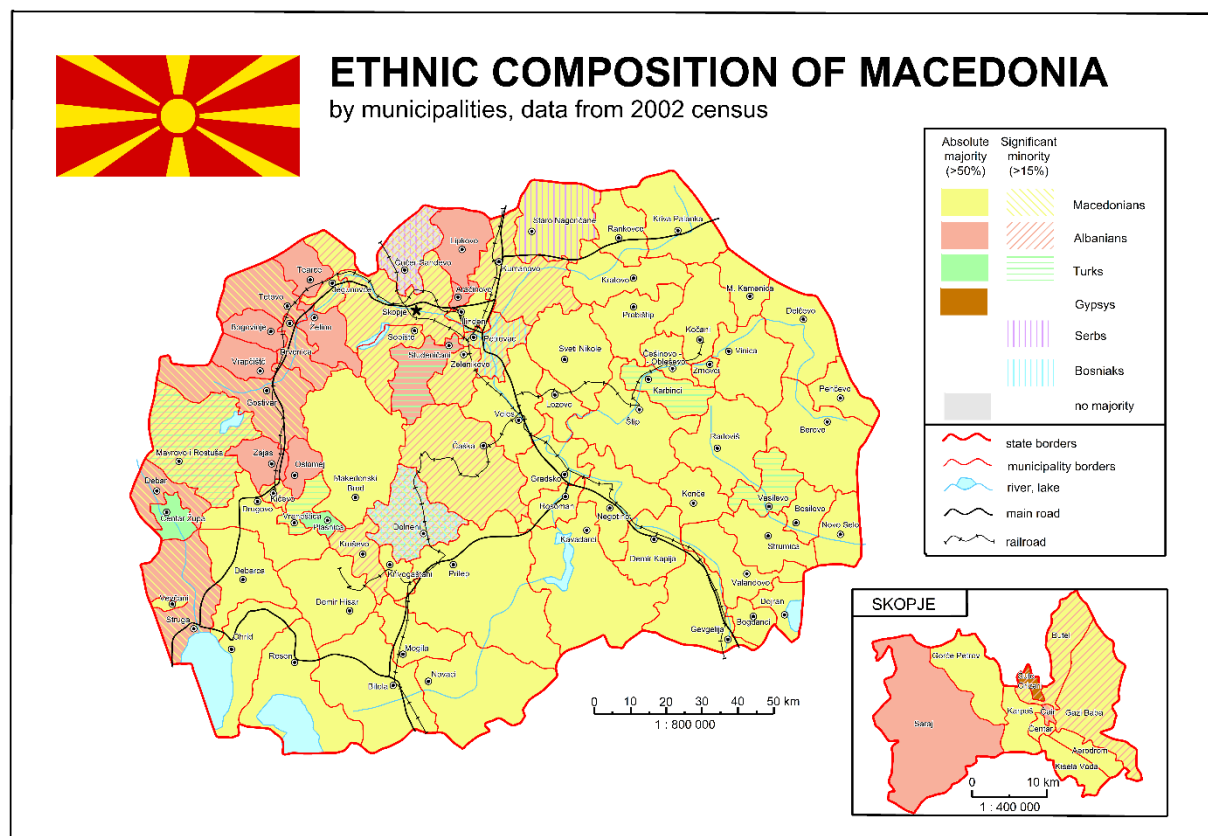


Illustration 1: star of Vergina graffiti in the city of Bitola. While the symbol may not be used officially it is still commonly seen across North Macedonia indicating continued identification with it. Here it is used in combination with 'Chkembari', supporters of the local football club.

The agreement is not without controversies, for instance Vankovska (2019) sees the Prespa Agreement as a way of the stronger partner in the negotiations (Greece) asserting a primordial view of its corner of Balkan history. Further, Vankovska sees 'identity disputes' as not part of international law and rejects the idea that identity can be determined: "...through imposition and by legally binding mechanisms, which could be easily questioned from the perspective of international law." (Vankovska, 2019 p. 279) Following this line of thinking, it is questionable that the Prespa Agreement is really a step towards closing the Macedonian Question for good as it directly opens up the possibility for any country to contest history through leveraging their membership of international institutions.

3.2 Inter-ethnic relationship of the politically relevant ethnic identities of North Macedonia

"For centuries, the geographic area of Macedonia has been a crossroads of armies and populations that influence, with their religions, cultures, and traditions, the identity-building processes of the people living in that area. According to a conqueror, the population has gone through processes of homogenization and assimilation, so the phenomenon of shifting identification is often the result of forced identification pushed by the dominant group—as in, for instance, "Serbianization," "Bulgarization," and "Hellenization"." (Piacentini, 2019 p. 4)



Map 2: the ethnic composition of North Macedonia according to the data of the contested 2002 census. (Wikipedia, 2012)

As can be understood from paragraph 3.1, the geographic area of what is now North Macedonia is heterogeneously populated by a variety of ethnicities that are not necessarily related in the sense of religion, language and/or culture. (Piacentini, 2019) Those identifying as ethnic Macedonians are thus not the only people living in the country. The Ohrid Framework Agreement recognizes the rights of the various minorities in the country. (Piacentini, 2019) Ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians form the biggest groups. In this section I describe their role vis-à-vis the Macedonian state, their grievances and political interests.

3.2.1 Ethnic Macedonians

Ethnic Macedonians are the majority ethnic group in North Macedonia, making up roughly two-thirds of the population according to the 2002 census. (Piacentini, 2019) The identity of the ethnic Macedonians is a contested one as described in paragraph 3.1 on the Macedonian Question. Their identity is shaped by a continuous need to change and reassert the ethnic Macedonian identity in the face of foreign threats and contentions. (Piacentini, 2019) Concretely ethnic Macedonians are a Slavic people speaking a Slavic language, usually

Orthodox Christians, that share a general identity consciousness and an often contested history characterised by foreign rule and oppression.

The Ethnic Macedonian identity

Throughout modern times the ethnic Macedonian identity has constantly been under threat while the Macedonian nation was dismembered and/or occupied. (Piacentini, 2018) This continuous state of anxiety has shaped the ethnic Macedonian identity and consciousness, and contributes in no large part to the friction with minorities (especially the ethnic Albanians) in the country. (Piacentini, 2019) Since Yugoslav times, ethnic Macedonians see the Macedonian state as 'theirs', as they were the majority in a constituent republic while the ethnic Albanians were just a 'nationality' without their own republic. (Piacentini, 2020) This feeling was also cemented in the wording of the constitution of the new republic, explicitly stating that the country was to be the homeland of 'the Macedonians'. (Konstantinos, 2020) This wording can be read as a response to the re-opening of the Macedonian question and the anxiety that it caused.

Piacentini posits that the survival of the Macedonian state is correlated to the survival of the ethnic Macedonian identity as neighbouring states are seen as a direct threat. (Piacentini, 2019) The ethnic Albanian assertion for additional rights and autonomy within North Macedonia plays directly into fears of (further) dismemberment of the Macedonian state, and thus the potential destruction of the ethnic Macedonians and their identity. (Piacentini, 2019) Moreover, the high birth rates and the (past) influx of ethnic Albanians from neighbouring Kosovo have caused anxiety among the ethnic Macedonians who fear of being replaced as the majority group. (Piacentini, 2019)

The Macedonian identity is not only a hotly debated case because of the long-standing controversies in the region but also because of the Macedonian government's well-documented attempt at state- and identity-building with the 'Skopje 2014' project. (Vangelov, 2019) Prior to that, the role of state-building for the Macedonian identity in the Macedonian republic under Yugoslav rule is a source of much discussion as well. (Piacentini, 2019) The Skopje 2014 project, implemented by nationalist right-wing party VMRO-DPMNE¹ reshaped the city centre of the capital of Skopje. Large neo-classic and neo-baroque buildings, including a Roman triumphal arc, now overshadow the Ottoman history of the city; it was being covered with an

¹ The full name means: *Vnatrešna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija-Demokratska Partija za Makedonsko Nacionalno Edinstvo*; Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation-Democratic Party for Macedonian Unity – from here on out I will use the abbreviation VMRO as that is what the party is commonly referred to. The 'VMRO' part of the name is a reference to the 'Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization' also abbreviated as VMRO in Macedonian (*Vnatrešna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija*); a rebel group active in Ottoman times. (Glenny, 2021)

antiquity Macedonian view of the Macedonian identity. The government erected giant statues for antiquity Macedonians Alexander the Great and Philip II, among many other heroes and great people from the historic Macedonian nation. (Piacentini, 2018; Vangelov, 2019; Piacentini, 2019)



Illustration 2: monument for 'Warrior on a horse' that bears a resemblance to Alexander the Great. The gargantuan monument was erected as part of the 'Skopje 2014' project. (Gamintraveler, n.d.)

Vangelov (2019) describes the increasing use of the antiquity narrative ('antiquisation') of the Macedonian identity: today's Macedonians are direct descendants of the ancient Macedonians during the time of Alexander the Great, a very primordialist stance on identity. This narrative was taken from the fringes and popularised by VMRO and its leader Nikola Gruevski that were in power between 2006 and 2016. The 'Skopje 2014' project and associated media campaigns are used to sell this narrative. Vangelov argues that VMRO and its increasingly authoritarian leader Gruevski used this antiquisation campaign to position themselves as the 'true' protectors of the Macedonian identity – an identity that was under (perceived) attack during three key moments in recent history: the 2001 ethnic insurgency, the 2004 decentralisation process creating more autonomy for local governments (particularly for the ethnic Albanians), and the 2008 Greek veto on both NATO and EU accession. These moments, when ethnic Macedonians and North Macedonia came under intense pressure, were used by the party to sell its primordialist narrative on Macedonian identity in the face of constant threats to it. It

also allowed VMRO to paint any opposition as traitors to the nation and increasingly assert a more authoritarian control over the country.

Vangelov (2019) further describes an intra-ethnic rift within the ethnic-Macedonian community. Writing in 2019 after the fall of VMRO coalition which was replaced by the social democrats (SDSM), Vangelov defines two main narratives among ethnic Macedonians about the origins of their identity: one that follows the antiquisation line of direct descent from ancient Macedonia, and the 'Slavic' line that ethnic Macedonians came to the Balkan peninsula when the other Slavs did during the 6th century. The Slavic narrative was initially more dominant, visible for instance in the declaration by then-president Kiro Gligorov that Macedonians had no claims to antiquity history and that ethnic Macedonian identity was Slavic. Now, following the VMRO years, according to Vangelov, polls show that around 40% of ethnic Macedonians believe that they descend from Alexander the Great, while also around 40% think they do not, a sharp increase from earlier polls in the 1990s. It is interesting to note that the narratives of VMRO point at the idea of North Macedonia being an 'ethno-nation' for the Macedonian identity only, whereas the narratives of SDSM are rooted in the multicultural idea of the Macedonian state. Indeed, the ethnic Albanian opposition during the Skopje 2014 years denounced the project as being an attack on the multi-cultural character of the state. VMRO follows the more Yugoslav tradition of 'ethno-nations', while also adopting an anti-communist stance, namely that the Yugoslav state-building project was essentially a confusion of Macedonian identity and an interruption in the line going back all the way to antiquity. (Vangelov, 2019) This intra-ethnic rift is thus a conflict on the origins of Macedonian identity, as well as on the view on politics and the view on the nature of the Macedonian state.



Illustration 3 & 4: images taken at the 'Skanderbeg square' in the city centre of Skopje; the ethnic Albanian counterpart to the VMRO constructed 'square Macedonia' with the warrior on a horse. The square has a statue of the ethnic Albanian military commander Skanderbeg and a mural showing the Albanian struggle over the years.

To place Vangelov (2019) in the debate. He draws on constructivist and instrumentalist approaches to identity; rejecting the notion of a homogenous and everlasting view on ethnic identity. He looked at the process of creating group identification; how people started to identify (more) with the primordial narrative of VMRO. He also follows the instrumentalist line of actors deliberately using ‘group-making’ at strategic moments to mask other interests.

3.2.2 Ethnic Albanians

Ethnic Albanians are the biggest and most politically relevant minority group of North Macedonia and, according to the 2002 census, roughly make up a quarter of the population. (Piacentini, 2019) Albanian culture is different from that of ethnic Macedonians; they are a predominantly Muslim population whereas Macedonians are primarily Orthodox Christian, Albanians are more rural and Macedonians more urbanised, their respective languages are unrelated and they have a different history and identity consciousness. (Koppa, 2001) In addition, in general they live in different parts of the country. The idea of unification of majority Albanian populations in Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, Greece and North Macedonia (also known as Greater Albania or the ‘Albanian Question’) inspires fear among ethnic Macedonians for dismemberment of the country. (Koppa, 2001) For Albanians, language is considered to be of great importance for the sense of feeling together, even across national borders. (Babuna, 2000) However, there is not a single ‘Albanian community’, but rather different social strata’s, organisations and political parties, all with their own interests and goals. (Koppa, 2001) The concerns of ethnic Albanians in North Macedonia are mostly focused on recognition in the political arena; looking for an official status in the country that, according to them, tries to create an ‘ethno-nation’ for ethnic Macedonians. (Piacentini 2019)

Ethnic Albanian history in North Macedonia

Within Yugoslavia, ethnic Albanians were recognised as a ‘nationality’ (*narodnost*) but did not have a constituent republic. Most ethnic Albanians lived in Kosovo and a minority in present-day North Macedonia. (Piacentini, 2019) Over the years, there were significant tensions between ethnic Albanians and the Yugoslav and Macedonian authorities, which responded harshly by imprisoning what they referred to as ‘Albanian nationalists’. (Piacentini, 2019) However, during the 1970’s conditions improved: an Albanian-language university was opened and the social-political status of Albanians further improved with the bestowing of the rights of an ‘Autonomous Province’ on Kosovo (albeit without recognition as a constituent republic). (Piacentini, 2019) In Macedonia both ethnic Albanians and ethnic Turks gained the same rights as ethnic Macedonians – for instance in education, the use of national symbols and the

use of their own alphabets. (Piacentini, 2019) During the 1980s ethnic Albanians called for the creation of an Albanian republic as an equal partner within Yugoslavia. (Koppa, 2001) This caused further tensions between the ethnic Albanians and the Yugoslav and Macedonian state, both of which – in their own process of nation-building – sought to repress and assimilate its minorities, while seeing demands for specific rights as a form of (dangerous) nationalism and irredentism. (Piacentini, 2019) Thus, Albanians gained a (limited) degree of recognition within both the Macedonian and Yugoslav systems, but were never fully equal to those identities possessing their own republic within the state.

