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language

language

media

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the UN security council

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media

the UN security council

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e-governance

the UN security council

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e-governance

media

e-governance

the UN security council

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Contents

Short Biography

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Ljupcho Stojkovski [1]

CONSTRUCTIVIST ASPECTS OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL'S PERMANENT MEMBERS' CONDUCT: THE CASE OF THE USA

INTRODUCTION

The UN Security Council is an institution that is in the spotlight of world's attention every time there is an armed conflict. The focus on the Security Council is due to the position it holds in the global security architecture, established with the UN Charter. Namely, as one of the six main organs of the UN, the Council is the primary organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security (Article 24), the one that assesses whether there is a threat, breach of the peace, or an act of aggression, and the one that decides whether and what kind of measures (with or without the use of force) should be taken in case of

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such occurrences. Moreover, all member states of the UN agree to respect and implement its decisions (Article 25).[2]

Regarding its composition, the Security Council consists of 15 member states, five of which are permanent members (P5) – the USA, Great Britain, France, Russia, and China – and ten are elected. The non-permanent, i.e. the elected member states of the Council have a 2-year mandate without the possibility to be re-elected.[3] These states are elected by the General Assembly with a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting[4], and the formal criterion for their election is their contribution to the maintenance of the international peace and security, as well as the equitable geographical distribution of the seats.[5]

The voting in the Security Council is regulated in Article 27 of the Charter, which was agreed upon at the second meeting during the establishing of the UN in Yalta, Crimea, in February 1945 (which is where the phrase "Yalta Formula" derives from). According to this formula, all member states of the Council are entitled to only one vote (paragraph 1), and the decisions will be made by 9 affirmative votes (or 7 affirmative votes prior to the amendments of the Charter in 1965) of the member states. Regarding the 'procedural matters', 9 votes from any member state of the Council (permanent or elected) are required, while for 'all other matters' or the 'substantive matters', as they are referred to today[6], a qualified majority is required, i.e. the affirmative votes of minimum 9 member-states, including the concurring votes of the five permanent members (paragraph 2 and paragraph 3). This means that any of the P5 states can block the decision-making process in the Council, i.e. they have the right to a veto (although the 'veto' is not explicitly mentioned in the Charter itself).[7] Therefore, the conduct of the five permanent member states in the Security Council has a great impact on the functioning of the Council as an institution.

Nevertheless, even though the five permanent members have veto power (including other privileges deriving from the permanent membership at the Council),[8] this does not imply that all of them act identically (or in a similar manner) within and towards the Security Council. To the contrary. There are major differences among them, and (sometimes) in the behavior of a single member state throughout the years. For instance, after the end of the Cold War, the United Kingdom and France – unlike the other three permanent member states – have not used their right to veto at all. On the other hand, Russia, which just like the United Kingdom and France, has had a decrease in its power

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2   UN Charter.
3   *Ibid*, Article 23.
4   *Ibid*, Article 18.
5   *Ibid,* Article 23.
6   Loraine Sievers, Sam Daws, *The Procedure of the UN Security Council* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 4th ed., 2014), 295.
7   *UN Charter*, Article 27.
8   Loraine Sievers, Sam Daws, *The Procedure of the UN Security Council* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 4th ed., 2014), 126, 127.

after the collapse of the Soviet Union, is the permanent member that has used the veto most frequently since the Cold War. In the case of the USA, there is a significant decrease in the use of veto after the end of the Cold War, although their military (and until recently, their economic) power has been stable and unsurpassable in the near future.

There are similar differences among the P5 with regards to, for example, the limitation of the veto in situations of mass atrocities – an initiative known as the 'Responsibility not to veto'. Thus, USA, Russia, and China are not willing to limit the use of veto even in these situations, the United Kingdom is open to the idea and is ready to accept it under certain circumstances, while France is the promoter of this idea and has pledged that it will never use the veto in such situations.[9]

In order to understand these differences, besides the material factors and the power relations, equally important are the non-material factors, i.e. the ideas, values, and identities of these states. The reason for this, following the constructivist approach in international relations (IR) theory, is that the material resources are not an independent factor, but gain importance 'only through the structure of shared knowledge in which they are embedded'.[10] Furthermore, actors' ideas and identities affect the shaping of their interests, which, in turn, affect their specific policies. Along this line, the institutions where the states are members do not only reflect their power but also their ideas, perspectives and perceptions about themselves, about the institutions that they are part of, and about how these entities, and international politics in general, (ought to) function. Therefore, it is necessary to take into consideration the non-material factors regarding the Security Council, i.e. the 'constructivist aspects' of the conduct – the ideas, the values, the identities, the language – of the actors that consist this body. Of course, the constructivist aspects of all actors involved are of relevance, and should be taken into consideration, but they are not equally relevant. In relation to the functioning of a single institution, the perspectives of those actors that are in position to have a greater impact on the work of that body, as well as to spread and develop their constructivist aspects, are more important. In the case of the Security Council, the five permanent member states are without doubt the most important actors, due to the systemic design and the long-term practice – and, of course, due to the greater material power – that they have in relation to the majority of elected member states.

In this paper I analyze the constructivist aspects of the conduct of one permanent member of the UN Security Council – the United States. The USA supports and sometimes works through the Security Council, but not by all

9 For this initiative, see more at Ljupcho Stojkovski, "The Importance of the Responsibility not to Veto Debate", in Vasilka Sancin, ed., "*Are we "Manifestly Failing" R2P*", 2017, Faculty of Law, University of Ljubljana, Litteralis Ltd, pp. 87-110, as well as the literature referenced there.

10 Alexander Wendt, "Constructing International Politics", *International Security, vol.20, no.1 (Summer, 1995)*, pp.71-81, 73.

means – if this body is an obstacle to its plans, it may also bypass it. This attitude of the USA towards and within the Security Council, from material perspective, is closely related to the enormous military and economic power it has globally. The non-material factors that explain this behavior include the roles of creator-reformer and custodian of the international order played by the USA, their self-perception of exceptionality, as well as their national political considerations.

The paper consists of three parts. The first part provides a short overview of constructivism as an IR theory, in order to show the theoretical background and the importance of the non-material factors in understanding the behavior of international actors. The second part points out to the material and non-material factors that give an explanation for the behavior of the USA in international politics. USA's relation to the UN and to the Security Council, more specifically, are further elaborated in the third part of the paper.

CONSTRUCTIVISM AS AN IR THEORY

Realism, as a dominant IR theory, explains international politics as a battle for power between states – primarily between the great powers – where they act egoistically and are governed by their national interests. The primary and minimum motivation for action, i.e. the interest of each state in international politics is the desire to survive, and the maximum motivation is universal domination.[11] Therefore, each state should continually focus not only on the absolute benefits for itself – in order to gain the maximum of what it holds relevant – but also on maintaining a relative advantage, meaning to gain more in relation to the other states. In order to achieve this, the state is constantly looking for ways to increase its power, primarily its material, physical power. That, on the other hand, continuously creates doubts and mistrust among the other states – the security dilemma – which is why they react in the same manner.

The context that contributes towards this kind of behavior among states is the anarchic structure in which they operate. Knowing that in the international community there is not a sovereign ruler that would compel the states to behave in a particular way, the anarchic structure "constrains them form taking certain actions, while propelling them towards others".[12] Therefore, existing in Hobbes' natural state, "the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must".[13]

11 Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 118.

12 Kenneth N. Waltz, "Realist Thought and Neo-Realist Theory", in Robert L. Rothstein (ed.), *The Evolution of Theory in International Relations: Essays in Honor of William T. R. Fox* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press 1992), 29.

13 Thucydides, *History of Peloponnesian War* (New York: Penguin Books,1972), 406.

All of this applies to international institutions as well. For realists, international institutions "are basically a reflection of the distribution of power in the world" and are based on and function according to the interests and calculations of the great powers.[14]

For the constructivist theory, the concepts of 'power', 'interest' or 'anarchy' have no independent meaning on their own. They completely depend on the content assigned to them by the very actors that create and use them, i.e. the ideas, the beliefs and the attitudes towards these concepts, which the states have created through the use of language and their mutual interaction.[15] The intersubjective understanding of these concepts by states are not determined once and for all, but represent a social construct, which, as any other idea, can be altered. On the other hand, this does not imply that "ideas are more important than power or interest, or that they are autonomous from power and interest. Power and interest are just as important and determining as before. The claim is rather that power and interest have the effects they do in virtue of the ideas that make them up. Power and the interest explanations *presuppose* [some] ideas" about their meaning, "and to that extent are not rivals to ideational explanations at all".[16] The materialistic factors are in a dialectical relation with their underlying ideas, which is why the "discursive circumstances that enable their functioning" should always be examined.[17]

Constructivists agree with the realists that there is an anarchic structure in the international relations, but do not consider that the very structure *a priori* imposes a certain type of behavior on states. This is because no structure can exist independently from the process through which it is created, and from the collective meaning that will be assigned to it by the actors that make it up.[18]

By participating in this collective process, according to Wendt, states create identities – "relatively stable, role-specific, understandings and expectations about self".[19] Other proponents from this camp think that the key factors in the formation of identities are the norms and the interaction of states with them, rather than the interstate interaction[20], while others focus on the internal factors and the domestic actors within a certain state.[21] In any case, regardless whether the international or domestic factors and interactions are more important when

14 John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions", *International Security, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Winter, 1994-1995),* pp. 5-49, 7, 13.

15 Alexander Wendt, "Constructing International Politics", *International Security, vol.20, no.1 (Summer, 1995)*, pp.71-81, 73.

16 Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 135.

17 Ibid.

18 Or in the words of one of the main representatives of the constructivist school, Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what states make of it". See Alexander Wendt "Anarchy is what sates make of it: the social construciton of power politics", *International Organization, vol.46, no.2, Spring, 1992,* 391-425.

19 Ibid, 397.

20 See for example, Martha Finnemore, *National Interests and International Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

21 See for example, Peter J. Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

forming identities, or whether all of these aspects should be observed as a connected whole,[22] all constructivists agree that identities affect the making and the defining of the interests of the states, which, in turn, affect the creation of their specific policies.[23]

Constructivists apply the significance of ideas, identities, and states' interactions in their explanations of the functioning of international institutions as well. In their view, "institutions are fundamentally cognitive entities that do not exist apart from actors' ideas about how the world works", and are not separated from their identities, but are "mutually constitutive".[24]

Thus, in order to understand the functioning of the Security Council, besides the 'objective', structural setting of the institution – for instance, that there are permanent and non-permanent member states among which there are systemically designed differences in favor of the permanent five – it is necessary to also take into consideration the perspectives of the states that make up this body.

MATERIAL AND NON-MATERIAL FACTORS OF USA'S CONDUCT IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The material factors that explain USA's conduct in international politics are its vast military and economic capacities. The USA convincingly tops the global rankings when it comes to military expenditures, having spent 649 billion US dollars in 2018, which is 36% of the total world expenditure.[25] The USA is a country with the strongest economy as well, and although the discrepancy with China is rapidly decreasing (and according to some estimations China is already a leader), it has had the pedestal since 1871.[26] These two factors should be supplemented by the outcome of the Cold War, where, according to many authors, the USA was the winner, and as a result, instead of the bipolar structure, today we have a unipolar world where the USA is the only superpower. Having in mind the fact that a standing army from the armies of its member states has never been established within the UN, and that the financing of UN's military activities completely depends on the willingness of states, it is quite clear why the USA is often referred to as "the permanent one" (P1) – without its military,

22 See for example, John G. Ruggie, "Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Toward a Neorealist Synthesis", in Robert. O. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); or Rey Koslowski, Friedrich V. Kratochwil, F. "Understanding Change in International Politics: The Soviet Empire's Demise and the International System", in Richard Ned Lebow and Thomas Risse-Kappen (eds), *International Relations Theory after the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

23 Christian Reus-Smit, "Constructivism", кај Scott Burchill, Andrew Linklater, Richard Devetak, Jack Donnely, Matthew Paterson, Christian Reus-Smit, Jacqui True (eds.), *Theories of International Relations*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 3ʳᵈ ed., 2005), 197.

