

BOSNIA AND MACEDONIA IN TRAP OF PEACE AGREEMENT

JULY 2014



According to BTI transformative index¹ Macedonia is politically and economically still weak country while Bosnia and Herzegovina is characterized as protectorate trapped with the so-called “Dayton Triangle”. Many will argue that the main weaknesses of the political system in Macedonia today are caused by the Ohrid Agreement², but also that this system was weak to begin with. The major criticism is focused on how this weakness is compounded and prolonged by the current political system established with the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA). As a result, there is an understandable argument that the Agreement has been

1 <http://www.bti-project.org/bti-home/>

For more information look at country reports from 2012 : http://www.bti-project.org/uploads/tx_itao_download/BTI_2012_Macedonia.pdf ; http://www.bti-project.org/uploads/tx_itao_download/BTI_2012_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina.pdf

2 Peace Agreement signed on August 13, 2001 by the government of the Republic of Macedonia and ethnic Albanians’ representatives. The Agreement ended the armed conflict and improved the rights of Albanians;

able to remove some of the inequalities of the previous system, but it remains unable to address the systemic problems that existed before and after its adoption. The source of the conflict stayed unresolved, while implementation of confidence building is lacking. Clear indications of this lack of confidence are the many problems arising in this multiethnic society, latest manifested in the protest related to the “Monstrum case”.³ In Bosnia the Dayton peace accord of 1995, which ended the devastating civil war, divided the country into two semi-autonomous entities: the Serb-dominated Republika Srpska and the Bosniak-Croat Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina with an international supervisor of the political affairs, the so-called high representative. The agreement was described as the most impressive

3 Five ethnic Macedonians were killed near the Smilkovsko Lake on April 12, 2012. The Macedonian Ministry of Internal Affairs claims the attack was a “deliberate terrorist act aimed at destabilizing the country”. Five ethnic Albanians were sentenced to life imprisonment in connection to this crime. Throughout Macedonia, many violent and non-violent protests were organized by ethnic Albanians against this indictment claiming the accused were framed.

example of conflict resolution but from the other side it leaves the country deeply ethnically divided.

From the very beginning, the International Community supported the OFA and Dayton as new political philosophy which should inaugurate innovative models of multiethnic states,⁴ and before all stop the wars in the Balkans. On one side they ended the conflict, but on the other the intensification of ethnic identification instead of having deeper integration led to even deeper division in both countries. Interethnic relations within Macedonia have been challenged many times, and the most visible one is the intense monument building in the city center, a project called Skopje 2014.⁵ The manipulation of ethnic symbols for political purpose is not new for the countries of former Yugoslavia. Skopje for instance has a 77 meters Millennium Cross that beams at night on top of mountain Vodno which was constructed in 2000 and a response from the predominantly Muslim, Albanian community in the country came in 2006 when the local municipality disregarding the procedures put a monument of the Albanian national hero Skenderbeg who rides his horse in the direction of the cross. The boundary making process and mapping of the territory increased internally, along the ethnically divided places of residence, and this is particularly emphasized by the recent project "Skopje 2014". With the ethnification of politics, the social dividing lines were perhaps not caused by the Agreement and the political system established by it, but the inability to reduce these divisions raises the question wheth-

4 James W. Pardew. Diplomatic History of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, South East European University, Page f 21-23 http://www.seeu.edu.mk/files/research/projects/OFA_EN_Final.pdf

5 More info here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skopje_2014

er it is at least responsible for the so called "guilt by omission".

The Dayton agreement was supposed to stop the war, but also to contribute to the democratic consolidation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This second part is largely absent. The big disadvantage of both agreements, particularly the Dayton, is their vagueness. In Bosnia it satisfactory serves as a good foundation for the ethno-national leaders to continue with the production of their ethno-nation, where almost every day we are eyewitness of constant ethno-territorial encircling. There are no official borders in Bosnia; but fiscal ethnic lines between the three ethnicities are stronger from day to day. Statements of the President of Republika Srpska entity who in particular highlighted that Bosnia can only survive as confederation of three ethnic Republics, not excluding the possibility that RS will call for referendum,⁶ confirm ethno-national discourse and weakness of the political system which supports ethnic elites' conscription. This assertion of the President of RS, is often used as tool for political mobilization in both entities. In the Federation the elites mostly blame RS for Great Serbia's desires', while RS's élite mostly blames the Federation for obstructing RS's integrity. We can see a continuation of the work of ethno-national causes that started the war of the nineties, and now continue with the means of political obstruction offered by the Dayton arrangement and the political system designed by it- consociation.

Consociation democracy as a model has its traces in the work of Arendt Lijphart. This model of political system is designed for multi-ethnic or multi-national societies. His, we can say, differ-

6 http://www.b92.net/eng/news/region.php?yyyy=2014&mm=04&dd=02&nav_id=89859

entia specifica is that it highlights the negotiation process between the political elites while decision-making in convocational democracy is possible only with the full consent of the elites. That is why Lijphart even calls it consensual democracy.⁷ This political arrangement should rest on a fundamental trust. The problem arises because consociationalism barely allows citizens to come to the fore; citizens as a main driving force of a democratic society stay behind. With the last social protests in Bosnia, we were witnessing how citizens articulate themselves behind ethnic elites.⁸

Instead providing common ground for both entities, the system used by elites, actually admits the division of the society along the ethnic lines while at the same time there is attempt to bridge the ethnic gap with this model. The “power-sharing” model, therefore, contains solutions that can be abused if somebody misuses their power and wants to disintegrate the country. Therefore, it all depends on the elites and their commitment to the values of democracy and human rights and freedoms instead of their “national cause.”⁹ Do the principles of “pow-

7 Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 25;

8 In one entity social protests took place, while the other entity barely had any protest whatsoever. For more information look at : <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/feb/17/bosnia-terrifying-picture-of-europe-future>

9 <http://www.newbalkanpolitics.org.mk/item/What-kind-of-a-political-system-did-Macedonia-get-after-the-Ohrid-Peace-Agreement#.U8FsrLFKrIU>

er-sharing” political system produce greater security and stability in countries on the verge of conflict? Despite everything, the answer seems to be yes. However, sharing should require the consent of a broad representation of all groups in a given system, not only elites. Consociation power-sharing runs the risk of reinforcing ethnic divisions and transforming ethnic belonging into the main or at least the dominant identifier and therefore making it impossible for post-conflict societies to recover.

At the end, we should ask how relatively liberal power-sharing was introduced in a semi-liberal democratic systems. It is easy to initiate consociation in wealthy and developed democracies, such as Belgium and Switzerland, which Lijphart describes as western democratic systems.¹⁰ They already had developed democratic practices before the power-sharing model was established and had to focus more closely on the interrelationship within their system. This is not to suggest that power-sharing simply reduces the quality of democracy, as is often suggested in academia, but rather the opposite, democratic fragility before introducing consociationalism can threaten effective power-sharing and turn a liberal consociational system into a more corporate, ethno-national governing system with unchanging reality.

10 Lijphart , Arend. *Consociation Democracy, Three types of Western Democracies*, *World Politics* Vol.21, No.2 (Jan. 1969) Page 207- 225- <http://is.muni.cz/el/1423/jaro2005/EUP405/lijphart69.pdf>