The Ethnic Albanian identity

The ethnic Albanian identity in the North Macedonian context has been a less popular topic for scholars than the Ethnic Macedonian identity. Krasniqi (2011) discusses the interplay of religion and internal and external actors on the ethnic Albanian identity in North Macedonia and Kosovo. While his main focus is on religion, he also gives a relevant overview of the ethnic Albanian identity throughout the 20th and 21st century.

Krasniqi (2011) argues that Islam is mostly absent from the ethnic Albanian political sphere: “... due to a specific social and political context, and due to a historical experience which forced Albanian nation-builders to deemphasize religion.” (Krasniqi, 2011, p. 204) Albanian nationalism during the 20th century has been mostly secular. Politicizing religion has been avoided, in order to avoid creating internal divisions along religious lines: Albanians at the time adhering to Catholicism, Orthodoxy as well as Islam. This forced nationalist and cultural leaders to focus on the descent, ethnicity and most importantly language instead of religion. (Krasniqi, 2011)

Following the Balkan wars and WW1 Albanians were territorially divided; some fell under the rule of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and after WW2 under socialist Yugoslavian rule. Krasniqi argues that the policies of these political entities had strong effects on the Albanian identity in what nowadays is North Macedonia and Kosovo. Religion was emphasised over nation-hood, thus ethnic Albanians were grouped together on a religious basis with, among others, Bosnian Muslims. The Kingdom tried to create a common ‘Muslim’ identity based in religion. However, Albanians distinguished themselves more on the basis of language and ethnicity from their Slavic neighbours. In socialist Yugoslavia, the Serbs tried to undermine the Albanian national cause by strengthening religious affiliation over ethnic (ethno-national) affiliation. All Muslims under the Kingdom of Yugoslavia were encouraged to move to Turkey. Similarly, under socialist rule Albanians from Kosovo and Macedonia were encouraged to declare themselves as Turks and move. These combined policies had a damaging effect on the Albanian

community and its uniquely Albanian traditions where both Christians and Muslims alike could practice their religion together. Religion was homogenized, and as a result in 1998 the ethnic Albanian population in North Macedonia and Kosovo declared over 90% Sunni Muslim. As Krasniqi argues, the Albanian religious identity was constantly reshaped because of other developments within Yugoslavia. He does add that religion was important for Albanians to self-identity vis-à-vis the (Orthodox) Serbian and Macedonian 'other'; religion and ethnicity became intertwined. (Krasniqi, 2011)

3.2.3 Fitting the ethnic identities in the debate

Generally, Krasniqi takes an approach to ethnic identity that is not dissimilar to Tilley (1997); a complex view where identity is moulded by historical experiences and interactions with the environment and other groups. Vangelov (2019) takes both a constructivist and instrumentalist view of ethnic identity: constructivist as he sees ethnic identity more as a discourse or narrative that is mouldable, and instrumentalist because he sees the primordialist narrative on Macedonian identity as not necessarily made, but popularised from above. This clashes with Tilley's view who largely rejects the idea of deliberate identity construction by autonomous intellectual ideas. However, one can argue that the extremely hostile environment around the Macedonian identity made the VMRO popularisation of the primordialist narrative around that identity possible. In this sense, it is still the environment and the relations of the Macedonian identity clashing with that of the neighbours and ethnic Albanians within the country that popularised an already existing narrative through elite manipulation as a reaction or defence mechanism.

The narratives around the ethnic Macedonian identity as described by Vangelov (2019) show clearly a (hotly debated) set of shared historical myths. Similarly, Piacentini (2018) describes the 'Ilinden Uprising' as being important in the mind of many ethnic Macedonians as one of the first steps to Macedonian nationhood. Under Ottoman rule identity was divided based on religion, thus ethnic Macedonians were grouped with other Orthodox people. Under Tito, ethnic Macedonians for the first time got their own Orthodox Church, their language was standardised (differentiating it from neighbouring languages such as Bulgarian and Serbian) and a historiography of the Macedonians was written. (Piacentini, 2018) Thus, religion, language and shared historical myths all set ethnic Macedonians apart from their neighbouring Slavic populations and are in fact all contested by these neighbours.

Krasniqi (2011) shows an ethnic Albanian identity that is largely based on a shared language, 'descent', and 'shared ethnicity'. Religion has historically divided ethnic-Albanians, but in the Macedonian and Kosovar story it is now much more shared – 90% of ethnic Albanians in those

countries declare themselves to be Sunni Muslim. Indeed, as both Krasniqi and Koppa (2001) argue, religion has been a way for ethnic-Albanians to preserve their (cultural) identity. Krasniqi and Piacentini (2019) both describe a shaping of ethnic Albanian identity or consciousness by a shared struggle for equal recognition in North Macedonia and previously Yugoslavia: a shared historical narrative.



Illustration 5: 'stara čaršija' or simply 'čaršija'; the Old Bazaar of Skopje the only real mixing place in the multi-ethnic capital of North Macedonia. It is also the only place left in Skopje where the Byzantine, Ottoman and other cultural heritages of the city are on clear display; most of the historical city was destroyed in an earthquake in 1963. (Wikipedia, 2013)

3.2.4 How do these ethnic groups interact with each other?

Ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians still live almost completely separately in North Macedonia; their communities and societies function alongside to each other, only meeting in certain aspects such as the political arena. Most other ethnic minorities; including a sizeable combined minority of ethnic Turks, ethnic Serbs and ethnic Bosnians; do mix more, if only by the fact that their numerical inferiority forces them to mingle. (Piacentini, 2020) Geographically, even if ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians live in the same city, such as in Skopje, they still remain divided. Ethnic Albanians live on one side of the river, the ethnic Macedonians on the other. Increased tensions before the outbreak of the conflict further

cemented this divide by ‘switching flats’; people switching dwellings to create more ethnically ‘pure’ neighbourhoods. In Skopje, the groups only mix in the ‘Old Bazaar’, but even there, while the shops and cafés might be next door to each other, they still remain divided in their clientele. (Piacentini, 2020)

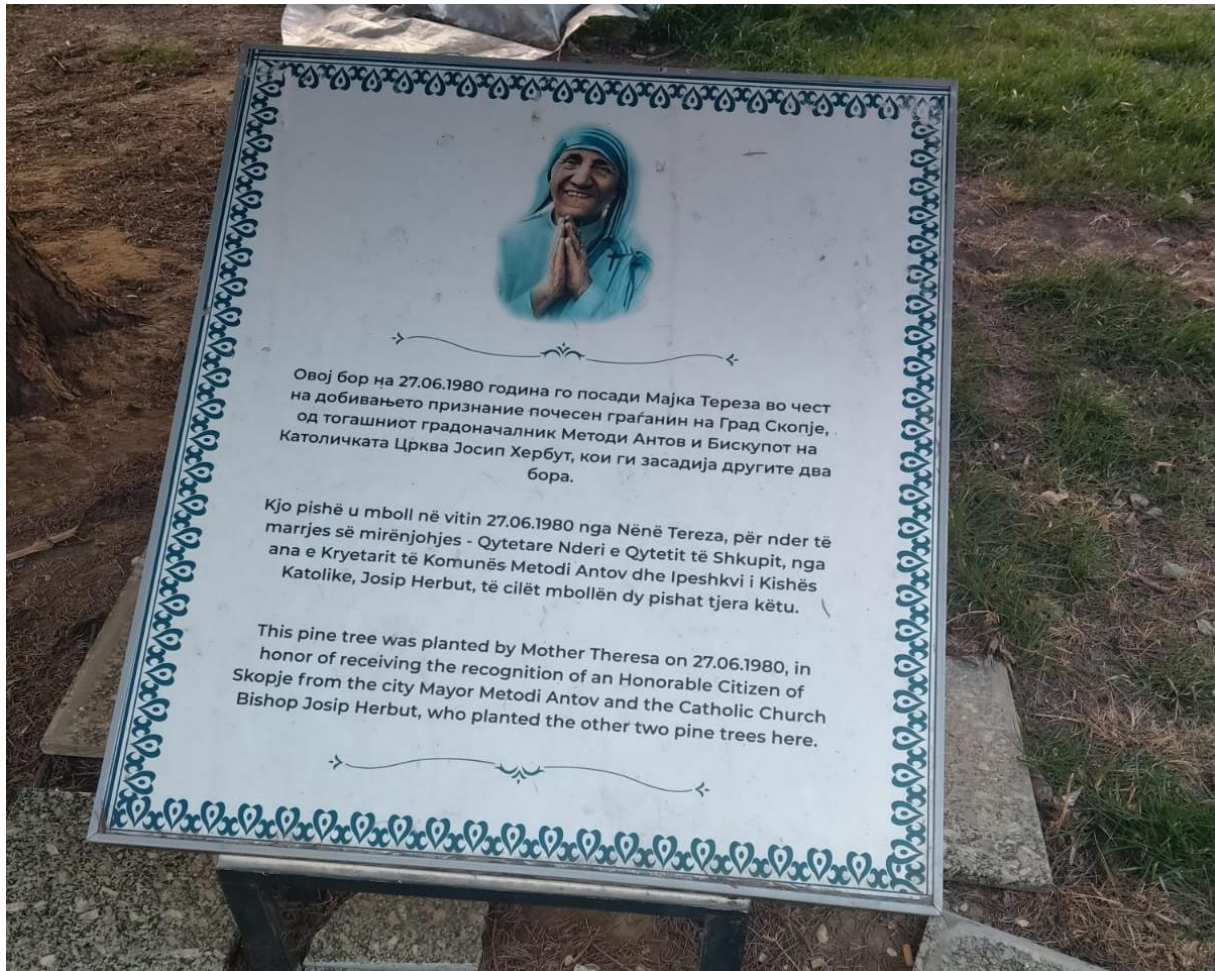


Illustration 6: plaque near the tree planted by Mother Theresa in the city centre of Skopje. Note the Macedonian, Albanian and English text commonly seen together in Skopje on signs. Mother Theresa was born in Skopje and of ethnic Albanian origin.

Schools are equally divided, and even if the same building is shared between both groups the classes still tend to be separate. There are almost no opportunities to socialise, build friendships or even communicate due to the language barrier. Adding to the situation are prejudices towards each other, often acquired at home. (Piacentini, 2020) This division makes it easy for politicians to play on the ignorance between groups and either whip up ethnic tension to distract from other issues or use the ‘ethnic card’ to show they are accomplishing something (for instance more rights for the ethnic Albanian population): in other words, instrumentalising the inter-ethnic distance.

3.2.5 The 2001 insurgency

The period in between independence in 1991 and the eruption of an open conflict in 2001 is characterized by tension between both ethnic groups. In the same year that Slobodan Milošević abolished ethnic Albanian-populated Kosovo's autonomy the Macedonian government dropped the ethnic Albanians and ethnic Turks from the constitution, officially making them minorities in the country once again. (Piacentini, 2019) This carried over into a call for independence as did the rising tensions in neighbouring Kosovo, which was a source of significant migration to Macedonia. (Koppa, 2001) Note that ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and North Macedonia share significant familial and kinship ties as both moved and intermingled a lot within the Yugoslavian state. (Glenny, 2012)

In 1991 ethnic Albanians had boycotted the referendum on independence, and later overwhelmingly voted in favour of autonomy in an unrecognised referendum. However, the majority of ethnic Albanians denounced violent means. (Koppa, 2001) There was no supranational identity in newly independent Macedonia: the country was seen as an ethno-state for ethnic Macedonians, in accordance with the constitution. (Koppa, 2001; Piacentini, 2019; Piacentini, 2020) Piacentini (2019) argues that the drive for nationalism, which was on the rise in the region during the late-Yugoslav and early post-Yugoslav period, could really only lead to ethnically defined nation states. Ethnic Albanians demanded an equal status to that of the ethnic Macedonians such as the right to use their own language in parliament, government institutions and higher education – thus seeking revision of the constitution. The ethnic Macedonian elites saw this revision as a threat to their state from within. In the new Macedonian republic assertion of these rights, like opening universities based on the Albanian language, were met with violence. (Piacentini, 2019) Besides these ethnic tensions the economy of the new republic was in bad shape: not in the least because of the embargo by Greece and tensions with its other neighbours, leaving the land-locked country without much possibility of international trade. (Vankovska, 2019) Both ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians were under significant pressure at this time.

In 1992, a new citizenship law had been adopted, stating that individuals had to live, legally, fifteen continuous years in the republic before being eligible for citizenship, which excluded many Kosovar migrants from Yugoslavian times. (Koppa, 2001) It is estimated that in the 1994 census, more than 100,000 Kosovar migrants in North Macedonia were not counted. (Koppa, 2001) This was before the 1999 Kosovar war saw roughly 350,000 mostly ethnic Albanian refugees coming over to North Macedonia in a short period of time, quickly creating a volatile situation in the already precarious equilibrium of North Macedonia at the time. (UNHCR, 1999)

The sort of pendulum swing of ethnic Albanian rights, first in Yugoslavia and later in the new republic, created a sense of insecurity and grievance with the Yugoslav and subsequently Macedonian state among ethnic Albanians. (Piacentini, 2019) In this precarious equilibrium, the conflict from Kosovo started bleeding over into Macedonia, as witnessed by the presence of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in the republic. In March of 2001 the situation in the Kosovar border regions escalated and unrest quickly spread to Macedonian cities like Tetovo and Kumanovo. (Piacentini, 2019) The newly-founded National Liberation Army (*Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare*; UÇK; ‘National Liberation Army’ or NLA in English) had wide-spread support among ethnic Albanians. The conflict lasted for nine months and with the help of international intervention a peace deal was signed between two ethnic Albanian and two ethnic Macedonian parties – the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA). (Piacentini, 2019) In addition, both an EU representative and a US representative signed, making it an international guaranteed peace treaty. (Marolov, 2013) This OFA would lay the foundations for the inter-ethnic relations in North Macedonia.