24 Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construciton of power politics", *International Organization, vol.46, no.2, Spring, 1992,* 391-425, 399.

25 Nan Tian, Aude Fleurant, Alexandra Kuimova, Pieter D. Wezeman, Siemon T. Wezeman, "Trends in Military Expenditure, 2018," *SIPRI Fact Sheet*, April 2019, available at https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/fs_1904_milex_2018_0.pdf

26 Prableen Bajpa, *The World's Top 20 Economies*, Investopedia, available at https://www.investopedia.com/insights/worlds-top-economies/

financial and political support, the Security Council (and the UN) would not function as they have so far.[27]

The non-material factors of USA's conduct in international politics are related to the roles of creator-reformer and custodian of the international order played by the USA, as well as the self-perception of its (supposed) exceptionality. The role of creator-reformer implies "a desire to engage in major international and social engineering, expecting that, if properly done, initiatives involving the design and creation of new [international] institutions would transform the essential nature and the procedures of those [international] politics".[28] In the previous century, the USA played a key role in the establishment of the League of Nations (although it never became a member) and of course, the UN, as well as many other international organizations and arrangements. Therefore, as Reisman claims, when the USA are criticizing these institutions, they are threatening to withdraw from them, or they freeze their financing, this should not be seen as a signal for an American isolation from international politics. To the contrary, with this behavior the USA is acting correctively, as a reformer to the international institutions, with the intention to incite them to modify their procedures and/or attitudes to suit USA's interests as a precondition for USA's engagement with them.[29]

This role is supplemented by the identity of a custodian of the international order, which the USA demonstrates in the international realm. Having in mind the material power it has, as well as the indispensable role it plays in the functioning of the international institutions where it is a member, the USA perceives itself as the ultimate guarantor for the goals that these institutions, and the international order per se, aim(s) to achieve. Sometimes, this role involves the usurpation or circumvention of the procedures of these institutions, because "it is the custodian who ultimate decides when, why and how to act" in the international system.[30]

These two roles of the USA are interconnected,[31] and, in a way, derive from the self-perception of the American exceptionality. The exceptionality can be explained through cultural ("our", "American" values), institutional (the

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27 David Bosco, "Commentary: The Permanent One's Search for Maximum Flexibility", кај Sebastian von Einsiedel, David M. Malone and Bruno Stagno Ugarte, *The UN Security Council in the 21st Century* (London: Lynne Rinner Publishers, 2016).

28 W. Michael Reisman, "The United States and International Institutions", *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 41-4, Winter 1999-2000, pp. 62-80, 65.

29 Ibid, p.66. Or in Trump's words, in the National Security Strategy from 2017: "If the United States is asked to provide a disproportionate level of support for an institution, we will expect a commensurate degree of influence over the direction and efforts of that institution." The White House "National Security Strategy". *White House Office*, 2017, 40.

30 Accordingly, one can understand Bill Clinton's famous statement: "multilateral when we can, unilateral when we must", in this context. W. Michael Reisman, "The United States and International Institutions", *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 41-4, Winter 1999-2000, pp. 62-80, 63, 64, 72, 73.

31 Besides these two roles, Reisman mentions two more roles played by the USA – an infra-organizational role (according to which the USA, sometimes, but not as often as its power allows, act as any other state in the international organizations where it is a member) and a reactive role under domestic pressure (according to which the foreign policy of the USA is vastly influenced by domestic (governmental and non-governmental) actors, who can sometimes prioritize micro matters or marginal matters). Ibid.

American constitutional and political arrangements) and other factors that take into consideration the power that the USA has (primarily the military, but also the economic power).[32] According to Luck, the American self-perceived exceptionality in the context of international organizations can be seen in the following four matters:

"1) a willingness to go it alone on a variety of issues, along with apparent immunity accompanied to the pressures and the criticism of others; 2) an assumption that its national values and practices are universally valid and its policy positions are moral and proper, not just expedient; 3) a strong tendency to look inwards, to domestic political considerations and processes, when determining how to act in international forums, in some cases coupled with a willingness to adopt national legislation that contradicts the rules and responsibilities imposed by the international arrangements; 4) a belief by national policy-makers and legislators that they have other options for pursuing their nation's interests, and that acting through multilateral institutions is only an option, and not an obligation."[33]

Foot concludes that such "perceptions of specialness encourage US administrations, when deemed necessary, to exempt themselves from the rules that the others are expected to follow. In addition, they frequently encourage a militarized response to any attack on US interests."[34]

From the perspective of values, the self-perception of exceptionality also encompasses USA's identity of protector and promoter of human rights, democracy and liberal values.[35] Nonetheless, exactly as a result of the exceptionality self-perception, although the USA portrays itself as a leader for these values, it often undermines them in practice.[36] Finally, it should be highlighted that besides the general continuity in their foreign policy, the priorities, the alignments, and even the identities represented by the USA can

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32 Rosemary Foot, "Exceptionalism Again: The Bush Administration, the "Global War on Terror" and Human Rights", *Law and History Review*, Fall 2008, vol.26, no.3, 708, 709.

33 Edward C. Luck, "American Exceptionalism and International Organization: Lessons from the 1990s", Rosemary Foot, S. Neil MacFarlane, and Michael Mastanduno (eds.), *US Hegemony and International Organizations,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 27.

34 Rosemary Foot, "Exceptionalism Again: The Bush Administration, the "Global War on Terror" and Human Rights", *Law and History Review*, Fall 2008, vol.26, no.3, 709.

35 See for instance, Rosemary Foot, *Human Rights and Counter-terrorism in America's Asia Policy,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), (particularly pp. 15-24).

36 For example, with the behavior in Guantanamo. Rosemary Foot, "Exceptionalism Again: The Bush Administration, the "Global War on Terror" and Human Rights", *Law and History Review*, Fall 2008, vol.26, no.3, 707, 708, 712.

alter (sometimes even radically, as it is the case currently under the presidency of Trump)[37] depending on the administration in power.[38]

THE USA AND THE UN

Taking into consideration all these material and non-material factors, it is much easier to provide an explanation for the 'uneasy', 'ambiguous' relationship between the USA and the UN.[39] Malone lists four factors for this 'ambiguous' relationship. First of all, the problematic relationship (from USA's perspective) began in the 1960s, when under the wave of decolonization the UN significantly increased its membership. Many of these new states became part of the Non-allied movement or inclined towards the USSR, which meant that the USA were losing a great portion of their influence in the UN, particularly in the General Assembly. The second factor for USA's tension with the UN lies in the Palestinian-Israeli issue. A great majority of the UN member states, through the General Assembly and other bodies and specialized organizations of the UN, support Palestine, while the USA, almost unconditionally backs Israel[40] (and often accuses the UN of anti-Zionism[41]). The third reason for the uneasy relationship between the USA and the UN lies in the national political factors. Namely, US domestic politicians (most often the Republicans) frequently highlight that the UN are a threat to American sovereignty, particularly to its military power and the way the USA uses it. Finally, Malone highlights the "familiar difficulties in trying to relate means to ends, values to the interests, and order to justice", as a fourth factor that explains the uneasy relations between the USA and the UN (the Security Council in particular).[42] One can add the 'Somalia syndrome', i.e. the unreadiness of the USA to "sustain military casualties in distant lands in the pursuit of fundamentally humanitarian objectives"[43], as the fifth factor for USA's ambivalence towards the UN, having in mind the experience from Somalia in 1993, when 18 American soldiers were killed in an intervention

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37 Wright, for instance, claims that USA's foreign policy under Trump is not unpredictable, as it is often perceived, , but it is consistent with Trump's worldview, and it includes "narrow, transactional relationship with the other nations, a preference for authoritarian governments over other democracies, a mercantilist approach to international economic policy, general disregard for human rights and the rule of law, and the promotion of nationalism and unilateralism at the expense of multilateralism". Thomas Wright, "Trump's Foreign Policy Is No Longer Unpredictable", *Foreign Affairs* 13 January 2019, available at https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2019-01-18/trumps-foreign-policy-no-longer-unpredictable

38 According to Patman and Southgate, the understanding and behavior of (the administration of) Obama, for instance, towards the American exceptionality was quite different from the "usual" one, and it included (more) multilateralism and leading by example. Robert G. Patman, Laura Southgate, "Globalization, the Obama administration and the refashioning of US exceptionalism", *International Politics*, vol.53, 2, 220-238, 2016, particularly pp. 228-235.

39 David M. Malone, "US-UN Relations in the UN Security Council in the Post-Cold War Era", кај Rosemary Foot, S. Neil MacFarlane, and Michael Mastanduno (eds.), *US Hegemony and International Organizations,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 83.

40 For a short summary overview of the reasons behind the close relationship between the USA and Israel, see Stephen Zunes, "Why the U.S. Supports Israel", *Institute for Policy Studies*, 1 Мај 2002 година, available at https://ips-dc.org/why_the_us_supports_israel/

41 This, for example, was the reason that led the Trump administration to withdraw from the UN Human Rights Council. See Gardiner Harris, "Trump Administration Withdraws U.S. From U.N. Human Rights Council", *New York Times*, 19 June 2018, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/19/us/politics/trump-israel-palestinians-human-rights.html

42 David M. Malone, "US-UN Relations in the UN Security Council in the Post-Cold War Era", in Rosemary Foot, S. Neil MacFarlane, and Michael Mastanduno (eds.), *US Hegemony and International Organizations,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 83-88.

43 International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect: Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty*, International Development Research Centre, 2001, 97.

under the auspices of the UN, in a case where the USA were widely perceived not to have any vital interests at stake. As a consequence of this episode, the USA introduced the Presidential Decision Directive 25 (May 1994), according to which the USA would participate in UN peace missions only if that would be in its national interest.[44] This explains why the USA is the biggest financial donor of UN peacekeeping missions,[45] and why, at the same time, it participates with a total number of only 34 troops in these missions – which is the fewest from the P5[46] - and why it prefers coercive measures from distance (sanctions and bombing).[47]

When it comes to USA's relationship with the Security Council more specifically, the first thing that needs to be highlighted is that, when creating its foreign policy, the USA does not take the Security Council into consideration as much as it is thought (or as much as it would be expected) it would. Namely, out of 251,287 classified US cables from the period between 1966 and 2010, published by Wikileaks, the Security Council is discussed in only 6,532 of them, or merely 2.6%.[48] In comparison, during the same period, human rights are discussed in 49,044 documents (19.5%), while terrorism is discussed in 28,801 documents (11.4%).[49]

Nevertheless, in those rare instances when the USA decides to use the Security Council, its policy towards the Council is "opportunistic and instrumental".[50] The USA wants maximum diplomatic flexibility when interacting with the Council. It wants a proactive and robust Council – a Council that says 'yes' to the use of sanctions and force. However, keeping in mind its role as a custodian of the international order, the USA reserves the right to interpret what that 'yes' means, and if the Security Council says 'no' to the measures that it is proposing, it may bypass the Council and continue with its intentions unilaterally, outside of it.[51]

This kind of behavior towards the Security Council explains the use of veto by the USA. There are three stages that can be distinguished here. The first stage covers

44 Robert G. Patman, Laura Southgate, "Globalization, the Obama administration and the refashioning of US exceptionalism*", International Politics*, vol.53, 2, 220-238, 2016, 226, 227.