3.3 The Ohrid Framework Agreement

“The following points comprise an agreed framework for securing the future of Macedonia's democracy and permitting the development of closer and more integrated relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the Euro-Atlantic community. This Framework will promote the peaceful and harmonious development of civil society while respecting the ethnic identity and the interests of all Macedonian citizens.” Taken from the Ohrid Framework Agreement signed in 2001. (OFA, 2001)

To end the 2001 conflict, the major political parties in North Macedonia signed the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The OFA which calls for constitutional amendments to improve minority rights, inter-ethnic relations and democracy in Macedonia. (Piacentini, 2019) Explicitly to ameliorate fears of territorial dismemberment it avoids federalism by declaring there are ‘no territorial solutions to ethnic issues’, avoiding a situation like Bosnia and the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords. (Marolov, 2013; Piacentini, 2019) As seen in Yugoslavia, federalism and/or autonomous provinces could easily seek independence in the future. (Marolov, 2013) Some ethnic Albanian requests were granted, such as education and the use of language. Further, the agreement made provisions for ethnic quotas in government institutions and ethnic Albanian parties to be included in government. Notably much power was given to local government (decentralized self-government), in reality giving power to ethnic-based self-government locally, while avoiding a territorial solution. (Marolov, 2013; Piacentini, 2019)

3.3.1 The OFA and consociationalism

Piacantini in her 2019 article ‘State Ownership and “State-Sharing”: The Role of Collective Identities and the Sociopolitical Cleavage between Ethnic Macedonians and Ethnic Albanians in the Republic of North Macedonia’ discusses the characteristics of the Macedonian power-sharing set-up. I contrast her findings with Lijphart’s (1977) four characteristics of consociationalism: grand coalition, segmental autonomy, proportional representation and veto rights.

(a) A ‘grand coalition’ was already an unwritten rule in (independent) North Macedonia; since 1991 the country has always been governed by a coalition of ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian parties. This unwritten rule to include parties from the largest ethnic groups thus became law in the country. (Piacentini, 2019)

(b) Segmental autonomy is in the case of North Macedonia not envisioned in a state-partition such as seen in Bosnia, but by giving more autonomy to local governments. The number of municipalities was also subsequently reduced, changing the demographics of affected municipalities to benefit different ethnic groups. An ethnic group that has the majority in a municipality has significant authority over how that municipality is run, including for instance the use of ethno-nationalist symbols like flags and the use of their own language in schools. (Piacentini, 2019)

(c) The OFA further provides for “...proportional, equitable representation in the societal segments in the state bodies.” (Piacentini, 2019 p. 12) The main way this is regulated is through ethnic quotas, which the Ombudsperson has the competences and responsibility to oversee. Further, the ‘Secretariat for Implementation of the Framework Agreement’ and the ‘Committee for Inter-Community Relations’ were established to oversee the provisions. (Piacentini, 2019)

(d) Regarding veto rights, the OFA provisioned a ‘double majority principle’ or ‘Badinter principle’ for “...laws that directly affect culture, use of language, education, personal documentation, and use of symbols”. (Piacentini, 2019 p. 12) These interests thus require a double majority in the legislative organs. ‘Vital national interests’ are defined as those interests named above, and can be, in a roundabout way, vetoed by either ethnic-Macedonians or ethnic-Albanians because any law pertaining to the above interests needs support from both groups.

Summarised, it is clear that the OFA has all the characteristics of consociationalism. Thus, the Macedonian political system is consociationalist in character.

3.3.2 Critiques of the OFA

The OFA has come under much critique. It is argued that the agreement rewarded violence because many goals of ethnic Albanian parties, use of their own language in education and government for instance, were finally met not by applying normal politics but by the NLA using violence. It should be noted that the NLA was officially excluded from the negotiations. (Marolov, 2013; Piacentini, 2019) This can partly be explained by the fact that the international community, particularly the Euro-Atlantic community (EU and NATO) pressured for an agreement to avoid another large-scale war in the heart of the Balkans. (Marolov, 2013) In addition, much of the contradictions within the agreement make more sense in the context of the pro-unitary (ethnic Macedonian) and pro-federalism (ethnic Albanian) debate during the talks in Ohrid. (Marolov, 2013) Indeed, the proverbial carrot of Euro-Atlantic integration, which is proving long in the coming, was a way the Macedonian government was persuaded to give in to certain ethnic Albanian demands. (Marolov, 2013)

3.4 Politics & power in North Macedonia

I will use Piacentini's 2019 article "Trying to Fit In": Multiethnic Parties, Ethno-Clientelism, and Power-Sharing in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia' to describe the Macedonian political scene.

As Piacentini (2019) describes, since independence in 1991 power has been in the hands of ethnicity-based parties. Four main players are found in political coalitions in North Macedonia: the ethnic Macedonian SDSM (*Socijaldemokratski Sojuz na Makedonija*) & VMRO-DPMNE, and the ethnic Albanian DPA (*Partia Demokratike Shqiptare*; Democratic Party of Albanians) & DUI (*Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim*; Democratic Union of Integration). While there have been and still are many smaller parties, it is those four parties that are relevant for forming a coalition at this moment in time.

SDSM is the successor of the 'League of Communists of Macedonia' and led the country between 1992-1998 in coalition with ethnic Albanian DPA, followed by a coalition with newly-formed DUI post-conflict in 2002-2006 and again from 2016 until the present day, again in coalition with DUI. The party occupies the centre-left position on the political spectrum. VMRO is the right-wing ethnic Macedonian party; initially the party was nationalist, anti-communist and anti-Albanian. As described in Chapter 3.2.1.2 the party espouses a primordialist view of the Macedonian ethnic identity. Despite VMRO's anti-Albanian stance and rhetoric, between 1998-2002 it governed together with the ethnic Albanian DPA and thus was the party in power when the 2001 ethnic insurgency occurred. In 2004 Nikola Gruevski became leader of VMRO and would lead the party to victory and ruling in coalition with DUI

from 2006 to 2016, until he was forced to resign with the 'Pržino Agreement' following extensive political scandals.² Since independence only two ethnic Macedonian parties have been in power. (Piacentini, 2019)

DUI is the largest ethnic Albanian party and has been in every coalition but one (2006-2008) since its inception. DUI was formed from the NLA immediately after the 2001 conflict, and former-NLA leader Ali Ahmeti has been the party's president until the present day. DPA was previously the most important party, but since the inception of DUI the latter has dominated the ethnic-Albanian vote. As such, with a brief hiatus in 2006-2008 DPA has been relegated to the opposition. According to Piacentini (2019) the ethnic Albanian parties remain only ethnically mobilised – they campaign on a variety of ethnic Albanian rights, but offer little in the way of non-ethnic politics – which perhaps offers an explanation of how DUI can consistently join coalitions with both the political right and left.

From the previous paragraphs it can be understood that political power in North Macedonia is in the hands of political parties. These parties represent specific ethnicities, sometimes in the name as DPA does, attract voters from a specific ethnicity and espouse rhetoric or engage in state-building (both VMRO and DUI, see paragraph 3.2.1.2) related to their ethnicity.

Piacentini goes on to describe the role of multi-ethnic party '*Levica*' (The Left). The party is not an offshoot of an existing party, but born from citizen's initiative with the aim of offering a non-ethnic based alternative. The relative failure of *Levica* offers an insight in why the ethno-national political party's hold on power is so dominant in North Macedonia.

Piacentini (2019) finds three main reasons why the ethno-nationalist political line remains dominant. First off are structural issues related to the consociational set-up of the government: power-sharing foresees inclusion and representation for ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians in the country. Parties representing other groups or mixed groups have no structural place within the government. Citizens political habits and beliefs are another hurdle "...in particular, the perception of multiethnic and civic political parties as powerless, tool-less, and unworthy of support during elections." (Piacentini, 2019 p. 286) Last but not least is ethno-clientelist practices: patronage networks. As the establish ethno-nationalist parties over the years have created a vast network they are in the position to dole out jobs in civil institutions. The *power to* remove people from these jobs creates incitement to vote in the party line. Because of the specifics of North Macedonia's consociationalist political system, and a political

² Following wire-tapping scandals which revealed extensive corruption, electoral fraud and money laundering by the ruling party VMRO and its leader Gruevski, large-scale everyday protests erupted: this is themed the Colourful Revolution. Under intense political pressure the EU mediated the Pržino Agreement which, among other things, forced prime-minister Gruevski to step down and the creation of a 'technical government' that would oversee new elections. (Piacentini, 2019)

culture of patronage networks, power in the country appears to be in line with Arendt's (19170) theory: power as a network of relations. A person is in power because they are empowered by their relations to act in their name. There, however, seems to be a forcing line in how those relations are maintained more in line with Weber's description of power as the ability to force ones will over another. Both conceptions of power thus work together in this case.

By Piacentini's (2019) description of politics in North Macedonia, we see that power is concentrated in a handful of political parties. Indeed the consociationalist and specific ethnic character of these main parties keeps them in power: the specific structure of the consociationalist government only reserves space for those parties playing the ethnic card.

Patronage is clearly visible in the way party politics work in North Macedonia, Piacentini (2019) describes it as one of the reasons why new parties have a hard time gaining power in the current system. Patronage networks are a clear example of Arendt's concept of relational power. The existing traditional big parties have deeply established networks of mutual beneficial clientelist relations that are levied for, among other things, getting people to vote for them. As such these networks play an important role in the outcome of elections in North Macedonia and thus an important role in politics in the country in general.

3.5 Conclusions: sketching the case of Macedonian consociationalism

In this chapter I have laid out the background to the case that is researched in this thesis. I describe the historical background of the Macedonian state, its two politically relevant ethnic groups, the background to the conflict & the establishment of the OFA and finally sketched what the political landscape looks like post-OFA. I described a situation where both ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians live in parallel societies. Both groups have a long and complicated history in the region, a history that contributes to certain group interests and needs that bring the two into conflict in the country of North Macedonia. This culminated in the 2001 insurgency, which was resolved by the consociationalist Ohrid Framework Agreement.

The OFA regulates the inter-ethnic relationship, and now has created a relatively stable political inter-ethnic equilibrium. However, the divided society between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians leaves politicians the space to instrumentalise ethnic tensions to uphold the political and societal equilibrium from which they profit. Both ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian identities have been distinctly politicised within this system with political parties usually representing only a single ethnicity. Political parties of both ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians share power within the consociational arena of national Macedonian politics.

Chapter 4 Research Design & Methodology

In this thesis I research how the Macedonian power-sharing system has impacted ethnicised policy making in the country. The previous chapters proved the relevance of and introduced the key concepts and their operationalisation and laid out the background to the case. Here I describe the methodological approach, that of the ‘case study’, why the case study method was chosen and strengths and weaknesses of this method. Then I go into the design of the case study, how I will conduct the research, analyse the data and finally how to develop conclusions and report on the findings. In the next chapter I will outline the results of the interviews.

4.1 Methodological Approach

To reiterate: the research question of this thesis is ‘how has the OFA power-sharing agreement impacted ethnicised policy making?’. The objective of the research, as described in chapter 1, is to understand how power-sharing works in the case of Macedonian consociationalism both to contribute to the literature but also to contribute to the potential application of consociationalism elsewhere.

The methodological approach of this thesis is the case study method. Broadly speaking case studies allow for in-depth examination of a specific case. (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010) This examination might be used to either confirm or challenge a theory or to delve deeper into a unique case. (Yin, 1994) In chapter 1 I detail why specifically the case of Macedonian consociationalism is unique and worth exploring. Here I this chapter will detail what case studies look like and why I the case study method is fitting for this research.

4.1.1 Defining the case study and application

Qi in their article 2009 ‘Case Study in Contemporary Educational Research: Conceptualization and Critique’ discusses the various definitions of case studies to be found in the literature. They distil all these definitions in the following defining characteristics of the case study method (Qi, 2009; p. 23) :

- case referred to as a ‘bounded system’;
- in-depth, detailed data from wide data source;
- a natural approach following the central tenets of qualitative research by being emic (from within the case) and holistic (the whole system in its context); (McDonough and McDonough., 1997, p.205)

- Crucially concerned with an understanding of people's own meanings and perspectives; (ibid.:p.205)
- Case studies observe effects in real contexts, recognizing that context is a powerful determinant of both cause and effects. (Cohen et al., 2000, p.181)

Further Yin nicely describes a case study as: '[the case study is] an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used' (Yin, 2009, p. 13).

The case here would be that of Macedonian power-sharing or Macedonian consociationalism, which is the specific method of power-sharing in the Macedonian context. As discussed in chapter 2 & 3; the Macedonian political system, and the way ethnic groups interact within it, has to be seen in historical context. In addition also relevant are the ever-changing international context and, among other things, the economic context as the country and its people do not exist in a vacuum. Because all these different parts inherently impact how Macedonian power-sharing works it is hard to draw clear boundaries where the 'case' ends: they are all part of understanding Macedonian power-sharing. Case studies are in-depth, detailed and consists of different types of data or evidence from a wide variety of sources and crucially give a lot of weight to the context of the phenomenon . Therefore the case study method is a fitting way to reach the research objectives. Furthermore, recognising different perspectives is important in a power-sharing system that's designed to mitigate the challenges of a divided society where ethnicities have different historical consciousness and face different economic and cultural realities. The case study method is well-suited to absorb these different perspectives and fitting them in the final case.

Some delineations to the case of Macedonian power-sharing can be made. The boundaries of this case study cover the implementation of the current Macedonian consociational system in 2001 until the last conducted interview in 2021.

4.1.2 Strengths of the case study method

Qi (2009) names a number of strengths of the research method. By their nature case studies are descriptive of a single case generating a detailed view of their topic of choosing. They can allow a multiplicity of different viewpoints and can catch unique features that could be snowed under in large-scale data. Thus case studies contribute to an archive of cases that can be compared and contrasted. In chapter 1 I noted that in the 'archive' of consociationalist cases in the literature, the Macedonian case is notably absent in many comparative studies. Qi (2009) adds that insights from case studies can often be put to immediate use: here for instance

implementing consociationalism in other divided societies or the careful recommendation of policy for North Macedonia and the EU.

4.1.3 General critiques of the case study method

Yazan (2015) posits that the case study method is under contestation: there exists not one clear way to conduct a case study. There exists no agreed-upon definition of ‘case study’ or even ‘case’ much less its methods and research design. This is not necessarily a critique of the method, but rather a note of caution for the would-be case study-researcher.

A critique of the case study is that it is not the basis for generalization. (Qi, 2009; Zaidah, 2007; Tellis, 1997) However, that is not necessarily the goal of a case study. As Qi (2009) puts it: ‘[t]he purpose of case study is not to represent the world, but to represent the case.’ (Qi, 2009 p. 22). In other words, consociationalism in North Macedonia is not a basis for consociationalism or power-sharing everywhere but is its own unique phenomenon that is worth it to be studied on its own. A detailed description of the Macedonian case can be used to contrast with other cases of consociationalism and power-sharing, and in that way the case study certainly has scientific value. Yin (2009) also attacks this notion of generalization saying that a case study is not comparable to a single sample or a single data point as a case study uses many different data sources to build its case.

Qi (2009) further adds two weaknesses of case studies: they are not easily cross-checked (thus creating issues of reliability) and open to observer bias. In this chapter I lay out the steps I took to shape this research which then can be checked by others. To mitigate my potential biases I apply triangulation on a couple of different levels, more about that in chapter 4.4.1 on triangulation.

For constructing my research design I will use Tellis’ ‘Application of a Case Study Methodology’ (1997). Here Tellis uses the works of Yin (2009) and to a lesser degree Stake (1995) to create a guidebook on how to construct a case study. His article goes through four stages: 1) Design the case study 2) Conduct the case study 3) Analyse the case study evidence 4) Develop the conclusions, recommendations and implications. Here I walk through all four stages and devote time to discuss how I tackled triangulation, cross-cultural communication and address some general strengths and weaknesses of the case study method.

4.2 Designing the case study

When designing a case study, according to Tellis (1997) citing Yin (2009), the researcher needs to evaluate if they have the necessary skills to conduct the research and create a protocol to

follow during the research. Some examples of skills named are being flexible, a good listener, being able to ask the right questions and 'being unbiased'. As I had conducted interviews before for research in my previous education I had some experience with these skills, making me confident in being able to conduct the interviews and being flexible to a changing research situation. Regarding bias; I do not have a stake in the functioning of the Macedonian political system. However, I am a foreigner who has grown up in a Western country with all the biases that come with that. The potential difficulties in cross-cultural communication I prepared for by taking a course on the subject, more about that in chapter 4.2.1.

The protocol I initially designed missed the questions the researcher should keep in mind, which is one of the requirements set out by Tellis (1997) citing Yin (2009). I had created an overview of the case study project, set-out procedures and outlined the format for the final report (thesis). Initially my procedure for finding respondents was going to be the 'snowball' method; asking each respondent to provide me with further contacts, starting with contacts through my internship at the 'European Policy Institute' in Skopje. Further, I had created an interview guide with a mix of more broad questions and some more specific questions based on my conceptual framework and desk research into Macedonian consociationalism, with the express goal to answer my research question. I divided the questions in themes: background, current situation of inter-ethnic relations, legal / constitutional perspective, inter-ethnic situation moving forward. The plan was, based on my earlier experience with interviews, to remain within these themes and use the questions as handlebars to guide the interview adapting to what the respondent was talking about.

4.2.1 Cross-Cultural Communication

As I would be working together with and interviewing people from a cultural background different than mine I prepared myself for more effective cross-cultural communication. Korac-Kakabadse et al (2001) argue that, laying out a somewhat dogmatic view, cultures can be placed on a continuum from 'low-context culture' to 'high-context culture'. Communication between cultures on opposite sides of the spectrum can be challenging if one is not aware of this. Some caution is of course required with such a dogmatic view of cultures, but it will serve for creating some general guidelines.

The Netherlands is generally seen as a 'low-context culture': there is little programmed information, and people tend to give the necessary information in communication relying little on context. North Macedonia, on the other hand, has the markings of a 'high-context culture' meaning that they rely on context rather than speech to convey crucial information.

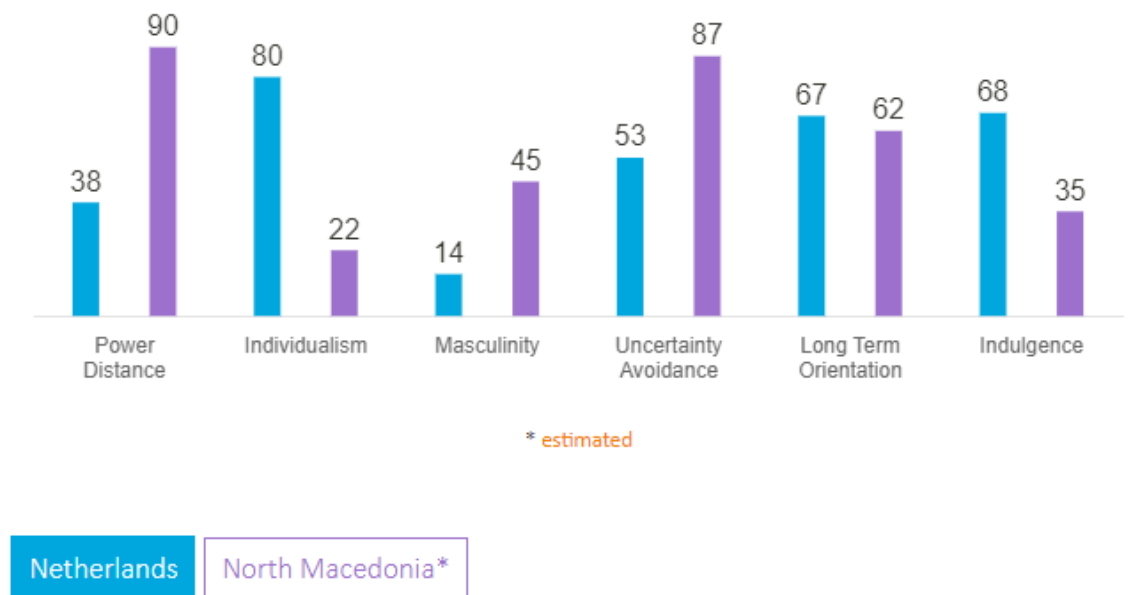


Figure 3: the Netherlands and North Macedonia compared according to the metrics of Geert Hofstede. (Hofstede-Insights, n.d.)

The cultural differences between the Netherlands and North Macedonia can briefly be compared (as seen in figure 3 above) according to the metrics of Hofstede. The biggest differences occur with power distance and individualism. North Macedonia's very low score on 'individualism' indicates a more high-context culture where things like loyalty and saving face are important. Similarly, the high value on power-distance - as opposed to the Dutch value - indicates that hierarchies are of much importance. All in all, this indicates that building relationships is important in North Macedonia. As are paying attention to contextual clues and observing hierarchical structures to avoid unnecessary conflict. Because North Macedonia is a higher-context culture than the Netherlands, the social dynamics around approaching interviewees is most likely different. This especially the case where hierarchies are involved. I mitigate this by being advised on my (native to North Macedonia) co-workers in my internship in communicating with and approaching interviewees.

Similarly, the type of questions that one can ask and the answers to them might potentially be different than expected, and the context of the answers or what is *not* said might be of importance. (Korac-Kakabadse et al, 2001) It is crucial to consider such cultural dimensions while conducting the research to avoid misunderstandings. Similarly I let myself be advised by my co-workers and discussed the interviews with them trying to get at the meaning of things I did not fully understand to place them in the right cultural context. Re-reading and discussing the interview transcripts also allows to get at nuanced observations that might not immediately jump out.

4.3 Conducting the case study

For the process of conducting the case study Tellis (1997) follows Yin (2009) who describes three tasks at this stage: preparing for collecting the data, distributing the questionnaire and conducting interviews. As ‘distributing the questionnaire’ is not relevant in this thesis, in this chapter I will discuss desk research, my internship and the interviews. I added my internship because it was part of my preparation. Further, I describe my processes of preparing for desk research and interviews in their respective paragraphs.

Further Yin (2009) describes six methods of data collection: 1) documentation 2) archival records 3) interviews 4) direct observation 5) participant observation 6) physical artefacts, of which I use the first three in my thesis. All methods of data collection come with their own strengths and weaknesses. Therefore I combine multiple data sources to overcome the weaknesses of each to come to a more reliable study, more about that in the paragraph on triangulation. In the table below is an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of each method of data collection.

| Source of evidence | Strengths | Weaknesses |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Documentation | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ stable - repeated review▫ unobtrusive - exist prior to case study▫ exact - names etc.▫ broad coverage - extended time span | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ retrievability - difficult▫ biased selectivity▫ reporting bias - reflects author bias▫ access - may be blocked |
| Archival records | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ Same as above▫ precise and quantitative | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ Same as above▫ privacy might inhibit access |
| Interviews | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ targeted - focuses on case study topic▫ insightful - provides perceived causal inferences | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▫ bias due to poor questions▫ response bias▫ incomplete recollection▫ reflexivity - interviewee expresses what interviewer wants to hear |

Table 1: methods of data collection with strengths and weaknesses according to Yin (2009) taken from Tellis (1997)

4.3.1 Desk Research

Desk research consists of existing documentation and archival records, and makes use of already existing research. As also seen in chapter 2 and chapter 3 there is ample existing literature on North Macedonia and its political system. Because of the sensitive political position of the country in the region it is important to carefully select sources writing about North Macedonia and keep in mind the interests of the authors, especially in popular sources

written in the local languages. When describing themes such as history, language, and identity of North Macedonia and ethnic Macedonians one must tread carefully: all these concepts are highly contested. Similarly, ethnic relations in conflict situations are always sensitive and therefore literature on the relations between ethnic Albanians and ethnic Macedonians must also be reviewed carefully. It becomes of even more importance to keep a broad perspective and a wide array of academic sources to avoid getting caught up in one particular viewpoint. I mostly used academic sources supplemented with newspapers and online sources, usually to illustrate a situation or illustrate a general opinion one could encounter in the local media.

Beyond the academic literature necessary to place the results of this thesis within the academic debate, I used statistical data. Such data can be contested in the case of North Macedonia, see the 2002 census, or simply hard to find. The Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia publishes some applicable and relevant statistics, as do certain other government institutions. However, governmental statistics in North Macedonia are not all-encompassing and often lack data, making their relevance for pure quantitative analysis limited. More relevant statistics I found for instance on the EU data aggregation databases and in reports of analyses made by NGOs in the country. These I used to contrast with the findings of the interviews as recommended by Yin (2009).

Further Yin (2009) recommends maintaining a chain of evidence and to keep a database of documents. All data used in this thesis, aside from the interviews, can be found online. Thus, keeping a APA style bibliography should allow others to track down and check the data that I used for this research. Interview transcripts are added in the appendix and in chapter 5, which details the results of my research, I added references to specific interviews.

4.3.2 Internship

Because of the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic an internship is not required for a master thesis. However, with the understanding that the high-context Macedonian society can be hard to navigate for an unconnected foreigner an internship is invaluable for connecting with the right people for interviews. Thus to support the research I found an internship at 'European Policy Institute' (EPI) in Skopje. EPI is an NGO dedicated mostly to analysing EU policies towards North Macedonia, because they approach EU policy quite broadly it also concerns the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. However, EPI cancelled my internship after it was supposed to begin, and I was forced to find an new internship. I managed to find one at the 'Institute for Human Rights' (IHR) located in Skopje.

IHR is an NGO or citizens association founded with the goals of promoting human rights and freedom in North Macedonia. Their methods are mostly legal based, but also include educating the professional public through organising discussions and research and analysis on topics related to IHR's values. My thesis is relevant to IHR insofar as it contributed to the debates surrounding democratisation and inclusion in politics. The production of such research and analysis to fuel public debate is a core interest to IHR. The NGO is well-connected within North Macedonia and has great expertise in the field of (ethnic) inclusion. Their network of experts in the country allowed me to find and connect with suitable interviewees.

4.3.3 Interviews

The choice to do qualitative interviews semi-structured is partially explained before: it allows an insight into the functioning of the political system of North Macedonia in regards to its ethnic politics. The choice of respondents was made following the line of Ritchie et al (2013, p. 113): "because they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and questions which the researcher wishes to study." Thus, respondents are specifically chosen for their experience or knowledge on the topic and not as representatives of the average Macedonian. The semi-structured form is chosen to give respondents the space to talk outside of pre-prepared questions and for me as interviewer to have the space to ask in-depth questions. The interview guide can be found in the appendix.

Respondents were selected through recommendations and connections with the internship organisation IHR, through my personal network in North Macedonia and then by using the 'snowball method' also known as 'chain sampling'. This method works by asking each respondent for other people that would be relevant to interview, thus ever increasing the number of respondents. The advantage of this method is that it allows for connecting with many different people in a situation where one does not have a strong, relevant network, and the method allows accessing more and more 'hidden' connections. A drawback of this method is its lack of scientific rigour; it is easy to keep getting respondents in the same circle and thus get a biased view. This can partly be mitigated by keeping an eye on the background of the respondents and how they interact with Macedonia's power-sharing system: i.e. not only speaking to ethnic Albanian politicians but switching up ethnicity and profession.

Some of the interviews might carry a degree of political sensitivity in a country where politics remain so divisive. Important here is to interview stakeholders on all sides: different ethnicities, working at different levels of the system and with different professional backgrounds. Before the interviews I explained I would record the interviews, asked

permission to use the respondent as a source and gave the option for the respondent to remain anonymous.

| Respondent | Position | Ethnicity |
|-------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | Professor of Law Faculty and Head of Human Rights Centre at South-East European University | Ethnic-Albanian |
| 2 | Professor at Faculty of Law 'Iustinius Primus'; Member of the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance | Ethnic-Macedonian |
| 3 | Deputy-president of the Ministry of Local Self-government for the 'Democratic Union' party, previously print journalist | Ethnic-Macedonian |
| 4 | Professor at University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Political Science Department | Ethnic-Macedonian |
| 5 | Journalist at 'Televizija 24' | Ethnic-Macedonian / Cosmopolitan |
| 6 | Professor at University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, previously member of the Macedonian parliament | Balkan-Egyptian |

Table 2: table of respondents with their relevant professional background and their ethnic background

As can be seen in table 2 the final interviewees are spread across different ethnic backgrounds, different professional backgrounds (politicians, professors, journalists) and different ways of interacting with the Macedonian consociationalist system. Therefore, I expect a decent spread of different viewpoints on the workings of the case.

4.4 Analysing the data

There is no consensus on how to analyse your data with the case study method. According to Tellis (1997) analysis is the aspect of the case study that is the least developed. Meaning that there is not one clear way to proceed. The researcher needs to use their experience and the literature to present and interpret the data in various ways. He goes on to again use Yin (2009) who identifies three main analytical strategies: pattern-matching, explanation building and time-series analysis.

For this thesis I choose explanation-building as my way of analysis: I create an explanation of the case of Macedonian consociationalism. To quote Tellis (1997): “[e]xplanation-building is an iterative process that begins with a theoretical statement, refines it, revises the proposition, and repeating this process from the beginning.” I did this by creating a number of hypotheses based on the academic background, key concepts and main take-aways from the interview notes and discussion. Then I went back to the interviews to confirm or disconfirm the different stances of the various respondents, how broadly a hypothesis was shared or if it was controversial, and to add nuance where necessary. I contrasted these findings with available statistical data. The resulting findings I grouped in three different themes: impact on the institutional level, reality of the ethnicization of politics, and impact of the ethnicised politics on ethnic relations in daily life.

4.4.1 Triangulation

Triangulation is the combining of several research methods to overcome biases and ensure accuracy and validity. As Tellis (1997) points out there are multiple ways of triangulation such as investigator triangulation or methodological triangulation but in this thesis I used ‘data source triangulation’ on a couple of different levels.