45 The USA are convincingly the leader with 28.5% of the total donations, before China with 10.3%. See United Nations Peacekeeping, *How are we Funded,* available at https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/how-we-are-funded

46 At the top of the list of countries that provide their troops/police forces to the UN missions, according to the ranking from 30 April 2019, is Ethiopia with 7,499 persons, and from the permanent members of the Security Council it is China with 2497 persons. United Nations Peace-keeping, *Troop and Police Contributors,* available at https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors

47 David M. Malone, "US-UN Relations in the UN Security Council in the Post-Cold War Era", and Rosemary Foot, S. Neil MacFarlane, and Michael Mastanduno (eds.), *US Hegemony and International Organizations,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 80, 81.

48 Even if we consider the more accurate information that out of the 251,287 documents, 145,451 were related to foreign policy, which then implies that 4.5% (and not 2.6%) were about the Security Council, the impression remains that the consideration of the Security Council is still very low. Stephen John Stedman, "United States in the Secuirty Council", кај Sebastian von Einsiedel, David M. Malone and Bruno Stagno Ugarte, *The UN Security Council in the 21st Century* (London: Lynne Rinner Publishers, 2016), p. 59.

49 Ibid.

50 David Bosco, "Commentary: The Permanent One's Search for Maximum Flexibility", also with Sebastian von Einsiedel, David M. Malone and Bruno Stagno Ugarte, *The UN Security Council in the 21st Century* (London: Lynne Rinner Publishers, 2016), 75.

51 Stephen John Stedman, "United States in the Secuirty Council", кај Sebastian von Einsiedel, David M. Malone and Bruno Stagno Ugarte, *The UN Security Council in the 21st Century*, (London: Lynne Rinner Publishers, 2016), 58. As it was the case, for example, with the war in Iraq, in 2003.

the period from the establishment of the UN until 1965, a period in which the USA had never used its veto. Yet, from 1966 until the end of the Cold War, when the UN membership and the anti-Israeli sentiment grew larger, the USA used its veto as many as 69 times.[52] After the end of the Cold War and the growing desire for a 'new world order' where the Council would function as it was envisioned, the use of veto by the USA has been reduced, and out of the 16 occasions in which it used its veto, 15 were related to the Palestinian-Israeli question.[53] This, though, should not imply that the USA supports the limitation of this privilege, nor any kind of (substantial) reform of the Security Council.[54] Publicly, the USA is pro reforms, and it is probably the permanent member that will suffer the least if the Security Council undergoes reforms, since its participation in any major operation in the sphere of the maintenance of international peace and security is *a conditio sine qua non*.[55] However, in practice, it protects its privileges in every possible way. In July 2005, for instance, the USA, together with China, took a range of joint and separate measures to make sure that the proposal of the G4 group of states on the enlargement of the Security Council's membership would fail.[56] Even more radical measures were taken by the P5, under USA's leadership, in March 2006, in order to undermine the initiative of the M5 group of states to reform the working methods of the Security Council, an initiative which was widely supported and was very close to succeed.[57] The USA behaves in a similar way in relation to the "Responsibility not to veto", i.e. the idea to limit the use of veto in situations of mass atrocities. Publicly, the USA criticizes the use of veto by Russia and China regarding the situation in Syria, for instance, but privately, it expresses reservations regarding the limitation to the use of veto in situations of mass atrocities.[58]

CONCLUSION

In this paper I discussed the constructivist aspects of the conduct of one permanent member of the UN Security Council – the USA. A common trait of all five permanent member states of the Security Council is their permanent membership, and consequently, their right to veto. All five states want to maintain their position in the privileged club, but how they understand the

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52 Ibid, 60.

53 See the record of all the blocked resolutions at Dag Hammarskjöld Library, *Security Counicl - Veto List,* available at https://research.un.org/en/docs/sc/quick

54 Stephen John Stedman, *United States in the Secuirty Council,* кaj Sebastian von Einsiedel, David M. Malone and Bruno Stagno Ugarte, *The UN Security Council in the 21st Century*, 68, 69; David Bosco, *Commentary: The Permanent One's Search for Maximum Flexibility,* also with Sebastian von Einsiedel, David M. Malone and Bruno Stagno Ugarte, *The UN Security Council in the 21st Century,* 78.

55 Thomas G. Weiss, "Overcoming the Security Council Reform Impasse: The Implausible versus the Plausible", *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung*, no.14, January 2005, 19, 20.

56 Jonas von Freiesleben, "Reform of the Security Council*"*, also with Center for UN Reform Education, *Governing and Managing Change at the United Nations: Reform of the Security Council from 1945 to September 2013*, 8.

57 Christian Wenaweser, "Working Methods: The Ugly Ducking of Security Council Reform", also with Sebastian von Einsiedel, David M. Malone and Bruno Stagno Ugarte, *The UN Security Council in the 21st Century*, (London: Lynne Rinner Publishers 2016), 186, 187.

58 Security Council Report, *The Veto: Reseach Report,* No.3, p.6, 19 October 2015, available at http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/research_report_3_the_veto_2015.pdf

permanent membership and the veto, as well as how the Security Council as an institution should function, differs. The different level of power that each state has, on its own, is not sufficient to explain the differences among them, or the changes in the conduct of one member state that has had a relatively stable material power over the years. Therefore, it is necessary to include the constructivist perspectives of their conduct, i.e. to scrutinize their ideas, values and identities, which sit at the background in the management of the material factors.

For the USA, the Security Council is an institution that they might take into consideration during the creation of a specific foreign security policy, if they think it will serve them a need. They do not feel obliged by the Security Council, and for them the Council is neither the first nor the last instance when it comes to the use of force. The unilateral view on the international affairs, the self-perceived American exceptionality, the identities of creator and custodian of the international order, the immense military and economic power they have in relation to the other states, as well as the dependence of the UN enforcement system on the will and contribution of the USA, are the main explanations for the USA's conduct. As Weiss points out, as long as UN's coercive capacity is on loan – primarily from the USA – the power of the UN and the Security Council, while it should be based on authority, will also be modelled by the one with power, which at the time being is (predominantly) the USA.[59] For Fassbender, the Security Council is a Concert of great powers in which the USA is a central player. The USA "cannot force the other players into performing, but when *it* does not appear on stage, the concert must be called off."[60] Therefore, one of the major future challenges for UN and Security Council supporters is "to determine when the Security Council will act as a multiplier of U.S. power" and how to get the USA to comply with and be involved in the UN, i.e. to persuade the United States that "acting multilaterally will be in its interest".[61]

59 Thomas G. Weiss, "Overcoming the Security Council Reform Impasse: The Implausible versus the Plausible", *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung*, no.14, January 2005, 19, 20.

60 Bardo Fassbender, "The Security Council: Progress is Possible but Unlikely", also with Antonio Cassese (ed.), *Realizing Utopia: The Future of International Law,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 56.

61 Thomas G. Weiss, "The Illusion of UN Security Council Reform", *The Washington Quarterly*, vol.26, iss.4, 2003, pp. 147-161, 153.

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UN Charter

Short Biography

Dragan Sekulovski is a dynamic professional with exceptional work experience in the field of project management gained through work in the public, private and civil society sectors. Sekulovski has multi-year experience in coordinating projects supported by foreign donors in the civil society sector, in particular on topics related to freedom of expression and processes important to democracy in the Republic of North Macedonia and the region. For the past 6 years, Sekulovski has held the position of Executive Director of the Association of Journalists of Macedonia. He graduated and earned his Master's Degree from the Faculty of Law - "Justinian I" at UKIM in Skopje.

Dragan Sekulovski

(NON)REFORMING THE MEDIA IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA AS A PRECONDITION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION INTEGRATION

INTRODUCTION

There is no real democracy without vocal journalists and critical media. In the same way, there is no real democracy in countries where authorities are silencing journalists and the media.

Therefore, the conditions in which journalists and media operate, and the way they are treated by representatives of public institutions as well as by political actors, are important factors that enable the freedom of journalists and the independence of the media reporting. Moreover, the safety of journalists and media workers, the media market, media regulation, as well as the judicial practice with regard to journalist rights and disputes of media as legal entities are other essential circumstances which contribute to the free functioning of the media sector.

The first indicator implying that something is wrong in one country in the sense of how the media operate are the weak and dependent public broadcasting services, which in our case is the Macedonian Radio and Television (MRT). In our context, this media outlet is financed by the citizens, and as such it is required that it sets a role example to the private media about the way in which the highest standards of ethical reporting are promoted, and likewise serve as an example of production of quality entertainment and educational program for the broader public. The second indicator is seen in the work of the media regulator, which is the body enforcing the media legislation and overseeing the work of the television and radio stations, or respectively the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (AVMU). This institution is required to demonstrate strong political and financial independence as a guarantee of non-selectivity in its decisions regarding the work of traditional media.

The executive power bears the greatest responsibility as well as obligation to create environment in which journalists can safely do their job and media can work independently. Also, the executive power needs to motivate the legislative power to adopt legislative solutions in the media sector which are in line with the best practices from other countries- members of the European Commission, and through which the judiciary would be obliged to take decisions complied with the practices of the European Court of Human Rights. Considering that on EU level there is no universal legislation that is common for the Union members, the local context where the media function and which per se is country-specific needs to be taken into account. To this end, the European Commission directives, as well as the Council of Europe and OSCE recommendations, are of particular importance since through their implementation in North Macedonia, but also in other countries that have the status of EU candidates, it is made possible to obtain quality legislative solutions.

Journalists and the media cannot be exempt from responsibility when it comes to the quality and accuracy of information, as they are expected to follow the principles of the Code of Journalists of Macedonia and at the same time take care of the manner in which they inform the citizens by keeping at the same time the public interest while doing so.

On the other hand, the public as a primary user of information is required to react to any disinformation launched in the media and be critical primarily towards those media outlets that generate such detrimental occurrences as well as towards the broadcasters.

All of these aspects regarding the media sector are important for the country's progress and for the European Union integration, in particular in view of the principles set out in Chapter 23 of the EU acqui communautaire which relates

to the judiciary and to the fundamental human rights, including the freedom of expression.

This article has the objective to point to the interrelatedness between the implementation of the media reform on the one hand and on the other, to the fulfillment of a part of the preconditions required for the country's integration in the European Union. As a European Union candidate country the Republic of North Macedonia is obliged to harmonize its media legislation primarily with the European Commission's Audiovisual Media Services Directive as well as with the Council of Europe Recommendations. Considering that on the level of the European Union there is no universal legislation that would be applicable for every country, each candidate country when creating the local legislation has the obligation to consider in particular the local context of the media environment.

The issue of systemic reforms in the Republic of North Macedonia aimed at the improvement of the working ambience for journalists and media and thus for the information of the citizens is not a constant focus in the Government work. There is neither a strategic plan nor any planned approach as much as for that about which part of the media regulation needs to be amended, in which way, when and by the involvement of whom. As a result of this approach, many of the expected changes called for in the past by the local stakeholders and the European Commission still remain pending or have been slightly delivered, but not as sufficiently as to produce a noticeable difference in the functioning of the media. Unless changed in the near future, the present conditions may have negative impact on the media sector and thus become obstacle to the EU integration process.