Regarding documents, as described in chapter 4.3.1, I made sure to include sources from multiple different ethnic, national or foreign perspectives. This is less important for scientific articles, but more so for the non-scientific literature I have included to illustrate certain points. In this way I want to make sure not to be biased in any one direction regarding, for instance, the inter-ethnic relations or the left-right political divide in North Macedonia.

For finding respondents I sought out people from different ethnic backgrounds and different professional backgrounds. In this way I wanted to get a broad view from different perspectives.

The interviews themselves I discussed with colleagues at my internship at IHR to see if I missed or misread anything, especially important considering the cultural differences between the Netherlands and North Macedonia. This way I sought to overcome my (potential) cultural biases.

The data gathered from the in-depth interviews I contrasted to archival data, existing documents and data from other research projects. By providing multiple sources of evidence I attempted to increase the validity and thereby strengthen the findings and finally my argument.

4.5 Developing conclusions

Tellis (1997) is rather short on the developing of conclusions, recommendations and implications besides mentioning that the reporting is the most important part for the reader. He does add that the researcher should help the reader understand the implications of the findings by using clear explanations.

4.6 Concluding research design & methodology

The research is objective to gain an understanding of power-sharing in the North Macedonian context. As the boundaries of the phenomenon, Macedonian consociationalism, and its context are not clearly visible or easy to delineate the case study method is fitting. Further, the case study methodology fits this objective because it gives an in-depth, detailed perspective of Macedonian consociationalism: it leads to a deep understanding of the case allowing it to be contrasted to other methods of conflict resolution for policy, or other cases of consociationalism to further understand that form of government.

The research design consists of desk research, semi-structured expert interviews and additional statistical data. Analysis is done according to explanation building; first creating preliminary hypotheses and then going back to the data confirming, disconfirming or adding nuance to these hypotheses. I contrasted these hypotheses with already existing statistical which leads to the results of the research helping me to construct the case of Macedonian power-sharing or Macedonian consociationalism.

Chapter 5 Results

In this chapter I describe the results of the interviews I took to answer the research question: how has the OFA impacted ethnicised policy making? In chapter 3 I described the context of Macedonian history, ethnicity and politics. Briefly summarised: North Macedonia is a country divided along ethnic lines. In 2001 an ethnic-based insurgency took place between ethnic-Albanians and ethnic-Macedonians. To end the conflict the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) was signed which laid the foundation for a consociationalist government that primarily recognises ethnic-Albanians and ethnic-Macedonians. Currently North Macedonia has worked with this system for 20 years.

What can the Macedonian case tell us about the interplay between ethnicity and consociationalism? How has consociationalism functioned in Macedonia? How has consociationalism strengthened ethnic differences in the country? The research for the thesis consisted of desk research and by taking qualitative interviews with experts living in the country that have researched Macedonia's political system, worked in it and interacted with politics and politicians or both.

In this chapter I describe the results of this research and build my argument. In the next chapter, conclusions, I will answer my research question and further lay out my argument compared to the existing literature.

5.1 Findings: how do ethnic identity and politics interact in North Macedonia?

Below are listed the most important findings relating to the research question:

- The OFA institutionalised ethnic identity in North Macedonia and traditionally political parties are based around ethnicity. Politicians often play the ethnic card and there is a lot of rhetoric around ethnicity. Ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian political elites however cooperate successfully within the consociationalist system.
- The OFA theoretically gives rights to all minorities, but in practice it creates a system where political power is shared between the challenging group (ethnic Albanians) and the majority group (ethnic Macedonians) often ignoring the interests of smaller groups.
- Since the fall of the Gruevski regime in the 2016 'colourful revolution' constant references to ethnicity above all in political and media discourse have somewhat subsided and the situation around ethnic mobilization and instrumentalism has improved, as has press freedom. There is hope in the rise of mixed-ethnicity parties, for

instance ruling party SDSM catching the ethnic Albanian vote and employing ethnic Albanians as well as ethnic Macedonians.

- Ethnic identities largely group themselves along religious lines both on normative and political level; i.e. ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Serbs (Orthodox Christian) share political parties and mix in daily life, similarly, ethnic Albanians and, for instance, ethnic Turks (Sunni Muslim) tend to be grouped together politically.

These general findings I work out below in three ‘theme’s’: impact on the institutional level, reality of the ethnicization of politics and the impact of ethnicized politics on ethnic relations in daily life.

5.2 Impact on the institutional level

The OFA laid the foundation for North Macedonia’s governmental institutions based on consociationalist principles. In line with this thinking we have a mandated coalition government between ethnic Albanian and ethnic Macedonian parties, a lot of local autonomy on municipal level based on the percentage of inhabitants that is a particular ethnicity, a roundabout veto construction for sensitive laws, and ethnic quotas in all state institutions. As such it is quite clear that the OFA institutionalised ethnic identity. That is to say, your ethnic identity matters on an institutional level in politics and other state institutions.

It is thus no surprise that all relevant political parties follow ethnic lines (IW 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). This poses an issue for smaller ethnicities like Roma or Vlachs: they are simply not big enough to have a political impact on their own (IW 2, 3, 6) nor are they automatically sought after for coalitions or cabinet functions who remain mostly in the hands of the two biggest ethnic groups. “Everything is divided like this, it is like a separate community. They don’t communicate. Politicians like this to be divided so they can manipulate it better.” (IW 2. Mihajlova)

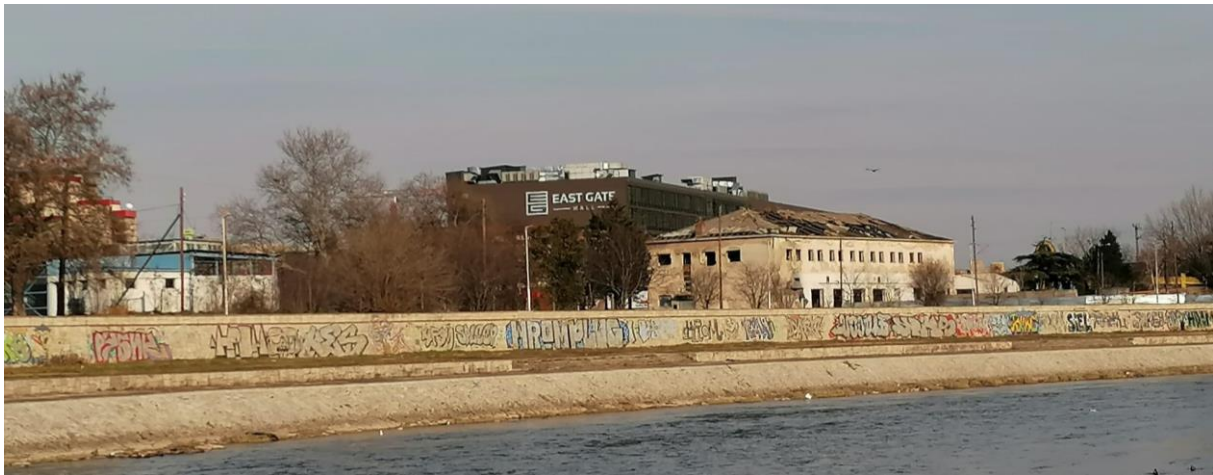


Illustration 7: inequality in city planning; the newly established Western-style 'East Gate Mall' (black building in the back) displaces a largely Roma-populated neighbourhood. Dilapidated buildings in the foreground remind of the original neighbourhood.

Smaller ethnic groups have gotten more rights with the OFA (IW 2, 3, 6), however the preamble of the constitution names some ethnicities and not others. Those ethnicities that are not included, Balkan-Egyptians or Montenegrins for instance, feel left out or even unprotected by the system. (IW 3, 6) Most interviewees found that the OFA has given more rights to minorities, but equally seems to shut other minorities out of the system. That being said, most respondents agree that the OFA is a good agreement but that the issue tends to lie with its implementation (IW 1, 2, 3).

| 2011-2014 | assembly | 2014-2016 | assembly | 2002 Census |
|---|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Ethnicity | Percentage | Ethnicity | Percentage | |
| Macedonian | 68,4% | Macedonian | 74,0% | 64,2% |
| Albanian | 20,3% | Albanian | 22,0% | 25,2% |
| Turk | 1,6% | Turk | 1,6% | 3,9% |
| Roma | 1,6% | Roma | 0,8% | 2,7% |
| Serb | 3,3% | Serb | 1,6% | 0,5% |
| Bosnian | 1,6% | Bosnian | 0,8% | 1,8% |
| Vlach | 0,8% | Vlach | 0,0% | 0,8% |
| Other | 2,4% | Other | 0,0% | 1,0% |
| Total | 100% | | 100,80% | 100,00% |
| Source: official statistics Sobranja and 2002 population census | | | | |

Table 3: 2011 and 2014 election results in the national assembly (Sobranie) by ethnicity compared to the 2002 census data. Note that the total percentage in 2014-2016 exceeds 100% by exactly 1 seat, this is either a statistical error or perhaps a member belonging to multiple ethnicities. (Sobranie, n.d.)

A quick overview of national assembly members by ethnicity in the elections of 2011 and 2014, see table 3, shows that ethnic-Macedonians are still overrepresented and that most other groups are underrepresented with some exceptions. However, almost all groups are at least represented in the assembly. The above elections are the only ones for which ethnic data is publicly available on the assembly's website. Note that 0.8% means 1 seat in the assembly which can skew the data: so in both election years 2 ethnic-Turks held a seat while their reported population should net them roughly 5 seats. Ethnic-Serbs held 4 seats and 2 seats in 2011 and 2014 respectively, an overrepresentation. This might be an indication of ethnic-Serbs being better 'integrated' in society, speaking the majority language and following the majority religion, or simply an anomaly. The size of smaller ethnicities and their political representation (ranging from 4 to 0 seats) compared to the representation of the two main ethnic groups means that they could be shut out of coalitions if necessary. All in all the national assembly figures concur with the interviews in that they do not show heavy discrimination in national politics, nor do they show overwhelming inclusion.

Noteworthy is also the role of international organisations on ethnic identity politics in North Macedonia. Membership of EU and NATO are perceived as broadly supported goals across different ethnic communities. Not only that, but recently attained NATO membership for North Macedonia has somewhat alleviated fears of dismemberment of the country: all neighbours except for Serbia and Kosovo are members of NATO and no NATO country has of yet been territorially divided. Potential EU-membership, North Macedonia and Albania are on the same track towards it, is a potential way to unify ethnic-Albanians without changing borders (IW 4). As I have stated in the introduction, the implementation of the OFA remains important for EU accession. This promise of stability, removing of the anxieties of ethnic Macedonians and a shared goal across ethnic communities could help overcome the more toxic elements of identity politics in the country.

A potential negative in this regard is the role of Kosovo. Kinship and familial ties of ethnic Albanians in North Macedonia and Kosovo are very tight and the unresolved situation remains a source of tension (IW 4). The 2001 conflict in North Macedonia broke out on the heels of the Kosovar war and subsequent refugee crisis. The fear remains that renewed unrest or conflict would spread to North Macedonia again, which could be disastrous for the inter-ethnic relations in the country.

5.3 Reality of the ethnicization of politics

What are the consequences of this ethnicization of politics on a practical level: how does this system function for the people working with it?

First off, the OFA is generally viewed as a defeat by ethnic Macedonians and as a win for ethnic Albanians (IW 1, 2). It is seen as an incursion into 'their' (the Macedonian) state, a state that is already under threat from the neighbouring countries. Important here is the history of the 'Macedonian question' (see chapter 3) and the identity conflicts with Greece and Bulgaria which put significant stress on the ethnic Macedonians. The Macedonian state is seen as the only protection against these threats, coming from states that historically divided ethnic Macedonian territory and violently oppressed Macedonian identity. Because of this history there were and are ethnic Macedonian fears for dismemberment of the country and the OFA in this sense can be seen as a first step towards federalism and eventual secession. Adding to this feeling of defeat are ethnic quotas associated with the OFA that come at the expense of ethnic Macedonians, who dominated the public services (IW 1, 2). Lastly, for ethnic Macedonians the OFA rewards ethnic violence because it gives in to ethnic Albanian demands following the insurgency in 2001 and there is the perception of a foreign-imposed treaty. Thus the feeling of an injustice, a reward for war, a fear of foreign incursion and a feeling of the loosing of 'their' state all come together in a general perception of losing something for ethnic-Macedonians. In politics this narrative is laid out by right-wing ethnic Macedonian parties such as VMRO and ironically left-wing *Levica* (more on this later). It leads to an environment where dealmaking between politicians, so central in the idea of consociationalism, is perceived amongst the ethnic Macedonian public as giving in to ethnic Albanian demands.

Generally politicians frame most political issues as ethnic issues. On the ethnic Albanian side, especially the long-ruling party DUI, the focus is solely on ethnic issues: more rights for ethnic-Albanians, more important positions for ethnic Albanians. In the previous election an important campaign promise made by DUI was an ethnic Albanian vice-president, a largely symbolic function (IW 1, 3). Mobilization for ethnic issues is generally understood as deflecting attention away from governance issues (IW 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6).

A good example of this instrumentalist mobilization-behaviour by politicians came from the previous VMRO and DUI coalition, as described by interviewee 3. In May 2016 large-scale multi-cultural protests broke out against the government. Later that same month a controversial raid in Kumanovo against supposed NLA members left a number of policemen dead. The name NLA immediately brings to mind memories of the 2001 ethnic conflict. Later, through wiretapping leaks, it became clear that ministers within the government had talked about managing an inter-ethnic incident in order to break up the multi-cultural protests. However in this case this provocation did not work and after extensive protests the government was finally forced to resign (IW 3). There are multiple ways of looking at this incident from the consociationalist perspective. The fact that this instrumentalist managing inter-ethnic relations for political reasons did not work in this case is promising: the system did not fall

apart and after elections a new coalition came to power. Unfortunately the new coalition still included the ethnic Albanian party DUI from the previous coalition because there was no alternative to work with within the ethnic Albanian political parties, more on this in the next paragraph. In this sense the consociationalist tenet of political coalitions across ethnic communities resisted much needed change.



Illustration 8: Macedonian nationalist graffiti in Skopje and Bitola. Left an attempt at re-creating the Macedonian flag in Skopje and right the text 'Makedonija na Makedoncite' translated 'Macedonia for the Macedonians' in the city of Bitola.

There have been changes in political behaviour since the resignation of the previous VMRO-DUI coalition led by Gruevski. Now ethnic Macedonian SDSM became the biggest party. SDSM is the first major party that has a somewhat multi-cultural character, with ethnic Albanians in its ranks in important positions. It was also able to attract a significant ethnic Albanian vote for the first time. However, SDSM was forced to enter a coalition with DUI again, which was seen by ethnic Albanians as a betrayal following the 2016 protests to let VMRO and DUI step down (IW 1, 2). In the following election SDSM lost most of the ethnic Albanian vote. Still there are important changes to note: the multi-cultural character of the party seems to point to a new type of politics, one where ethnicity is not front and centre (IW 1, 2, 3, 4). Related is the toning down of ethnicity-related hate-speech in the media since the fall of the VMRO regime and the media is also not under constant (populist) attack from politics (IW 1, 3, 6, 5). These changes are not insignificant, but how lasting they will be remain to be seen as the SDSM-DUI coalition still suffers from governance issues and deep-rooted corruption, and has since lost popularity.

A counter to these changes is the story of the political party 'Levica' (the Left) as told by interviewee 1. Initially the party had a left-wing economic and multi-ethnic platform but had no electoral success. After an internal coup the party was taken over and started spouting

extremely Macedonian-nationalist rhetoric, anti-Albanian sentiments, and was openly against the OFA and other international treaties. This new turn got them electoral success and they managed two seats in the new elections. The '*Levica*' story shows the power these narratives, including the above named grievances towards the OFA, against the consociationalist system can hold with part of the ethnic Macedonian electorate.

Political cooperation on the national level between ethnic Macedonian parties and ethnic Albanian parties is really strong despite the ethno-nationalist rhetoric, but is mostly absent between groups in daily life (at least partly because of geographical and linguistic factors) (IW 1, 2, 4, 5, 6). A quote from interviewee 1 describes the situation well: "[I]t was even hypocritical to see how they used this hatred and how they used this nationalist narrative during the elections, and then during the aftermath of the elections they worked together to form the government. And they were very happy in that government, making a lot of deals and a lot of crimes as we have seen." (IW 1. Arifi) The OFA facilitates this cooperation with the need to form an inter-ethnic coalition and the ethnic quotas, the last of which serve to dole out positions as political favours. Also the level of autonomy for municipalities with minority populations lends itself to the creation of ethnic 'fiefdoms' where local politicians can do business and build patronage networks (IW 1). It is these networks and other clientelist behaviour which are making it hard to uproot long-standing political parties: they are simply deeply entrenched in the power structures (IW 1, 3, 4, 5). "It is difficult to change them, because they approach each and every family within the Macedonian-Albanian community. It is very difficult to get a job if you are not from DUI." (IW 4. Dimitrovski) Often do patronage networks follow ethnic lines, this can be explained by shared in-group culture, language, geography or the fact that political parties follow ethnic lines (IW 1, 3, 4). Political cooperation between parties of different ethnicities is thus successful insofar as they let each other build and maintain their own networks and territories from which all sides can profit.

Relevant to address here is the European Commission's report on the fight of corruption in North Macedonia. (EC, 2021) In the rapport it is noted that some progress is made regarding the prosecution of high-level corruption cases. However, the high-level corruption cases almost exclusively pertain to cases of the previous Gruevski administration. Thus it seems a new turnover of power might be necessary to reveal current high-level corruption and adequately prosecute it.

This consociational cooperation however is not successful in terms of governance. Many governance issues are related to the lack of a merit system in Macedonian politics: everything is based on patronage networks and clientelism. Appointing clients to important positions all the way down to the lowest level where lucrative jobs in local government are given for political favours, especially important in a country where unemployment soars (see table 3). This

follows party lines, and because parties are ethnic-based, also ethnic lines. To keep your government job you are supposed to get a number of votes for the party, and here on the lowest level there are a variety of common un-democratic practices to get those votes such as intimidation, ballot box-stuffing and the so-called 'Bulgarian train'. This is visible in the European Commission report on North Macedonia in 2021, where notes of criticism were voiced regarding the lack of transparency in the funding of political parties and the lack of progress in addressing OSCE/ODIHR guidelines regarding elections. (EC, 2021)

| North Macedonia - Key economic figures | 2012-17 average | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|--|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| GDP per capita (% of EU-27 in PPS)¹⁾ | 36 | 37 | 38 | 38 |
| Real GDP growth | 2.3 | 2.7 | 3.2 | -4.5 |
| Economic activity rate of the population aged 15-64 (%), total¹⁾ | 64.8 | 65.4 | 66.3 | 65.5 |
| <i>female</i> | 51.8 | 52.2 | 54.8 | 54.0 |
| <i>male</i> | 77.5 | 78.3 | 77.3 | 76.7 |
| Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%), total¹⁾ | 26.9 | 21.0 | 17.4 | 16.6 |
| <i>female</i> | 26.4 | 20.1 | 18.6 | 16.1 |
| <i>male</i> | 27.2 | 21.5 | 16.6 | 16.9 |
| Employment of the population aged 15-64 (annual growth %) | 2.3 | 2.5 | 5.1 | -0.3 |
| Nominal wages (annual growth %) | 1.6 | 5.8 | 5.1 | 8.3 |
| Consumer price index (annual growth %) | 1.1 | 1.5 | 0.8 | 1.2 |
| Exchange rate against EUR | 61.59 | 61.51 | 61.51 | 61.67 |
| Current account balance (% of GDP) | -1.9 | -0.1 | -3.3 | -3.5 |
| Net foreign direct investment, FDI (% of GDP) | 2.4 | 5.6 | 3.2 | 1.9 |
| General government balance (% of GDP) | -3.5 | -1.1 | -2.2 | -8.2 |
| General government debt (% of GDP) | 37.2 | 40.6 | 40.7 | 51.2 |

Table 4: Economic indicators for North Macedonia in the period of 2012 to 2020. Note the high but decreasing unemployment rate. However it seems that the COVID-19 pandemic could have harsh consequences for Macedonia's relatively weak economy. (European Commission, 2021)

Another concrete example of these practices on the highest level is the so-called minister 'bez resor' or 'without portfolio'. Historically there were about 3 or 4 such ministers in the government, but the Gruevski regime upped it to 7 ministers without portfolio for a total of 26 ministers in a country with a population of 2 million. SDSM initially retained the 7 but managed to later scale it down to just 1. These ministers relate to consociationalism because they are important for 'making up the ethnic balance' and are used in negotiations to reward parties willing to join the coalition. (Blazevska, 2021) In general this system of party-based appointments has caused a bloated, ineffective and incompetent public administration because people are not appointed a job because of their merit but because of their connections or ability to help their political connections. Consociationalism figures into it because these jobs are the

reward for party loyalty, with political parties often becoming central in consociationalist systems, and because higher level jobs can be used in political negotiations.

5.4 Impact of ethnicized politics on ethnic relations in daily life

The OFA and the effects of it on smaller groups have partially been described above. Most interviewees agreed that official recognition through the OFA has been important for minorities in their sense of identity and to make them feel part of the country and political system. (IW 1, 2, 3, 6)

The European Policy Institute (EPI), an NGO based in Skopje, have conducted a research on ethnic representation in Macedonian institutions in their report 'Equitable Ethnic Representation and Integration at the Workplace'. (EPI, 2016) I will use their research to flesh out how people dealing with ethnic quotas in their workplace feel about the ethnic relations at their job.

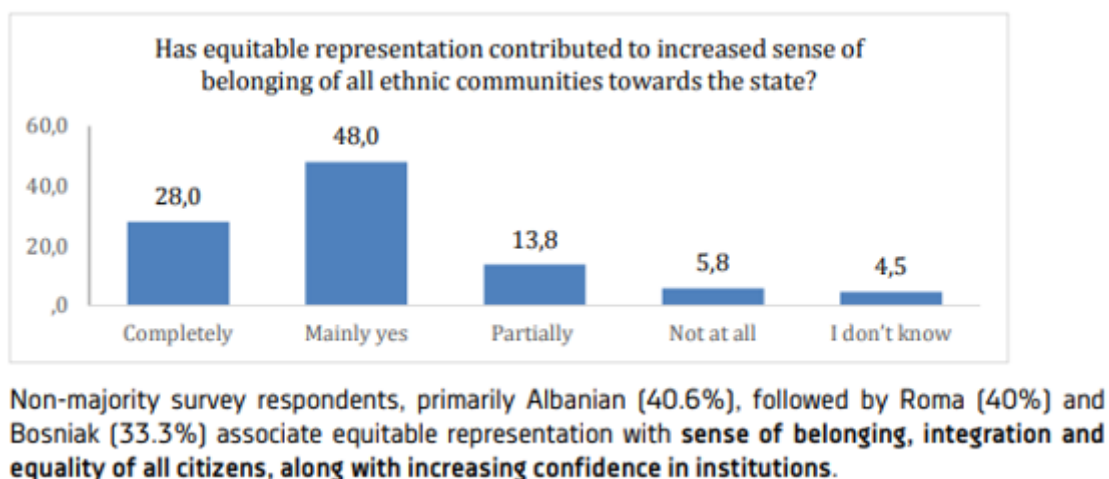


Figure 4: how administrative servants feel that representation in institutions has increased sense of belong towards the Macedonian state. (EPI, 2016)

The research for EPI's report consisted of 15 in-depth interviews and a survey of administrative servants with 400 respondents. See figure 4, they find that representation has greatly increased the sense of belong for ethnic minorities towards the state, confirming the findings from the interviews at least within administrative servants.

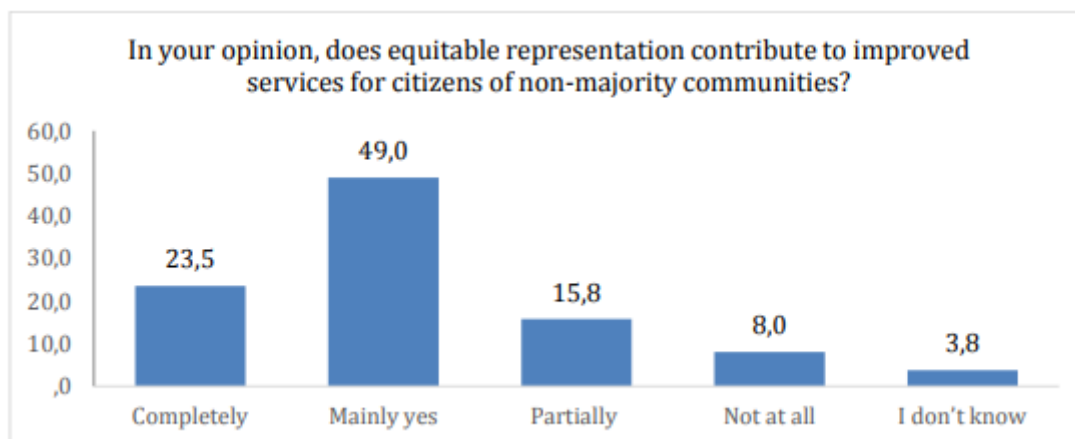


Figure 5: how administrative servants feel representation has or has not improved services for minority communities. (EPI, 2016)

Similarly, see figure 5, respondents of minority communities generally feel that services have improved with the improvement of ethnic representation. One of the reasons given for this is simply language: not all minorities speak Macedonian and representation of administrative servants that speak minority languages improves the service they can provide. However, ethnic Macedonians are least likely out of all respondents to agree that services have improved. (EPI, 2016)

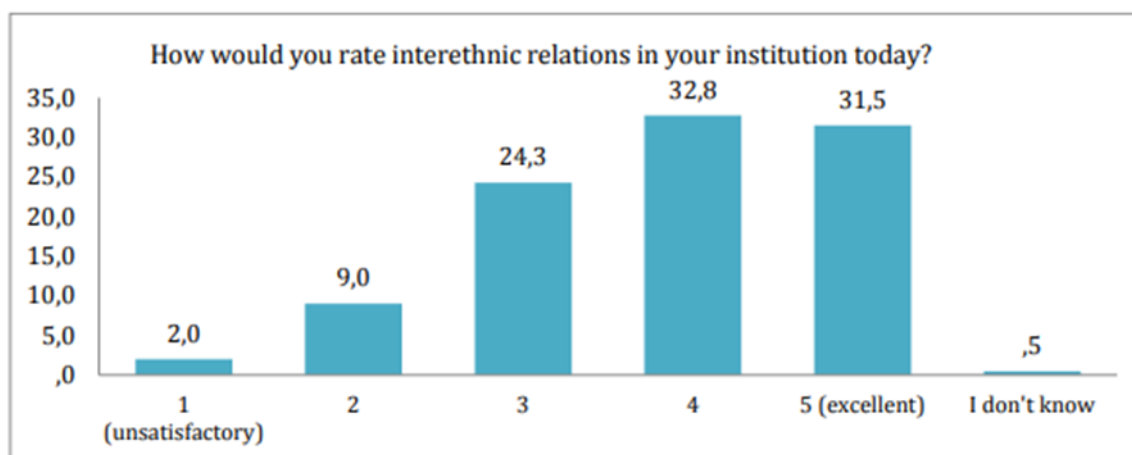


Figure 6: the ratings of administrative servants regarding inter-ethnic relations in their institution. (EPI, 2016)

EPI finds that respondents in general rate inter-ethnic relations in their own institutions highly, see figure 6. From these figures we can conclude that administrative servants see equitable representation, as demanded by the OFA, as largely successful both in terms of offering services, inter-ethnic cooperation and creating of a feeling of belonging to the state. Lastly, through their qualitative methods they find that not equitable representation but

recruitment and promotion based on party affiliation has a negative impact on quality of public service in the opinion on the respondents. Of course, administrative servants are not necessarily indicative of sentiments across the board but EPI's research shows the views of some of the people interacting with the system in their day-to-day lives.



Illustration 9: alleyway in 'çaršija' the multi-ethnic neighbourhood in the centre of Skopje. Flags of the countries of the main ethnic inhabitants of the neighbourhood are on display, namely; North Macedonia, Kosovo, Albania and Turkey.

Different ethnic identities largely group together along religious lines both on normative and political level; for example ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Serbs (Orthodox Christian) share political parties and mix in daily life, similarly, ethnic Albanians and, for instance, ethnic Turks (Sunni Muslim) tend to be grouped together politically (IW 6). This is not only a question of language and geography: ethnic Turks and ethnic Albanians do not always live in the same parts of the country and their languages are not mutually intelligible. As mentioned above, politically for smaller groups to matter enough they need to align with a bigger group. A reason could be that shared religion has the perception of having shared political and social interests. Interviewee 6 gives the example that during the 2001 ethnic Albanian insurgency, revenge was

taken in different parts of the country on Muslim groups like ethnic Turks (who were not party to the conflict). In that case the ethnicity and religion seems to be conflated by the perpetrators.