For the purpose of this article, we shall analyze credible reports from local and international civil and political organizations which on regular basis conduct analysis and research on topics regarding media independence and freedom of expression.

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION BENCHMARKS ON MEDIA INDEPENDENCE AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In case the Republic of North Macedonia fails to fulfil certain requirements for making changes in the media regulation as well as in the practice of its implementation, which is something that the European Commission notifies on regular basis in the annual reports on its candidate members, then this part may pose a serious impediment to the country's EU integration process. The benchmarks considered essential by the Commission in this context are the following: the media legislation has to guarantee independent and stable source

of financing for the Public Broadcasting Service and for the media regulator as well as selection of appropriate management for these two institutions that would be resistant to political pressures and influences as a precondition to their impartial functioning. The second benchmark refers to journalist rights and their physical and social and economic safeguards provided through the efficient protection from the competent institutions, including from the judiciary. The state has the obligation to promote media pluralism and enable fair conditions for functioning of the private media in the media sector. Besides, the country also has the obligation to create environment which promotes freedom of expression and transparency of the institutions and protects critical views regardless of whether they come from journalists or civil organizations, and this should be in particular the case during pre-election and election campaigns. Right to freedom of association of journalists is a prerequisite through which they can fight for their rights and therefore this right should be guaranteed as appropriate.

The European Commission, through the Audio and Audiovisual Media Services Directive, seeks to identify areas of coordination as well as to manage the coordination of national legislation across EU member states in the following areas: general principles in the sense of which types of media it refers to and how; suppressing content that has elements of hatred; promotion of media pluralism, accessibility for people with disabilities, taking part in important events, promotion and dissemination of European works as well as protection of minors. In the area of public services, there are specific guidelines aimed at ensuring political independence of management as well as independent and stable financing as a precondition for smooth functioning.

CURRENT SITUATION WITH THE MEDIA SECTOR IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

A) Number of media outlets, their income and public trust in media and journalists

A total of 123 private television and radio outlets and one public broadcaster, respectively the Macedonian Radio Television (MRTV)[1] operate in the Republic of North Macedonia. Out of this number, five television outlets air their program through the state-owned terrestrial multiplex, respectively TV Sitel, Kanal 5, TV Telma, TV Alsat and TV Alsat-M. In addition to these media outlets, as of 2018 effectively there have been seven television outlets airing their program statewide through satellite and also through a public electronic communications network operator, of which TV 24 news is considered distinctive in the sense of

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1 Republic of North Macedonia, Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, Analysis of the market of audio and audiovisual services in 2018 (acceded to 25 August 2019) https://avmu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Анализа-на-пазарот-на-аудио-и-аудиовизуелни-медиумски-услуги-за-2018-година.docx.pdf

the number of its employees totaling 102 persons and the amount of its annual budget. In addition to these media outlets, 22 regional and 19 local television outlets also aired their programs in the course of 2018.

The media space in the Republic of North Macedonia apart from the television outlets is also filled in with radio stations, 3 of which are aired on a national level, 17 operate regionally and there is a total of 50 commercial local stations. In addition to the private radio stations, there are 3 radio stations operating on a national level under the auspices of the public broadcaster, which is the Macedonian Radio Television (MRTV).

Based on the research made by the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual media services for 2018, the total income achieved by all of these media outlets in 2018 was 40 million EUR, 24 million EUR of which was the income achieved by the commercial television and radio outlets, whereas the remaining 16 million EUR was the income achieved by MRT. Compared to the previous years, this amount is smaller in relation to the income achieved by the commercial broadcasters and the public broadcasting service.

At the same time, five national printed media outlets operate in the Republic of North Macedonia, in addition to some twenty other printed media outlets published on regular or periodic basis.

Unlike the broadcasters, as from 2018 by Decision of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia the printed media which fulfil certain criteria receive state subsidies in a total amount of 700.000 EUR per year[2]. These funds are horizontally allocated depending on the amount of the expenses of the printed media, and are foreseen to support the printing and the distribution of these media outlets.

There is a number of online media outlets operating in the country, but about 80 of them, which are of mainly informative format, transmit the main aggregates. There has been no specific analysis about the financial situation with the online media in the country, but according to IREX Media Sustainability Index for Europe[3], in 2018 the digital media achieved annual income through commercials in the amount of 3.5 million EUR.

Public trust in media and journalists is low based on the recent research made by local and international organizations. Thus, according to the survey[4] made by the "Konrad- Adenauer" Foundation and "Ipsos Macedonia" on the freedom

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2 Media Information Agency (MIA), text entitled: „42.5 million denars paid as subsidies to 11 printed media" of 28 January 2019 (acceded to on 17 August 2019) https://mia.mk/2019/01/isplateni-42-5-milioni-denari-subvencii-na-11-pechateni-mediumi/

3 Media Sustainability Index for Europe and Eurasia for 2019 https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/media-sustainability-index-europe-eurasia-2019-full.pdf page 76

4 Konrad- Adenauer Foundation and Ipsos Macedonia, „Survey on media freedom and trust in international institutions and states " published on 8 November 2018 (acceded to on 26 August 2019) https://www.kas.de/documents/281902/281951/KAS+Ipsos+Pressemitteilung+08-11-2018+mk.pdf/f1455fde-5b39-6aab-4b7c-2386037bdad7?version=1.1&t=1541493300821

of media and the trust with international institutions and states, almost every second Macedonian thinks that the media in the country do not report independently and only one third of the population thinks they are well informed about the current political topics. Generally speaking, Macedonians get informed about politics through television. According to the same survey, there is a relatively great trust in EU and NATO.

B) Legal environment

Freedom of expression in the Republic of North Macedonia is a constitutional category enshrined in Article 16 whereby censorship is prohibited. The primary piece of legislation regulating the rights, obligations and responsibilities of the public broadcaster and of the commercial television and radio outlets is the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services[5]. The purpose of this law is to provide for the development of audio and audiovisual media services, to promote the freedom of expression, the development of independent production, as well as to foster the promotion and protection of the cultural identity, language and tradition of the communities in the Republic of North Macedonia etc. The second most important law in the media sector is the Law on Media[6], which prescribes the principles and conditions that must be met by media publishers in performing their activity. Other laws considered important for the work of journalists and media are the Criminal Code, which contains provisions on verbal offenses, such as hate speech, then the Election Code which prescribes media reporting during pre-election campaign, Law on civil liability for insult and defamation, Law on Copyright Protection, Law on Free Access to Public Information and other laws and bylaws.

The Ministry of Information Society and Administration is the competent authority in the media sector and institution responsible for implementation of the primary media legislation. Supervision of the work of the television and radio outlets is carried out by the Agency for audio and audiovisual media services, whereas as from 2018 effectively there is also a Minister without portfolio in charge of communications, accountability and transparency under the auspices of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia.

C) State of play in the media sector according to local and international reports

In 2018, almost all international and local reports following the state of play in the media and journalist rights notified improvements in the area, though there are remaining challenges in the implementation of a part of the legislation, especially within the reforms of the Macedonian Radio Television. The financial situation in which the media operate is generally difficult, as the marketing

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5   Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, „Official Gazette 08-884/1" of 4 February 2019 https://avmu.mk/legislativa/domasna-legislativa/zakoni/

6   Law on Media, Official Gazette of RM, No. 13 of 23.01.2014 https://avmu.mk/закон-за-медиуми/

market is small, and the number of media is large. As a result, in 2018 several media outlets were closed due to financial difficulties. The trend of attacks against journalists has declined, but the problem with court impunity remains, and this in particular applies to outstanding cases where journalist rights have been violated.

Many of these findings have been restated in the European Commission reports over the years. Thus, in the last report[7] of May 2019 in the section referring to the freedom of expression it is stated: "The country has a degree of preparedness / is moderately prepared in the area of freedom of expression and has made good progress. The climate for media freedom and freedom of expression has improved. Open political debate and critical reporting by the media continue. Further self-regulation efforts are needed to improve professional standards and quality of journalism."

The Report offers plenty of constructive recommendations, and to this end the European Commission notes that the public service reform should be continued and its financial independence secured. In this regard, it is recommended to modernize MRT's technical equipment, as well as to develop a strategy for further operation of the public service.

A special part of the Report is dedicated to the practice of law implementation, so under the section of recommendations it recommends appropriate application of the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services by demonstrating a strong political will for professionalism, by respecting the principles of transparency, and ensuring the appointments to the MRT Program Council and to the AVMS Council on the basis of the merit system.

For this year, the Report contains a special section on journalist rights, and therefore the Commission recommends that in the coming period special emphasis should be placed on prompt and effective investigations by judicial and other institutions in processing the attacks against journalists.

In addition, weaknesses in resolving old attacks against journalists have been noted, and there is a reference to the work of the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in the sense of it being insufficiently effective in investigating attacks against journalists.

According to the Reporters Without Borders' Global Media Freedom Index, North Macedonia marked rising of 14 places in the list of their latest report and currently ranks 95th out of 180 countries in the world compared to 109th in 2018. However, they also emphasize the negative occurrences in the media sector, in

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7   European Commission, Report on North Macedonia for 2019 enclosed with the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, to the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and to the Committee of the Regions, Brussels 29.05.2019 COM(2019) 218 final version http://www.sep.gov.mk/data/file/Dokumenti/Izveshtaj%202019-F.pdf

particular those which the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM) had been on a couple of occasions referring to in the past period calling for their solution. Some of these problems are related to the non-implementation of the public broadcasting service (MRT) reform, the need for amendments and addenda to some pieces of the media legislation, such as the Law on Civil Liability from Insult and Defamation, the Law on Free Access to Public Information, and also the Election Code. A serious remark in their report refers to the culture of impunity in cases where journalist rights have been violated, thus stimulating future violence against journalist and media workers. Moreover, criticism was also made in relation to the tendency by certain government officials to intimidate and offend journalists.

A similar trend was also noted in the Freedom House Report, Nations in Transit[8] of 2018 where the situation with the independent media in Macedonia has slightly improved compared to 2017 as a reflection of the positive development of the credibility of media reporting, but also as a result of the change of government on a central level. Notwithstanding, media remain to a great extend polarized along political, ethnic and language lines. In that sense, this Report highlights that: „Journalists and media workers have insecure jobs and many of them work without social contributions and benefits and for low salaries. Media are still far from being independent from political influence".

In the domestic reports following the developments related to journalist rights and the situation with the freedom of the media in the Republic of North Macedonia, slight improvements have been noted, though serious systemic reforms that would create favorable climate for unobstructed media development and for development of professional journalism are lacking. According to the indicators provided by the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM) on the degree of freedom of the media and the safety of journalists in Macedonia,[9] it is pointed that journalists very easily lose their job, as they are provided no legal protection from the institutions and are equally unaware of their rights. Salaries continue to be low and are below the average of the state monthly income, whilst very few journalists have secure job under permanent employment contracts with provided social and worker benefits. Journalists' monthly average net salary is 18.800 MKD, which is for about 30% lower than the average salary paid in the country in 2018. Many of them have no indefinite employment contract, and a smaller part are engaged under author contract. Due to this unenviable situation, journalists can be easily subjected to pressure in their newsrooms and practice self-censorship. They do not seek protection as they have no confidence in the institutions and because they risk

8   Freedom House, Country Report – Nations in Transit for 2019, part on Macedonia https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2018/macedonia

9   Association of Journalists of Macedonia, Report on Indicators on Freedom of Expression for 2018, published in December 2018 https://znm.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/MK-indicators.pdf

losing their job. That is why until the end of 2018 effectively there had been no ruling on mobbing against journalists.

STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS FOR MEDIA REFORM AND RNM'S GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION ASSESSMENT

As a result of the political crisis in Macedonia prior to 2016 Parliamentary elections, during their negotiations the political parties considered media reforms a precondition to compromise and reconciliation. This was also emphasized in the European Commission Urgent Priority Reforms[10] of June 2015 which provide key instructions on what it is required to do with the media sector in order to mark improvements. In Chapter 5 of this document there is a special subchapter in regard of media and freedom of expression on the subject of changes in the work of MRT, government commercials in private media, access to information, as well as acts of insult and defamation. In addition to this document, another document which plays significant role in the intensification of the changes to the media legislation and practices are the Recommendations made by the Senior Experts Group on systemic rule of law issues with regard to the interception of the communications revealed in the spring of 2015[11], likewise known as Priebe Report. The recommendations set out in this document, which are in the spirit of the European values, offer guidelines on the necessity for media ownership to be transparent, journalist working rights to be improved, the court cases of defamation against journalists not to be taken advantage of as a mechanism for intimidation, calling for all media to have their own independence and not to be exposed to political pressures and intimidation. These recommendations are aimed at strengthening the independence of media and journalists from economic, political and court pressures, as well as strengthening the financial and editorial policy. Typical of these recommendations is that they mainly refer to the work of broadcasters and rights, i.e. the status of journalists, and do not interfere with the work of online media.

The next document, or agreement, signed between the main local political actors and under the auspices of the European Union and the US Embassy in Skopje is the so-called „Pržino Agreement"[12] of June 2, supplemented by the annex of June 19, as well as the Protocol of 15 July 2015. This agreement puts end to the prior political crisis in the country, and is considered to be of particular importance for the media, as the implementation of this agreement implies covering the reforms

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10   European Commission, Urgent Reform Priorities, published in June 2015, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/urgent_reform_priori-ties_en.pdf

11   European Commission, Recommendations of the Senior Experts Group on systemic rule of law issues of June 2015 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/news_corner/news/news-files/20150619_recommendations_of_the_senior_experts_group.pdf

12   European Commission, Agreement in Skopje to overcome political crisis, June 2015 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commission-ers/2014-2019/hahn/announcements/agreement-skopje-overcome-political-crisis_en

to be undertaken in the areas of chapters 23 and 14, that is representation and the independent functioning of the competent state authorities, greater media freedom and full compliance with the opinions and recommendations of the Venice Commission. This suggests that the purpose of the agreement is to ensure making of institutional and systemic changes in the legislation, including in the media, aimed to improve the democratic environment in the country. The implementation of this agreement proceeded with challenges and delays due to the divided opinion among the political parties along some of the points that were part of the negotiations. A significant contribution was made by the Belgian mediator Peter Van Haute who was engaged by institutions which themselves were mediators in the process, respectively the EU Delegation in Skopje and the US Embassy in Skopje. Through his efforts and in cooperation with AJM and other media organizations, he offered changes to the primary media regulation that were later largely incorporated into the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services adopted by a two-thirds majority of the MPs in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, but only in December 2018.

As a result of all of these recommendations made by the European Commission and the professional associations in the media sector, the new Government of the Republic of North Macedonia in July 2017 adopted a document entitled Urgent Reform Priority "Plan 3-6-9"[13]. This document contains a special section that deals with legislative changes and certain practices in the media sector, outlining eight commitments aimed at drafting amendments to the Media Law and the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, envisaged to enable the application of the Code of Ethics for reporting during and out of election periods, as well as to strengthen the independence and capacity of the media regulator and the public service broadcaster, through public consultation with media, media associations and civil society organizations. In addition, the Government is committed to preparing an overview of all past cases of physical and verbal assaults and pressures, hate speech etc. against journalists.

A special part refers to the Government's decision to halt government commercials with commercial broadcasters (with the exception of social media) and to conduct communication with citizens through the public service broadcaster. Two years later it can be estimated how many of these commitments will have been actually made. In the part of Government commitments, political will needs to be demonstrated to supporting the continued application of the Code of Ethics by the media, as conversely to this, in 2019 there have been noted cases of senior government officials using vocabulary in their public communication that in some cases contained elements of insult and discrimination against a political opponent, a certain marginalized

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13 Republic of North Macedonia, Government of Republic of North Macedonia, Plan 3-6-9 for Urgent Reform Priorities published in July 2017
https://vlada.mk/sites/default/files/dokumenti/Narativen%20plan%206-9%20MK.pdf

group or a critical journalist. The Association of Journalists of Macedonia and the Media Ethics Council in Macedonia on a couple of occasions have publicly condemned these inappropriate statements and threats with lawsuits made by senior officials[14]. As a consequence of the inappropriate speech made by politicians at both central and local levels, some of the media through the way they report have impact on the public discourse among the citizens, and especially in the social media.

In the part of government campaigns, the real improvement is seen in that on a central level there are no public fund allocations for government campaigns, though the practice on a local level is different and according to the surveys[15] made by AJM, some of the municipalities finance some of the regional and local media outlets for the purpose of them covering their regular activities, such as following the sessions of the local councils, as well as for the purpose of commercials made by the municipalities and the public communal enterprises, interviews with Mayors and alike. In this regard: "AJM's analysis showed that two-thirds of municipalities in 2018 spent or by the end of the year intend to spend about half a million euros on commercials and on engaging journalists under author contracts." Also, in 2019 a new practice was launched on the national televisions where political parties directly buy out space in these media outlets for advertising purposes, namely this was done by the ruling parties on the occasion of what the Government had achieved for the past two years, but also by the opposition parties to discuss other topics, such as party rallies. Public data on the amount spent for these purposes is still lacking, even though over a period of few months in 2019 several media outlets have been trying to get the answer[16]. Although this practice of parties buying advertising space in private media outlets beyond the period of election campaigns is not explicitly prohibited by law, it is considered as a risk of buying influence in the editorial policy of certain media, and in part with public money, given that political parties have a different model of financing under the latest legislative changes, where a large share of funds are allocated from the state budget.

The fact is that in the part of consultation with local stakeholders and adoption of the legislation envisaged under items 4, 5 and 6, broad consultation and transparency in adopting these laws have been secured.

The problem is that the Plan 3-6-9 for Urgent Reform Measures was published in July 2017 whereby measures were envisaged to be implemented in phases of 3, 6 and 9 months respectively. But on the other hand, the Law on Audio

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14 Public reaction from AJM and SEMM of 24 August 2019, *„AJM and SEMM call for the media to adhere to professional standards, whereas politicians to refrain from lawsuits "* https://znm.org.mk/знм-бара-медиумите-да-се-држат-до-профе/ acceded on 1 October 2019,

15 Association of Journalists of Macedonia, Report on Indicators of Freedom of Expression for 2018, published in December 2018, page 9 https://znm.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/MK-indicators.pdf

16 Vlado Apostolov, „The word doesn't count" published on 03.10.2019 (acceded to on 05.10.2019) www.prizma.mk https://prizma.mk/zborot-ne-vazhi/

and Audiovisual Media Services was adopted a year and a half later, namely in December 2018, as a result of it being blocked in the Parliament. Presently, nine months following the entry into force of this law, the new members of the governing boards of the media regulator and MRT have not been appointed yet, making one essential part of the Plan 3-6-9 still not being fulfilled.

Positive developments with the last two recommendations of the Plan can be seen in the report on attacks against journalists that was released and publicly presented[17] by the Ministry of Interior, as well as in the improvement of the government communication with journalists through more frequent press briefings which as a practice began in the second half of 2017.

In addition to the European Commission, the EU Council of 26 June 2018 also adopted conclusions[18] on the work of the Government, which were also confirmed by the European Council of 28 June 2018, emphasizing the importance of continuing the progress in implementing the Urgent Reform Priorities and delivering further sustainable results. As a result, the government developed a new reform plan called "Plan 18"[19]. This plan is divided into four key reform areas in line with the conclusions of the Council of the EU, but unfortunately there is no separate section on media reform even though some of the measures envisaged in the previous plan were still not implemented. The only direct recommendation that concerns the work of journalists and the media sector is point 4.5, which refers to the promotion of the right of access to public information. On 22 May 2019, the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia adopted a new Law on Free Access to Public Information, whereby the Commission is converted into Agency for Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information. The election of the Agency's management (director and deputy director) is still under parliamentary procedure. The Commission is currently composed only of President, which means there is no majority in the total number of members and therefore it cannot fulfill its legal obligations, i.e. work and decide, until a Vice President and members are appointed, thus denying the citizens their right to obtaining public information.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The problem with the media sector in the Republic of North Macedonia is multifold, which is why the approach to solutions should not be seen only in changing the legislation, but also in ensuring its proper implementation, as well as in changing the mindset of politicians and other centers of power and their relation towards journalists and media. This is the reason why some of the

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17   Radio Free Europe, Report of 29 May 2018 (acceded to 06.10.2019) https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/29257343.html

18   Council of the European Union, Conclusions of 26 June 2018 https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/35863/st10555-en18.pdf page 14-16

19   Republic of North Macedonia, Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, Plan 18 of November 2018 https://vlada.mk/sites/default/files/programa/2017-2020/plan_18_mkd.pdf

analyzed plans of the Government appear to offer not only measures that imply changes to the regulation, but also measures that offer different practices such as regular briefings with journalists, fostering a professional attitude towards journalists and the media etc. On the other hand, in a situation of deliberate extensive spread of disinformation, primarily by politicians, which in continuation is further disseminated by some of the media, journalists and media need to strictly adhere to the principles of ethics so that the public can recognize which of the media outlets are credible, and which are causing damage through the way they (dis)inform.

Moreover, the prosecution office and the civil and criminal courts need to demonstrate active commitment to the protection of journalist rights and media integrity, and they are equally required to be resistant to party and economic influence.

The Republic of North Macedonia for years now has been receiving negative criticism in the part of Chapter 23 on the work of the media and freedom of expression in the European Commission's Progress Report.

The criticism mainly refers to the pressures and attacks against journalists and critical media as well as to the work of the public broadcasting service which in the past had been specifically seen as failing to fulfil its role in our society. In addition, criticism has been also made against the judiciary in the sense that it often fails in its work when dealing with cases related to journalists and media.

In a situation when the Government is offering proposal plans on fight against disinformation and the competent Ministries are taking initiatives on amending the laws which are key to the media sector, it is required that the Government further considers to create a national action plan on improvement of the status of journalists and the media. Needless to say, such documents ought to be created in collaboration with the journalist community, but also with media representatives as they all have their special role to play. Thus, the Government has the role to create a positive climate for the work of journalists and media by ensuring consistent implementation of regulation which should be in line with the best practices from other countries, EU member states, and at the same time it should set the example through its own relations it forges with journalists and with the media, in the context of them being nonselective and transparent when informing the public. In the current context, when there is already delay in the appointment of the governing boards of MRT and the media regulator, the Government is faced with its own commitments being tested in the sense of whether it is genuinely striving toward systemic reforms that could significantly improve the media or would there instead be offered only cosmetic solutions which would yield positive results but only in the short run.

On the other hand, media owners and managers need to consider how to continue the practice of managing their media outlets in conditions of a restricted market. In the European countries there are already present models of grouping few smaller media outlets into larger ones, or instead some of the media should become a certain form of shareholding associations in which journalists and editors would have their shares, which would imply collective ownership of legal entities. Collective agreements in the media sector in North Macedonia are currently lacking despite the efforts made by the journalist trade union, therefore the media need to accede to this as soon as possible in order to provide for the minimum economic and social security for journalists as a form of prevention of the current practice of self-censorship.

Media self-regulation needs to be accepted as a concept by all stakeholders, and especially by media owners and managers as a precondition to quality media contents, but also as a mechanism that could likely protect the public from possible unprofessional journalism. Thus, the authorities would be deterred to consider possible restrictive legal solutions which may constrain freedom of expression, as this may pose additional problem to the EU integration process.

At the same time, the guilds and associations need to continue to promote the code of ethics on professional reporting and offer training and advanced education not only for journalists but also for the rest of the media workers, such as cameramen and photojournalists in order to improve professionalism in reporting. Additional efforts are required to promote media literacy so that the public can be further educated about the role of the media as well as how to be able to recognize more efficiently disinformation from real news.

 Finally, the authorities in the Republic of North Macedonia need to make additional efforts to improve the legislative framework in the media sector, but equally to ensure consistent implementation of all relevant laws and changes to some of the practices, especially with regard to improving the attitude towards journalists and media. It is of exceptional importance to continue to further align the domestic media regulation with the EU audio and audiovisual media services directives, especially in the part of pluralism and prevention and penalties in the event of abuse of freedom of expression. These aspects are under permanent loop by the local civil society organizations, but also by the European Commission and are considered precondition to the successful European Union integration. In regard of the status of implementation of these issues, the European Commission makes regular references in Chapter 23 in its annual report, where in addition to the judiciary it also refers to the fundamental human rights, such as freedom of expression.

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Radovan M. Spiridonov is an undergraduate student enrolled in the BA programs of International Relations and Philosophy at St. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. So far, he has written several student academic papers on the topics of: reshaping of the world order, the phenomenology of political ideologies, and existentialism. He has gained professional experience through his involvement in the Center for Research and Policy Making, but also through the engagement with several youth CSOs. He is also a scholar of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

Radovan M. Spiridonov

LANGUAGE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF THE NATIONALISTIC POLITICS IN THE BALKANS

„Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt.“[1]

Wittgenstein

INTRODUCTION

The language as a sociolinguistic phenomenon has a constant interactive correlation with the political processes in every society. In multiethnic societies, the sociopolitical character of the language has a great impact on the social cohesion. In order to advance their own political agenda and personal interests for power, the politicians with nationalistic orientation instrumentalize the language in order to create national confrontations. This is the case because politicians do not implement scientifically based policies in the field of linguistics,

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1   The limits of my language are the limits of my world. (translation from German)

but instead builds policies based on ethnocentrism. This interrelation can be clearly seen when analyzing the multiethnic societies, as that of former Yugoslavia. (Bugarski, 2012, 219-235)

In countries like the SFR of Yugoslavia, the language issues penetrate even deeper into the political sphere, because the language policies can contribute either towards a cohesive or a conflicted society.[2] The Serbo-Croatian language was the common language (lingua communis) of the majority of citizens, and represented one of the cohesive factors in the multiethnic Yugoslavian federation. (Naylon, 1978, 456-468) However, the socialist state faced its disintegration in 1991, mostly thanks to the new wave of nationalistic policies. (Denitch, 1993, 3-16) The subsequent interethnic conflicts among the Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks were the cause for the disintegration of the Serbo-Croatian language into four separate languages: Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, and Montenegrin.

By analyzing the conditions in former SFR of Yugoslavia I will make an attempt to demonstrate that the Serbo-Croatian language did not 'disintegrate' as a consequence of its linguistic, sociological and political contradictions, but because the politicians with nationalistic orientation abused the language issues in order to stir interethnic tensions, social confrontations, and to maintain conflicting conditions.

By applying the analytical-synthetic method of the scientific research, I will offer arguments that will map the methods of instrumentalization of the language issues in favor of the nationalistic ideology. Furthermore, by applying the case study method, I will analyze an example where the language is an instrument in the nationalistic policy – the case with the two schools under the same roof in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Finally, through the experience of the countries from the German linguistic area, and by portraying an overview of the academic activism with the Declaration on Common Language, I will offer positive examples to help build a scientifically founded language policy oriented towards strengthening the concept of open society.

THE NATURE OF BALKAN NATIONALISMS

The debate on the nature of Balkan nationalistic policies is the necessary initial step towards our understanding of the use of language as a political instrument in the post-socialist transition. Therefore, in this part of the paper I will provide

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2   Regarding sociolinguistics as a scientific discipline, as well as the issue of the relation between the language and the social processes, see in more detail: Sociolinguistics: Paulstone, Christina, and Richard Tucker, editors. Sociolinguistics: The Essential Readings. 1st ed., Wiley-Black-well, 2003.; also Meyerhoff, Miriam. Introducing Sociolinguistics. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2011.; and Edwards, John. Multilingualism: Understanding Linguistic Diversity. 1st ed., Continuum International Pub. Group, 2012

a short overview of the key features of the nationalistic policies and the implications deriving from them.

In this debate, there is no need for reexamining the distant past, because it is noticeable that the genesis of the new forms of nationalisms emerges during the intensified decentralization of the SFR of Yugoslavia, implemented with the resolutions from the 1974 Constitution.[3] However, the death of Josip Broz Tito in 1980 – the figure who united the citizens from various ethnic backgrounds (Djilas, 1995, 116-122), initiates a process of enhanced prominence of the nationalistic movements in the republics.

The nationalistic momentum culminates after the fall of the Berlin Wall, at the time when Yugoslavia is governed by "irresponsible politicians, who know that the shortest way to satisfy their lust for power is nationalism". (Llosa, 2000, 8) Such an outcome was greatly reinforced by the fact that the Balkans as a region, in the more recent history, had not had the opportunity to establish and develop stable autochthonous political systems, nor had had the tradition of democratic institutions and high awareness among the citizens for their participation in the political discourse and the decision-making processes.[4]

In the years of social and economic transition, the nationalistic policies were a useful tool to gain power when the citizens were going through a deep political, economic, and moral crisis.[5] According to Winkler, this happens because nationalism is suitable for averting the attention from the social crises and the existential problems within the community. He says that the political elites govern with it [nationalism] on top-to-bottom basis. (Winkler, 7)

Furthermore, in the same spirit, Sundhaussen mentions that only "the joint interplay of the manipulation by the elites and the insecurity of the masses provides nationalism with its madness and explosive power". In the end he concludes that "the politicians, the intellectuals and the journalists are its

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3 The SFR of Yugoslavia's Constitution from 1974 was the fourth and the last constitution of the federation. The most controversial, and, historically, the most important consequences from this highest legal act derived from the resolutions about the state organization of Yugoslavia, which were later used as a legal justification for its disintegration. Such resolutions were interpreted differently by the warring sides during the armed conflict. The purified text of the Constitution is available at: Djurovic, Dragoljub, editor. The Constitution of The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Dopisna Delavska Univerza, 1974, https://www.worldstatesmen.org/Yugoslavia-Constitution1974.pdf.

4 Regarding the issue of democratization of the Balkans, see more at: PRIDHAM, Geoffrey. "Democratizing the Western Balkans: Challenges and Burdens for the European Union." International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs, vol. 17, no. 3, 2008, pp. 72–89.

5 The nationalistic tendencies between the two largest peoples – the Serbs and the Croats, fueled the overall dissolution of the federation. The Serbs were basically determined for the concept of a unitary state, i.e. for establishing a strong federal state of Yugoslavia, which some desired to establish as predominantly a Serbian state. Strong outbreaks of this new form of nationalism can be seen in: the propagation of the irredentist project for a Great Serbia, the stronger role of the church in the state policies, the deeply wrong position in relation to the Albanians' demands in the Autonomous Region of Kosovo and Metohija. Slobodan Milošević was the new "father of the nation", and in him were all hopes for the revival of the glorious past against the ever more austere daily life. Serbian nationalism will turn out to be an extraordinarily lethal power in the wars to come. For some from the Croatian political leadership, Yugoslavia was only a transient and transitory solution on the path towards an independent Croatian national state. In a similar way as Milošević, the Croatian leader Franjo Tudjman was also developing obsessive nationalism, which could be seen from his attitude towards the Serbian minority. His decision to depart from Yugoslavia without taking into consideration the needs and the attitudes of the significant Serbian minority, as well as the social climate that was stimulating extreme right-wing political groups only contributed towards bringing the state closer to the abyss. Many researches of these events also criticize the role, as well as the political orientation and the acts of the Bosnian leadership under Alija Izetbegović.

true protagonists." (Sundhaussen, 1933, 44-67) Quite often nationalism is thought of as "primitivism, hindrance, reactionism, delusion, or disease, and to overcome it represents an advancement for the nation, or even a precondition for establishing a spiritual civilization." Such conclusions do not seem overrated when nationalism's actual outreach is taken into consideration: "glorifying one's own nation, racial hatred, contempt for others, persecuting unbelievers within one's group, fanatism and crimes of exodus and destruction of whole nations." (Lemberg, 1964, 7)

Such a scientific observation of the phenomenon of nationalism in the 20th century induces Popper to conclude that this ideology is "a rebellion against reason and the open society. Nationalism addresses our tribal yearnings, addresses the passions and prejudices, our nostalgic desire to get rid of the burden of personal responsibility and replace it with a collective or group responsibility." (Poppers, 1966, 252)

Finally, it is completely wrong to believe that the above-mentioned political elites can be considered patriots, although they assert themselves as such. Patriotism excludes the biased idealization of own's own nation, but also the lack of respect for the other nations. The feeling of hatred, contempt, and intolerance for other nations, as well as any kind of discrimination against them are strange to every patriot. To the contrary, patriotism fosters respect for other nations and other national cultures.[6]

The critical insight into the historical facts, the sociological phenomena, but primarily the acts of the politicians with nationalistic orientation impose the conclusion that the nature of Balkan nationalisms is essentially juxtaposed to the principles of open society and the political standards known as "values of the western democracies". Therefore, they can justly be described as fatal and recessive factors in the society, if we are to stay true to the determination for democratization of the Balkan states and their integration into the family of European nations.

SCIENCE AGAINST IDEOLOGY

The third part of this paper is dedicated to the key scientific arguments in favor of the claim about the polycentric nature of the Serbo-Croatian language. At the same time, I will analyze the conflict between science and the nationalistic

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6 Maurizio Viroli in "For the Love of the Fatherland" clearly outlines the border between patriotism and nationalism. He claims that in Fascist times, nationalism prevailed, while patriotism did not exist at all. The political life was rendered down to highlighting the belonging to the race or the nation. Patriotism, as confirmed by history and understood by VIroli, sees tyranny, despotism, and corruption as enemies, while nationalism sees foreign ideas and opinions, heterogeneity, ethnic and cultural diversity, lack of social cohesion as their greatest enemies. For the patriots, the main values are 'res publica and the free life it enables', unlike the nationalists, whose highest values are 'the unity and purity of one own's nation'. See more at: Viroli, Maurizio. Per Amore Della Patria: Patriottismo e Nazionalismo Nella Storia. Laterza, 2001.

ideologies and their position towards the language issue, as well as how it got reflected in specific political outcomes in former SFR of Yugoslavia.