In chapter 3 I described the situation that ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians speak unrelated languages. The OFA has created the situation that minorities can teach in their own language if they constitute more than 20% of the population in a municipality. Together with the redrawing of municipal boundaries more along ethnic lines, this has created a situation where common knowledge of the Macedonian language has gone down (IW 1, 5, 6). Whereas in the past a non-Macedonian speaker would have had to follow (especially higher) education in Macedonian, nowadays elementary and high school are often taught in local languages (Albanian and Turkish for example). Now there is Albanian-language higher education, making it completely possible to attain an education without learning Macedonian (IW 1).³ Thus this common language has disappeared and communication between certain ethnic groups has become more difficult. This adds another difficulty to establish inter-ethnic relations and interviewees pointed at this lack of inter-ethnic relations as making people more vulnerable for ethnic instrumentalism and fear-mongering.

Interviewee 2 sees the 2001 ethnic conflict through the lens of unresolved trauma. Specifically (but not exclusively) from the ethnic Macedonian point of view there was never any justice for the victims of the war. While certain ethnic-Macedonian perpetrators in the war were tried in The Hague, no ethnic Albanian perpetrators were ever tried. Guilt on the ethnic Albanian NLA side was never individualised or acknowledged. In fact the leader of the NLA remains a powerful politician as leader of the ethnic-Albanian political party DUI. For interviewee 2 this never resolved trauma both adds to distrust towards the ethnic Albanian community and a sense of victim-hood for ethnic Macedonians. Both these sentiments are easily and commonly exploited by politicians.

5.5 Concluding

Throughout this chapter I argued that within the consociationalist system that came out of the OFA ethnic identity is institutionalised bi-ethnically. Political parties group themselves by ethnicity, however SDSM has in recent elections fudged this traditional distribution. Smaller ethnicities do not have a clear voice in the system, and tend to group with the two main ethnicities based on religion. Recognition however was found to be important for a feeling of

³ A possible positive here is the role of English language as a second language. Interviewee 1 notes that South Eastern European University was founded as a trilingual school (Macedonian, Albanian, English) and one of the few places in the country where people of all ethnicities can meet and follow classes together in English language. With English proficiency on the rise with younger generations the language might be a potential means of communication.

protection in the country and to feel part of the country by both the respondents of the interviews and those of a quantitative study done by EPI.

Ethnic provisions, as found by that same study, are not viewed negatively and inter-ethnic cooperation in the workplace is generally viewed positively two decades after the conflict. Issues arise with appointments based on party-affiliation, which are perceived negatively. There however is the electoral win of *Levica*, a party that campaigned against the OFA. This points towards a potential frustration with the consociationalist agreement.

Another grievance from the ethnic Macedonian side is that of the unresolved trauma from the 2001 ethnic insurgency. The signing of the OFA is seen as rewarding violence, as are the appointments of many former NLA members in positions of power. This is also viewed through the lens of security, with North Macedonia and the Macedonian identity under constant stress from the neighbouring countries. This insecurity has in the past often been instrumentalised by ethnic Macedonian political elites to mobilize the electorate. However, in the right-wing coalition of VMRO and DUI the consociationalist dealmaking continued despite the ethnic mobilization on both sides.

The inter-ethnic interaction within the consociationalist system has many challenges; such as instrumentalist behaviour and un-meritocratic use of ethnic provisions which causes governance issues. Political dealmaking between political parties is still often viewed, mostly by ethnic Macedonians, as a loss making it hard to govern without losing popularity. However elite cooperation across ethnic groups largely functions well.

Common knowledge of the Macedonian language has gone down posing issues of communication between the different ethnic groups. Ethnic groups also group together according to religious lines in both day-to-day life as well as politically. These divides between groups, which rarely meet in day-to-day life, remain and remain a basis for misunderstandings between groups, ignorance of each other's problems and considerations, and will remain a basis for future ethnic mobilization by politicians.

Despite all this the different ethnic groups were able to come together in 2016 to overthrow the increasingly authoritarian VMRO-DUI coalition government, and that in the face of clear top-down meddling to cause inter-ethnic tensions. Combined with other crises the Macedonian consociationalist system went through, as described in chapter 3, the fact that the system is still around and even made certain improvements is a point of hope.

Chapter 6 Concluding

In this chapter I conclude the research. I look back to the start of the research; what was the starting point and which questions did I want answered? How do the results of the research compare to the existing academic theory? Further I go back to the societal relevance of the thesis and I discuss the implications of the findings. Then I make recommendations for further research. Finally I reflect on the process of researching and writing the thesis.

6.1 Reflection

The starting point of this research was an interest in the idea of consociationalism as basis for a government system after a conflict situation in a divided society. In Europe in the 1990's consociational agreements were signed in Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia. Here the case of North Macedonia stands out because of its lack of international overseer, the barriers between the different groups and its relative low-intensity conflict. The international community made attempts to create an agreement that built on the lessons from the Dayton Accords in Bosnia. In North Macedonia, on the one hand, there are more difficulties with communication between the ethnic groups. On the other hand there is less trauma, there are fewer parties to the agreement and there was a real-life example to improve on. What can the Macedonian case tell us about consociationalism?

My argument is that Macedonia's political system is in a state of 'functional dysfunction' and has essentially created a bi-ethnic consociational state. The system shows some of the typical attributes or challenges associated with consociationalism, as I will show in this chapter by contrasting to the literature, but has been successful in keeping the country together with minimal violence. Minorities, especially ethnic Albanians, have a voice in the government, feel more like a part of the country and in places where inter-ethnic cooperation is mandated this cooperation is judged positively. Further, the political system has survived multiple political crises since its inception in 2001. Therefore, despite noticeable ethnic institutionalisation and governance & corruption issues, consociationalism has provided for a stable North Macedonia.

6.2 Answering the research questions

1. *Which ethnic identities are relevant in politics in North Macedonia and how do these ethnic identities manifest themselves in policy making before the Ohrid Framework Agreement?*

In North Macedonia two ethnic identities are politically relevant and these are the ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians. They are divided by language, by religion, and intra-group shared myths and historical identity consciousness. We can thus speak of a society with strong social cleavages.

The experiences of these groups within Yugoslavia are different, with any sign of Albanian nationalism being suppressed whereas ethnic Macedonians carved out their own sub-national state within the federation. In schools, non-Macedonian ethnicities had to learn the Macedonian language. When North Macedonia became independent ethnic Albanians were part of the governing coalition as an unspoken rule. However, ethnic Albanians already had grievances vis-à-vis the state coming out of Yugoslavia and while they were nominally part of the government (with ethnic Albanian parties campaigning on improving the rights of their constituents) lack of ethnic Albanians in many state institutions and lack of schooling available in Albanian language remained a constant sore point. The changing of the wording in the constitution, amongst other ethnic Macedonian policies, seemed to ethnic Albanians as a way for the ethnic Macedonians to create a Macedonian ethno-state. For ethnic Macedonians this was a way to keep their state secure from threats from neighbouring countries and the idea of ethnic Albanian secession. Thus, before the OFA ethnic Macedonians try to protect 'their' state by increasingly 'Macedonianising' the country and ethnic Albanians try to gain more rights, which inspired fear of secession and state collapse for the ethnic Macedonians. In addition, ethnic Albanians had grievances going back to Yugoslavia where they experience repression and already had distrust towards state institutions in which they were not well represented.

2. How do ethnic identities manifest themselves in policy making after the Ohrid Framework Agreement?

The OFA was signed after the ethnic Albanian insurgency in 2001. The OFA facilitated a consociationalist system in which both ethnic Albanian and ethnic Macedonian parties are needed for forming a coalition. The rebel NLA was not party to the agreement, but after the signing of the OFA NLA-leader Ali Ahmeti created the political party DUI which has dominated the ethnic Albanian vote ever since. Ethnic groups in the Macedonian context are represented by 'ethno-parties'; many of which primarily concern themselves with ethnic issues. Recently the historically ethnic Macedonian party SDSM managed to win elections on a multi-ethnic platform, however the party has lost popularity and their multi-ethnic make-up has not been repeated in other major parties. Smaller ethnic groups largely follow the main ethnic parties that they are closest to in religion; for instance ethnic Serbs vote for ethnic Macedonian parties and ethnic Turks for ethnic Albanian parties. Smaller ethnic groups, especially those not

mentioned in the pre-amble of the constitution, do not gain as much from the OFA as the ethnic Albanians do. In line with the ideas of consociationalism, while inter-ethnic contact in day-to-day life is almost non-existent, elite cooperation between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians is quite successful.

3. *How has the Ohrid Framework Agreement-mandated consociationalist set-up for the North Macedonian government institutionalised ethnic differences?*

In short the OFA has laid the groundworks for a system where your ethnicity matters. As described above, political parties almost exclusively follow ethnic lines. Both ethnic Albanian and ethnic Macedonian parties are needed for coalitions and parties not affiliated with an ethnicity or parties representing smaller ethnic groups are left out of the consociational deal. The story of *Levica*, described in chapter 5, shows the difficulty of electoral success with a multi-ethnic or non-ethnic platform and the relative ease of success by utilising an instrumentalist agenda. Intra-party and intra-ethnic patronage networks also function to keep established parties in power and dole out much-needed jobs as reward for loyalty. Similarly, ethnic quotas forgo a merit-based system and again largely leave out smaller ethnic groups.

With the geographic divide that exists between many groups this means that locally certain ethnicities can be dominant: mostly ethnic Albanians but also ethnic Turks and sometimes others like the Roma. This autonomy consists of, among other things, the right to teach in their own language, use their language in state institutions, and to use their own nationalist symbols (flags). This means that common use of the Macedonian language has gone down and social intersection across ethnic groups becomes more difficult. Lack of interaction between the different ethnic groups in the country leaves them open for ethnic mobilisations by political parties. However, it should be noted that ethnic mobilisation has gone down in recent years since the fall of the Gruevski government. Simply put; since the OFA your ethnicity matters for which parties you vote for, what job you can get and on the day-to-day level who you interact with. While many of these divisions also existed pre-OFA the agreement has 'hardened' or institutionalised the divisions.

How has the OFA power-sharing agreement impacted ethnicised policy making?

The OFA has facilitated a system where the ethnic Albanian minority has a guaranteed seat on the policy-making table in a state that otherwise might be ruled by the ethnic Macedonian majority. It is these two groups that largely control the institutional channels and most state institutions and thus the spaces of power. De facto North Macedonia is ruled on the national

level as a bi-ethnic state. Ethnic Albanian parties further have a hidden power as their choosing of which party to form a coalition with is crucial for forming a majority in parliament that follows the consociational guidelines: they are the kingmakers.

On the local municipal level the OFA has allotted a lot of autonomy for ethnic groups that make up more than 20% of the (local) population and in many municipalities power is in the hands of the local ethnic majority.

On the international level the EU sees implementation of the OFA as a prerequisite and potential EU accession is a broadly shared goal across ethnic groups. NATO accession was a similarly broadly shared goal and it provides safety as no NATO country has been territorially divided. These supra-national groups thus have the potential to be a stabilising influence on North Macedonia.

During the twenty years the OFA has been implemented North Macedonia the system has seen ups and downs. Different governing coalitions have had a different effect on the inter-ethnic relations with the previous Gruevski coalition seeing a lot of instrumentalism and ethnic mobilisation, not to mention Gruevski's growing authoritarianism, culminating in the Colourful Revolution. The country also suffered considerable set-backs with EU-accession, with the vetoes putting a lot of pressure on ethnic Macedonians, and disappointing economic development. Despite these significant pressures on Macedonia's consociational system and the inter-ethnic equilibrium in the country, today the same system is still in place and (violent) inter-ethnic conflict has not taken place.

Policy making in the Macedonian consociationalist system is thus a largely bi-ethnic and elite affair, in which the ethnic Albanians have an arguably outsized influence relative to their number. As discussed above political parties follow ethnic lines and many parties have a largely ethnic agenda with non-ethnic parties not having a seat on the table. Mobilisation on ethnic issues is still common and partly facilitated by social cleavages, some of which have arguably deepened because of consociational tenets.

6.3 Findings compared to existing theory

6.3.1 Consociationalism

One of the findings of this thesis is that political or elite cooperation is strong between the different ethnicities, that is mostly ethnic Albanians and ethnic Macedonians. This is in line with the literature, consociationalism as first described by Lijphart is after all 'domination by elite cartel'. (Lijphart, 1969) Further the ethnic (and territorial) fiefdoms found amongst Macedonian political elites comes back in another Lijphart description: in 1975 describes the

‘sphere of influence’ as a tool to alleviate political conflict. How the Macedonian political system fits Lijphart’s conception of consociationalism is already described in more detail in chapter 3.

At the start of the chapter I argued that the characteristics of Macedonian consociationalism, especially its challenges, can be found in other consociationalist systems as well according to the academic debate. Below I compare some of these challenges to those found in the literature.

In Macedonian consociationalism I found strong political parties with broad appointment and bargaining powers, opaqueness in dealmaking and significant corruption in appointments to lucrative positions (example: ministers without portfolio). This concurs with the findings of Peters (2006) describing Belgian consociationalism. Peters argues that it is precisely these characteristics that make the system function. I would argue that for North Macedonia this is more nuanced. Corruption, which Peters argues helps the system move forward, certainly helped during the VMRO-DUI coalition years. Both sides mobilised voters based on ethnic considerations that often seemed opposed, but later in coalition dealmaking continued with both sides committing many instances of fraud and corruption. I would argue that the governance issues in North Macedonia, of which corruption and patronage-based appointments are a source, are so great that they are dramatically hindering the development of the state. This is a potential source of instability because it withholds economic (and political) opportunities from the population. In the long run these issues are, at least partly, a treat to the system.

Taylor (2006) argues that consociationalism can actually hamper democratic development. Macedonian consociationalism has not led to a stable democracy according to common democratic indices, perhaps the why can be found in Taylor’s argument. Taylor (2006) writes that consociationalism privileges certain presupposed groups over all others, this hampers freedom of association in his view, and that between these groups consociationalism in Northern Ireland gaining maximum communal advantage was the goal of politics instead of cross-communal goals. In concurrence with Taylor in Macedonian consociationalism I found this group-privileging which essentially created a bi-ethnic administration in a multi-ethnic state. Similarly, those parties trying to function outside the ethnic dimension have gained little success because they have no natural place in a system that privileges ethnic descent. In regards to democracy it can be argued that it takes a backseat to promoting ethnic cooperation. A trade-off to solve past conflict and prevent future inter-ethnic conflict.