For a start, the standard language is defined as a linguistic form that is standardized and codified and is used for official communication in one or several states. Its main feature is supra-regionality, with the tendency to be used by all social spheres. (Finegan, 2007, 14)

It should be noted that the polycentric language is often defined as a language that is officially used or widely spread in several states, where each state develops its own codified norms for the specific language. Such variants are noticeably different in certain areas, however, not enough to be considered separate languages. Some of the main world languages have polycentric characteristics, such as: English (British, American, Australian, and other variants), Spanish (Castellan, Mexican, Argentinian, and other variants), or German (German, Austrian, and Swiss variants). (Clyne, 1992, 1) (Stewart, 1968, 534)

Moreover, I will present a short and concise overview of the key scientific arguments in favor of the thesis that we are talking about a single polycentric language. (Blum 2002, 8) The Serbo-Croatian language area, in linguistics, is treated as a continuum of dialects spreading from the Croatian-Slovenian to the Serbian-Bulgarian border. (Alexander, 2000, 4) Since all normative variants in this area are based on one dialect – Shtokavian, the linguists consider that these are linguistic variants with the same foundation.

Besides all policies of language divisions, even today the differences among these four variants are much smaller when compared to the variants of some other polycentric languages. There are bigger differentiations among the variants of English, German, and Spanish. (Blum, 2002, 134) According to Blum, the differences between the four variants are completely insignificant in relation to the orthography, the grammar, or the other linguistic categories. The lexical differences are more obvious, but quite typical for a language that is spoken across a larger geographical area. The claim that the existence of different words implicitly imposes the existence of two different languages (talas/val [wave]; sijalica/žarulja [lightbulb]; voz/vlak [train] etc.) is incorrect, because it excludes the influences of the differences on the language structure, and most importantly on their mutual understandability.

The above-mentioned linguistic facts can be supplemented by the sociolinguistic conclusion of linguistic resemblance.[7] From a sociolinguistic point of view, the South Slavic philologists with nationalistic orientation are trying to identify the

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7   See in more detail about the sociolinguistic standpoints at: Thomas, Paul-Louis. "Serbo-Croatian (Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, Serbian): From the Study of the Language to the Identity of Languages." Slavic Studies Review, vol. 74, no. 2-3, 2002, pp. 311–325.; also, at Kordić, Snježana. "Policentrični standardni jezik" Jezični varijeteti i nacionalni identiteti, Disput, 2009, pp.83-108.

language with the nation, representing it as the nation's benchmark, which is incorrect. Science does not know a unilateral simplistic relation between the character of the language and the identity of the nation.

Having reviewed the key scientific arguments in favor of the polycentric concept of the language, in addition, I will provide a short analysis of the ideological positions of Balkan nationalisms, with the attempt to present their tendencies to instrumentalize the language issues.

The marginal ultra-right wing parties instrumentalize linguistics through quasi-scientific theories to justify their irredentist aspirations.[8] The position that unites all these groups is the conviction that the Serbo-Croatian language was nothing more than a political project. The nationalists from all these states say that the Yugoslavian political doctrine "invented" the Serbo-Croatian language in order to harm the national interests of the people.[9] Such political positions are based on historical misinterpretations aiming to cause interethnic animosity. Namely, the Serbo-Croatian language was a joint project of the South Slavic authors and linguists long before the emergence of the Yugoslavian state on the stage of history. Ever since the Illyrian movement, and the Spring of Nations, the South Slavic authors and linguists have been developing the concept of a shared language among their peoples.

The Serbian linguistic nationalism, in the past, used to have its initiators and supporters even in the most prestigious institutions such as SANU[10], although, today, it stays within the margins of the far-right. However, the retrograde nature of these views still has the potential to create conflicts and tensions.[11] The linguistic nationalists deny that the other South Slavic people speak languages that are different from the Serbian literary standard and insist on all being one form of the Serbian national language. The language issues are the foundation on which the nationalistic powers in the Serbian society build their chauvinistic argumentation of negating the uniqueness and independence of the other nations in the surrounding.

On the other side, the Croatian linguistic nationalism is deeply rooted in the institutional structures, starting with the higher-educational institutions up to HAZU[12]. For many, the most obvious example of linguistic nationalism is the insistence on the linguistic purism policy. Linguistic purism emerges when there

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8 One of the greatest contributors to popularizing and encouraging such political viewpoints was Voislav Šešelj and his Serbian Radical Party. Although today, his party is politically marginal power in the state, in the past, as one of the largest political parties, was mostly responsible for shaping such narratives in the Serbian society. For more details about the Serbian Radical Party's ideology, including their view on the monolithic Serbian language, see at: Шешељ, Војислав. Идеологија Српског Национализма. Велика Србија, 2002.

9 On the attitude of the nationalities towards the Yugoslavian linguistic identity, see at: Busch, Brigitta, and Helen Kelly-Holmes. Language, Discourse, and Borders in the Yugoslav Successor States. 1st ed., Multilingual Matters Ltd, 2004.

10 For more detailed overview on the origin and development of the Serbian nationalism, see at: Pavković, Aleksandar. "The Origins of Contemporary Serb Nationalism: Yet Another Case of 'Trahison Des Clercs?'." The Slavonic and East European Review, vol. 82, no. 1, 2004

11 For more recent studies of the Serbian far-right and their methods, see at: Bakic, Jovo. Right-Wing Extremism in Serbia. FES Serbia, 2013.

12 HAZU - Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences (translation from Croatian).

is a systematic and institutional tendency to "purify" the language from foreign words, by replacing them with newly coined suitable words from the domestic linguistic fond. Purism as a phenomenon, on its own, is not scientifically wrong, or socially harmful. To the contrary, in can be very fruitful, speaking of enriching the language fond and the literary opus of one nation.

However, in the given social and historical context, and the intentions which underline its implementation in the academic community, impose the conclusion that purism emerges as a consequence of the nationalistic concept of language (Gardt, 2000, 247-271), it represents "a linguistic equivalent to xenophobia and the excessive social need for demarcation."[13] Research shows that quite often "linguistic purism is a tool in the hands of the racist and nationalist ideologies." (Milroy, 2005, 432-4-342) Kordić highlights that the nationalistic hatred happens first in the minds, i.e. in the sphere of language and symbols. In the historical review, she speaks of the role of purism in Nazi Germany, when the linguistic policy was mainly responsible for shaping the Reich's identity. Research shows that the linguistic policy and the purist aspirations are directly interrelated and grow with the nationalistic policy. In addition, the source of purism is not the speakers, but individual linguists who are in line with the nationalistic policy. (Czerwizski, 2005, 256)

The arguments presented above, as well as the analysis of the sociological phenomena show the relation and the way of interaction between the nationalistic ideology and the linguistic issues. The next part shows how the policies related to these issues can have a negative impact on the society and the future of the region, through the analysis of the educational policies.

CASE STUDY: TWO SCHOOLS UNDER THE SAME ROOF

The instrumentalization of the linguistic issue in the service of nationalism generates, daily, a spectrum of retrograde sociopolitical consequences in all social spheres. The literature dealing with the study of post-conflict societies, points out that their educational systems are a social sphere that is often used as the frontline for nationalistic policies. (Coenders and Scheepers, 2003, 313-343) The post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina is considered to be a society that is particularly vulnerable to the nationalistic abuse of the educational system. (Emkic, 2018, 37-49)

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13 Final conclusion remark from the analysis: Coulmas, F. Gewählte Worte: Über Sprache als Wille und Bekenntnis. Frankfurth Verlag, 1996.

During the war, education was used to stimulate separation and hatred among the young people, and later to maintain these separations.[14] The educational system became a tool for segregation of the young people according to religious, language, and national belonging. (Kreso, 2008, 353-374) The manipulation with the language issues will turn out to be one of the main instruments for implementation of such policies.

The fact that the educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a hostage to the nationalistic policies is confirmed by the phenomenon, colloquially known as "two schools under the same roof". Namely, this is an exemplary form of segregation[15] in at least 56 schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The common trait for all these facilities is that both Bosnian and Croatian students are schooled in the same facility, but are physically separated from each other. Usually, they have separate entrances in the common school facility, which, in addition, prevents any interaction whatsoever. (Lowen, 2010) The students of Bosnian nationality attend classes based on the curricula defined by the government in Sarajevo, while the Croatian students use the curricula defined by the government in Zagreb. These schools can mostly be found in the Central Bosnian, Herzegovina-Neretva, and Zenica-Doboj cantons. These are the areas that witnessed bloody interethnic skirmishes during the civil war, and are still lacking suitable mechanisms for interethnic integration.[16] (Tolomelli, 2015, 89-108)

According to the positive legal regulations, students have the right to attend classes in both schools, however, practice shows that they actually attend classes in schools with predominantly students of their own community, according to the model "separate but equal". This should not be surprising, because the school environment, including the curriculum, favors only one community. Due to this reason, the existence of such schools can be considered an example of segregation, because segregation implies an act of separation of the students based on various criteria, contrary to the basic principles of human rights and freedoms, and the reconciliation process. Another disadvantage is that post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina is a deeply polarized society, which makes the profiling of civic educational policies even more difficult.

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14 In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH) the influence of the ethno-nationalistic and language policy reached the schools most noticeably. It is typical for the authorities to rename the schools in order to honor persons or events from the war period, and to emphasize the national or religious characteristics in the schools. The teaching is also done based on teaching plans and coursebooks that are ethnically hued, which include victimization of one constituent people, and even placing the other constituent peoples in a negative context. For instance, the history coursebooks often have the tendency to interpret the relations between the ethnic communities in BIH as directly juxtaposed, focusing only on the animosity and the wars between them.

15 In this text, segregation is synthetically defined as a policy of forced separation and division of the members of the society. It is usually applied based on racial, national, or religious grounds, where it can be regulated by legislature (de jure) or implicit from the social context (de jure). General or more details on the issue of segregation, see at: Kaplan, David H. Navigating Ethnicity: Segregation, Placemaking, And Difference. 1st ed., Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2017.

16 Historically speaking, the aforementioned phenomenon is a consequence of the incompletely and incompetently implemented peace agreement that ended the armed conflict (1992-1994) between the ethnic Bosniaks and the ethnic Croats. We can add to this the absence of suitable effective measures for building the peace and for reconciliation, but also the lack of political will to overcome the ethno-nationalistic social discourse. More details on the contents of the agreement, see at: United States Institute for Peace. The United States And Croatia: A Documentary History, 1992-1997 - Washington Agreement. USIP Library, 1997, pp. 29-37.

The OSCE is considered to be the most credible and relevant instance that conducts detailed research of this phenomenon and is committed to developing initiatives for its resolution. According to the report of their Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the existence of "two schools under the same roof" is a breach of the international conventions. Such national and language segregation is contrary to: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention against Discrimination in Education and other regulations of the international law. (OSCE, 2018, 15-18)

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in 2015, stated the following: "we continue to express our concerns for the significant national segregation within the educational system in certain states, signees of the Convention, as with the case of the "two schools under the same roof" [in BIH], and we reaffirm our concerns about the fact that segregation in the education on the territory of the signee state only deepens the duality, the lack of trust, and the fear against "the others". (CERD, 2015, 6) The same remarks are additionally highlighted in the 2018 report, expressing concerns about the lack of political will to implement the recommendations. (CERD, 2018, 5)[17]

We should not underestimate the role of the linguists in the debate on the historical, legal or pedagogical perspectives of this phenomenon. Namely, we are referring here to the fact that a certain part of the linguists and educators have decided to put themselves in the service of the political elites with nationalistic orientation, by providing so-called "scientific arguments", based on which policies are created for separation, rather than inclusive policies. (Kordic, 2010, 366-381) (Gröschel, 2009, 183-185; 371-372) (Busch, Kelly–Holmes, 2004, 54-55) Actually, one of the most commonly used arguments for the existence of the phenomenon "two schools under the same roof" is that the students from the different ethnic communities, speak two different languages, and according to their logic and thinking it is necessary to have two separate curricula. Such policy is not only devastating for the process of creating and developing the national democratic capacities, but it has its own repercussions in the domain of the international obligations of the state.