Further I found links between ethnic identity, consociationalism and patronage networks. Similarly, Deets (2018) finds that consociationalism in Lebanon supports patronage networks based on the social in-group networks that are then strengthened by institutionalising those

non cross-cutting groups in government. Now elites in the group gain significant power because they can bargain on the national level and offer favours all the way down. This concurs with my findings about the Macedonian consociationalist system. Political parties in North Macedonia play a central role and follow ethnic lines. Parties are largely in control of appointments, from high level positions all the way down to local municipal administration. Thus they strengthen these existing in-group networks.

Another argument by Deets (2018) is a potential point of further research. Deets argues that (multi-ethnic) cities could be a breeding ground for cross-group politics and protests as city dwellers deal with much the same issues across groups. These cross-group protests could form the basis for a new type of politics that transcends ethnicity. In North Macedonia the origin of multi-ethnic protests could similarly be in cities, like the colourful revolution that started out of Skopje and later spread throughout the country.

6.3.2 Ethnic identity

In regards to ethnicity the findings from the interviews are in line with Tilley (1997) who argues for ethnic identity as shaped by historic experiences and the environment around that identity. In North Macedonia we already saw this with the 'Skopje 2014' project Vangelov (2019). The experience of national recognition by the OFA has given certain ethnic groups the chance to identify more with the country they live in; for example becoming more 'Macedonian-Albanian' rather than just Albanian.

Krasniqi (2011) and Koppa (2001) argue that religion is important for ethnic Albanian identity in North Macedonia. My findings indicate that religion is important not only for identification for ethnic Albanians but all ethnicities in the country in both day-to-day life and politics.

Finally, my findings indicate that the ethnic Macedonian issues with the OFA largely come from a sense of 'losing something', and ethnic Albanians winning something (unfairly). This is in line with the view of ethnicity as a zero-sum game, the 'collective fear of the future' as described by Rizova (2011). The idea that there is a limited amount of resources, of which there is a necessity to act or risk losing out resources for the own ethnic group.

6.3.3 Power

Arendt's (1970) conception of power as a group effort; being empowered by a number of people to act in their name. In my discussion of patronage networks, see chapter 2.3.2, I linked Arendt's conception of power to definitions of patronage or clientelism by Piacentini (2020) and Bereziuk (2018) who see patronage as a network resting on inter-personal loyalty based

on reciprocal exchanges of favours. Based on the interviews taken for this thesis I found that politics and political power are highly dependent on inter-personal relations within the political party frame. At the lowest level clients are responsible of getting votes for the party, in exchange they get a cushy job in the local administration. If, however, you are part of the wrong political party it is hard to get a job. These intra-party relations are crucial for the electoral success of that party. Political power in North Macedonia is, in accordance with Arendt's theories, thus a group effort where political elites are empowered based on a pyramid-like network that goes down into the municipalities where the 'lowest' clients bring in the votes necessary to win the election.

It is noteworthy that Piacentini (2019) also describes the case of *Levica* when the party was an electoral failure. Piacentini argued that reasons for the failure were the ethnic considerations of consociationalism, citizens belief in the powerlessness of non-ethnic or multi-ethnic parties and new parties lack of established patronage networks. I argue that *Levica*'s recent electoral success, in contrast to its earlier failure, is due to the party changing its narrative from a left-wing one to Macedonian nationalism. This strengthens Piacentini's argument because the party started co-opting exactly that which she argued was missing for electoral success.

6.4 Implications and recommendations

6.4.1 Implications for EU policy

Above I described the potentially stabilising influence of supranational organisations on North Macedonia. However, the EU's tolerating of Bulgaria and Greece's veto's on EU accession of North Macedonia on bilateral identity issues with ethnic Macedonians has a potentially destabilising influence. It risks ethnic Albanians pressuring the ethnic Macedonians to give in to Bulgarian demands on what the ethnic Macedonians see as compromising on their identity and history consciousness. This situation creates the potential of renewed tension between the two groups potentially upsetting the inter-ethnic equilibrium.

6.4.2 Implications for local policy

Based on Deets (2018) and the findings from the interviews a multi-ethnic political movement or political party could be found on shared experiences across ethnic groups. Deets argues for the shared experiences and issues of city life and from the interviews the shared experience of corruption and non-meritocratic appointments could be something binds people across ethnic backgrounds. It might form the basis for post-ethnic politics and a more content-driven political discourse.

Based on the findings of the interviews there is a lingering distrust surrounding the 2001 insurgency. Research into guilt on the ethnic Albanian side or some sort of programme around dealing with the trauma from relatives from casualties from both sides might help partially restore ethnic Macedonian feelings of injustice and help ease tensions from the inter-ethnic relationship.

6.4.3 Recommendations for further research

Further research could be done into the electoral victory for SDSM and if they will manage to keep up their multi-ethnic character. This to establish if their success was just an anomaly after the also multi-ethnic protests of the colourful revolution or if there really is an opportunity for post-ethnic politics.

Briefly have I discussed the international organisations, mostly in regards to the ethnic-Albanian minority. However the role of international organisations in (de)stabilising potential flashpoints in the Balkans might be relevant to the relative stability of the Macedonian consociationalist system.

The link between consociationalism and patronage networks could use more in-depth focus. Most Balkan states deal with significant corruption and not all governments in the region are consociational in nature. Perhaps the shared communist past or other shared characteristics of these different governments are more or as important in the upholding of these networks.

More research could be done on the impact of traumatising during the 2001 insurgency in North Macedonia and how the different ethnicities view this conflict in present day. This research might prove helpful in creating more understanding between groups.

6.5 Reflections on the research process

A number of things could have gone better and should go better with future research. When looking back on my proposal I did not have a clear methodology, though I did know *how* I wanted to do my research I did not choose a specific methodology to follow. Later I almost stumbled into the ‘case study’ method and because of this process I fell into a trap associated with case studies: lack of clear boundaries to the study which was not helped by a very broad research question.

There are always things out of your control; in my case my first internship abroad abandoned me at the last minute and I had to find something on the fly. This took a lot of my time and when I finally found a place the time-frame was such that I had to rush to start contacting

potential interviewees and create questions. In hindsight there were questions that I wanted to have asked, and questions that now seem less important.

With a new supervisor came the sharpening of the research questions. However, with data already gathered started a whole process of re-writing and re-tooling the existing chapters to fit better with the new research questions. This process took unnecessarily long and it created the possibility of sloppiness. Almost every problem I encountered in my research in its source came from a not clearly defined and mapped research design. This led to necessary changes and potential sloppiness in my research that I had to compensate for, and my enjoyment of and motivation for the research took a hit as a result.

Things I would improve in future research projects:

1. Choosing a methodology carefully from the start. While I do think the methodology of the case study is fitting for this research, a good overview of the pros and cons of case study methods and its associated traps will guide the research better. Now I was often lost at every new step I had to take and fell into some well-known traps.
2. Regarding your research design weigh your choices against the research project you are about to undertake. There are ways to deliberately choose a more fluid research design if you expect you will encounter a more fluid situation when doing your research. For instance I had a research design more in line with Yin (2009) than with Stake (1995). Yin is much more rigid whereas Stake allows for a more flexible design.
3. Research questions in my case should have been sharper to delineate the scope of my research better. Same goes for my conceptual framework which consisted of five concepts. Not setting clear boundaries for a case study meant that I could practically keep adding more and more information to the study indefinitely. Choices need to be made: where does the case start and end, what do I want to know and what data do I need to get to answer what I need to know? Delineating this at a later stage meant cutting data already gathered and a lot of 'clean up' of unnecessary information.

Concluding: when starting a new research I want to make sure that I have 1) chosen a fitting methodology by weighing all the options and charting the pitfalls 2) choose a research design that fits better for the project, is it going to be more fluid or will a strict method fit well with the situation? 3) clear research questions and delineating boundaries of a case study. In short; preparing well already in the proposal so all the steps become clear in advance, and if they cannot be clear in advance leave space for fluidity in the research design.

6.6 Reflections on the findings

When I started this thesis I had the goal to understand the consociationalist agreement that ended the inter-ethnic conflict in the multi-ethnic nation of North Macedonia. The OFA had built on a similar agreement in Bosnia to avoid the pitfalls of that consociational system. When used as a tool for conflict resolution consociationalism gives all the feuding factions a place in the new government, makes them share power and make policy in coalition with each other. On paper the idea makes sense and in conflict resolution it has delivered an end to some contentious conflicts like Bosnia, Northern Ireland and Lebanon. However in reality consociationalist systems often they seem to create a stagnant, frustrating gridlock and those who want to rise above petty factional politics have no place in the system.

While writing this thesis I found many nuances to consociationalism. How difficult it is to go from an agreement that was written to end a war and bring all parties to the table, to actually governing with that same agreement. Ending a conflict and building a basis for a government are two completely different goals. Even bringing a rebellious faction to the table is rather contentious, seemingly rewarding violence. Then there are ethnic quotas at the expense of the previous most powerful group, elite dealmaking, seemingly *giving in* to the violent enemy and casting the different groups into an institutional straightjacket. Taking all this into account consociation in North Macedonia is actually rather successful; the system has survived two decades and multiple crises without falling apart, and while inter-ethnic communication and cooperation is absent in daily life, in the workplace it is actually positively viewed. Challenges arise with the endemic corruption and party affiliation overriding the merit-system and creating governance issues. Ethnic mobilization is still common but went down in recent years, and rarely directly criticises the system: rather politicians gain from pointing the finger to the system for unpopular decisions and do not want to break it down. In my view, though the system is not popular, it is stable. With education now more accessible to minorities perhaps in the future there will be a point where jobs can be equally spread according to merit and not according to ethnic background. However until then North Macedonia will likely have to work with consociationalism to keep its inter-ethnic equilibrium. Like one of my interviewees said: *‘Maybe we will see the day that our political parties are purely political and not ethnic. Maybe a day like that will come.’*

Figures

Most of the illustrations in this thesis have been shot on camera by the writer. However the maps, illustrations and figures below come from the following sources.

Map 1:

CIA (1993). *The Former Yugoslavia* [Map] <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/5197161>

Map 2:

Wikipedia (2012). *Map of the municipalities of Macedonia with majority ethnic groups* [Map] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ethnic_map_of_Macedonia.png

Illustration 2:

Gamintraveler (n.d.). [Photograph of 'Ploshtad Makedonija'].

<https://www.gamintraveler.com/2021/02/26/skopje-airport-to-city-center/>

Illustration 5:

Wikipedia (2013). *Pogled kon Suli An I Starata skopska charshija*. [Photograph] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%D0%9F%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%B4_%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD_%D0%A1%D1%83%D0%BB%D0%B8_%D0%90%D0%BD_%D0%B8_%D0%A1%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0_%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BF%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0_%D1%87%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%88%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0.JPG

Figure 3:

Hofstede-insights (n.d.). *Country comparison Netherlands and North Macedonia*. [Graph] <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/the-netherlands,north-macedonia/>

Table 4:

European Commission (2021). *North Macedonia – Key economic figures*. [Table]

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Appendix

Interview Guide I

1. Introduction

Introduce research and explain the nature of the interview and confidentiality

- Introduction to research: influence ethnic-identity on political processes
- The interview is recorded, will take about 30 minutes
- Confidentiality storing and use of data; the thesis will be published online
- Interview can be stopped at any time

2. Background Respondent

Introduce the background of the respondent and their experience (with the topic)

- Which organization do you currently work for?
- In what way have you encountered inter-ethnic relations in politics?

3. Content

Aims to gain a better understanding of the role of ethnic-identity in political processes

3.1 Current situation inter-ethnic relations

- How do you see inter-ethnic relations in the political sphere in North Macedonia in present day?
- What is your view on government inclusion of minorities? Do you think in reality there is a discrepancy between what government research and reports show versus the real picture?
- Do you think ethnic tensions are sometimes manipulated by actors for political gain?
- Do you think that patronage networks play a role in parties coming and / staying into power?
- How do patronage networks play a role in politics in Macedonia?

- Do you think patronage networks are related to ethnicity? If so, in what way?

3.2 Legal / constitutional perspective

- How has the OFA changed the way ethnicities manifest themselves politically?
- Do you think that all ethnic minorities have profited from the provisions adequately?
- Do you think that the change of constitutional rights of minorities in North Macedonia over the decades impacts their identity in present day? And what about their politics?
- How have these changes impacted ethnic-Macedonian politics?

3.3 Inter-ethnic situation moving forward

- In your work, do you see ethnic relations between the different groups in North Macedonia changing and if so in what direction?
- How do you think these changes might impact (ethnic) politics in the country?
- Anything else you would like to add?

4. In conclusion

Concluding the interview

- Thank respondent for the interview, remind them of confidentiality
- Establish that the respondent can contact me for additions or questions
- Stop recording

Interview Guide II

1. Introduction

The research is about the influence of ethnic-identity on political processes in North Macedonia for a master thesis in the specialisation 'Conflicts, Territories and Identities' for Radboud University, in the Netherlands. In this context I think you as a professor of law will have an invaluable perspective on the legal side of inter-ethnic relations of North Macedonian politics.

Note on confidentiality; the master thesis will be read by my professors at the university and will be published online in the university library. I will need to be able to refer to your name as a source.

Due to the language barrier an email interview is preferred over a face-to-face interview, even if it loses some of the dynamic. This interview consists of about a dozen questions on the topic that have been translated from English. I would like to ask you to take your time and fill them out 'extensively'.

2.1 Background

To start off I would like to ask you how do you encounter inter-ethnic relations (in politics) in your work as a journalist and now in government?

2.2 Current situation inter-ethnic relations

- How do you see inter-ethnic relations in the political sphere in North Macedonia in present day?
- What is your view on government inclusion of minorities? Do you think in reality there is a discrepancy between what government research and reports show versus the real picture?
- Do you think ethnic tensions are sometimes manipulated by actors for political gain?
- Do you think that patronage networks play a role in parties coming and / staying into power?
- How do patronage networks play a role in politics in Macedonia?
- Do you think patronage networks are related to ethnicity? If so, in what way?

2.3 Legal / constitutional perspective

- How has the OFA changed the way ethnicities manifest themselves politically?
- Do you think that all ethnic minorities have profited from the provisions adequately?
- Do you think that the change of constitutional rights of minorities in North Macedonia over the decades impacts their identity in present day? And what about their politics?
- How have these changes impacted ethnic-Macedonian politics?

2.4 Inter-ethnic situation moving forward

- In your work, do you see ethnic relations between the different groups in North Macedonia changing and if so in what direction?
- How do you think these changes might impact (ethnic) politics in the country?
- Anything else you would like to add?
- Are there other people you would recommend me to talk to?

3. Conclusion

Thank you for participating in this email interview. If you have anything more to add or any additional questions I am available at pyke.haans@student.radboud.nl or through IHR.