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17 In addition, in 2012, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child noted: "Discrimination in the educational sphere is still a widespread phenomenon, which involves the continuation of the existence of "two schools under the same roof", as well as the implementation of one-nation school policies in the territory of the state that is a signee of the Convention [BIH]. During classes, the students are separated based on their nationality, which creates a situation when children attend classes only in schools intended for their community. In accordance with Article 2 from the Convention, the Committee requests the signee state to cancel such practices of segregation of the school children based on their nationality and language." More details at: Committee on the Rights of the Child (OHCHR). Concluding Observations: Bosnia And Herzegovina. 2012.

Efforts have been made to initiate interethnic integration in the education by the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina,[18] and by other representatives of the international community, primarily the OSCE and the EU, even though their impact is not significant.

Besides the insufficient impact of the institutions of the system and the international community, there are positive examples of civic activism signalizing resistance against the nationalistic policies of educational segregation. Namely, in the town of Jajce, allegedly responding to the complaints about discrimination against the Bosnian children in the secondary schools, the Assembly of the Central Bosnian canton made a decision to establish another secondary school, with classes in Bosnian language. This would lead to separation of the children from different nationalities, and practically a segregation of the young people based on ethnic belonging.

A group of students – Bosniaks and Croats – showed courage and stood their ground by publicly condemning the decision, rejecting the nationalistic positions of the politicians. Moreover, they required to be educated in multiethnic schools. The international community, undoubtedly supported their position and supported their request. The persistence of the students, their creative civic activism and the moral authority that they demonstrated attracted the attention of the general public, which lead to freezing the decision. Thanks to their civic activism in 2016 and 2017, the group of students from Jajce received the European Award - Max van der Stoel.[19]

The incentive and the courage of the youth form Jajce, demonstrated the potential of the civic activism as a tool to oppose the nationalistic instrumentalization of the language issues in the direction of ethno-centric shaping of the educational policies.

LINGUISTIC POLICIES FROM THE GERMAN LANGUAGE AREA

The Serbo-Croatian language is just one of the many examples of polycentric language systems in the world. One of the most significant of these languages

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18 The Office of the High Representative is an ad hoc international institution responsible for monitoring the implementation of the civil aspects of the Peace Agreement to end the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The position of the High Representative was established in agreement with the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, known as the Dayton Agreement, agreed upon in Dayton, Ohio, and signed in Paris, on 14th December 1995. The High Representative should work with the citizens and institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the international community in order enable Bosnia and Herzegovina to develop as a peaceful and sustainable democratic country.

19 More information on the civic activism of the students from Jajce are available at: Adler, Sabine. "Učenici u Jajcu Ne Pristaju Na Podjelu". DW.COM, 2019, https://www.dw.com/bs/učenici-u-jajcu-ne-pristaju-na-podjelu/a-46834749.; Augustinović, Marija. "Srednjoškolci U Jajcu Ostaju Zajedno: Vlasti Odustale Od Nove Škole". Radio Slobodna Evropa, 2019, https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/srednjoskolci-u-jajcu-os-taju-zajedno-u-klupama/28560287.html.; Kadić, Neira. "Mladi Heroji: Tinejdžeri U Jajcu Zaustavili Daljnju Segregaciju U Školama". Balkan Diskurs, 2019, https://balkandiskurs.com/2019/02/28/mladi-heroji-tinejdzeri-u-jajcu/; Lakic, Mladen. "Bosnian Schoolchildren Win Award For Fighting Segregation". Balkan Insight, 2019, https://balkaninsight.com/2018/07/20/u%C4%8Denici-iz-bih-dobili-nagradu-za-njihovu-borbu-protiv-segregacije-07-19-2018/?lang=sr.

is the German (Ammon, 1995, 484-499), which deserves particular attention in relation to the political, social, and linguistic solutions. Such solutions could serve as a good model for the civic society in direction of creating scientifically founded policies to combat nationalistic tendencies.

For a start, there are three mutually equal, standard national variants: German (Bundesdeutsches Hochdeutsch), Austrian (Österreichisches Hochdeutsch), and Swiss (Schweizer Hochdeutsch). (Ammon 1995, 496) From linguistics' perspective, the national variants of the German language are significantly different with noticeable autonomous features. (Földes, 2002, 225) Such variables, to a lesser degree, can be seen in the Serbo-Croatian language. Moreover, just as the Serbo-Croatian language, the German language does not have a single unified cultural standard. (Ager, 2001, 57) However, it does not prevent them from cherishing the shared linguistic and cultural heritage, where each nation does so in the context of the domicile cultural surrounding.

Unlike the nationalistic elites on the territory of former Yugoslavia, who wanted to justify their political craftwork of separate languages by postulating tendentious interpretations of the language policy, the German politicians simply followed the recommendations of the scientific community in relation to creating and implementing the strategic policies in the sphere of linguistics. Drawing conclusions from the negative experience with the language censure in East Germany, the language policies today enjoy the status of policies of public interest. (Rodden, 2004, 46-63) Each of the republics should establish their own mechanisms to standardize and regulate the language communication, such as, for instance, the acknowledged reference statements for the standard German language, as well as for institutions that define the norms based on scientific deliberation.

To illustrate it, and to show how it functions in practice, we can refer to the fierce polemics regarding the orthographic reform of the German language. It was introduced in 1996, in order to simplify the German spelling and punctuation rules. Even today, the reform is not undoubtedly accepted, and it has its supporters and opponents in various social fields: from academics to civic activists. The reformed orthography was compulsory for the schools and the public administration, however, there was a huge campaign against the reforms, and as a result of the public debate, the Federal Constitutional Court of Germany was invited to determine the scope of the reforms (Upward, 1997, 22-36) In 1998, the court announced that, since there is no law regulating orthography, outside the schools people can write as they please, including the use of the traditional spelling.[20] In March 2006, the Council of German Orthography unanimously agreed to remove the most controversial changes from the reform.

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20 The documentation related to the trial is available at: Bundesverfassungsgericht, Leitsätze zum Urteil des Ersten Senats, 1998. https://www.bundesverfassungsgericht.de/entscheidungen/rs19980714_1bvr164097.html

This is a prominent example of civic inclusiveness and presence of linguistic authorities with various orientations and various positions and attitudes in determining the flow of the language policies.

In the developed European democracies with a high level of civic inclusion in the political life the ethno-nationalistic understanding of language does not prevail. In this regard, the European experience in creating policies to regulate the language issues serves as an undoubtedly positive example for the countries from former Yugoslavia. The countries from the German language area offer a practical manifestation of the concept of how - through mutual reverence, respect for the differences, as well as by highlighting and building on similarities - to create an atmosphere of intranational cohabitation, collaboration, and integration.

THE DECLARATION ON A COMMON LANGUAGE – A HOPE FOR DEMOS

In the years of the post-socialist transition, the voice of science was pushed to the margins of the public discourse, replacing scientific deliberation with ideological demagogy. The fifth part of this paper is dedicated to an observation of, for the Balkan area, an unconventional case of academically engaged civic activism, directed towards addressing such phenomena.

The project "Languages and nationalisms", under the auspices of the German foundations Allianz Kulturstiftung and Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst, started a regional initiative to revitalize the scientifically based discussion on the linguistic issues.[21] This is where the Declaration of Common Language[22] derived from, which represents a kind of program protest text affirming the concept of common language.

The proclamation was prepared by an international group of eminent linguists. Presented in March 2017, it holds the signatures of over 200 prominent intellectuals. The signees of the Declaration consider the languages predominantly spoken in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, and Montenegro to be forms of a common language with several national variants, and that the use of four names for the standard variants – Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, and Serbian – does not imply that they are different languages.

The Declaration reminds us that the communication among these peoples is flowless and easy, which is actually the essence of each language. Furthermore, it highlights that the linguistic policy of underlining the differences has brought to a series of negative social phenomena. The text states that each national

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21   More details on the project, available at: Jezici i nacionalizmi, O projektu, 2017. http://jezicinacionalizmi.com/o-projektu/
22   The text of the Declaration is available at: Jezici i nacionalizmi, Tekst deklaracije, 2017. http://jezicinacionalizmi.com/deklaracija/

collective can independently standardize its variant and that they are essentially equal. The document demands an end to the segregation of students based on national grounds in the schools, for supposedly speaking a different language. The Declaration highlights that the language and the nation do not necessarily overlap, since the language does not define the nation. The proclamation calls for an end to all forms of language segregation and discrimination in the educational and public institutions.

The Declaration was supported by a great many world-renowned sociolinguists[23] who emphasized its scientific basis, and at the same time, condemning the nationalistic language policies. Moreover, particular criticism was addressed to the system of educational segregation of youth under the premise of "speaking different languages" (Trudgill 2017:46)

However, besides the general support for the Declaration among the scientific community, the initiative was facing serious backlash by the nationalists in all the four republics. The nationalistic circles interpreted the concept of a common language as an attack against their national identity and language. There were negative reactions, which echoed mostly in the Croatian public, against the Declaration that was labelled, along with its signees, with the most profane and insulting epithets by many political and academic figures.[24]

Besides the negative reactions, we can conclude that this is a successful example of civic and academic activism, which according to the scientific community is an important step forward in the direction of building dynamic and open societies.[25] In a region with a predominantly ethnocentric interpretation of the states and cultures, even the seemingly small initiatives are a step forward towards constructing a society based on demos, not ethnos.

CONCLUSION

The language as a system for human interaction holds another fundamental characteristic in its background. The language creates our perception of reality

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23 The fact that deserves attention is that the father of modern linguistics Noam Chomsky, who is considered to be one of the most quoted living world intellectuals, is one of the proponents of the Declaration. For more details, see at:N1BiH, Noam Chomsky signs Declaration on the Common Language, March 2018. http://hr.n1info.com/English/NEWS/a290410/Noam-Chomsky-signs-Declaration-on-the-Common-Language.html

24 More details on the negative reactions in Croatia: Narod.hr, Jure Vujić: Jezikova juha neo-jugoslavenskom Esperantu, April 2017. https://narod.hr/hrvatska/jure-vujic-jezikova-juha-neo-jugoslavenskom-esperantu ; furthermore, Narod.hr, Kovačec o "Deklaraciji o zajedničkom jeziku": To je skup iskompleksiranih ideja koji se ne temelji ni na kakvoj objektivnoj stvarnosti, March 2017. https://narod.hr/hrvatska/kovacec-deklaraciji-zajednickom-jeziku-to-skup-iskompleksiranih-ideja-se-ne-temelji-ni-kakvoj-objektivnoj-stvarnosti ; and Vecernji list, 'Deklaracija o zajedničkom jeziku je sasvim marginalna stvar o kojoj se ne treba raspravljati', March 2017. https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/grabar-kitarovic-deklaracija-o-zajednickom-jeziku-je-sasvim-marginalna-stvar-o-kojoj-se-ne-treba-raspravljati-1159853.

25 More details on the reactions of the expert community, see at: RTS, Koliko je Deklaracija o zajedničkom jeziku postigla svoj cilj?, June, 2018. http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/125/drustvo/3172576/koliko-je-deklaracija-o-zajednickom-jeziku-postigla-svoj-cilj.html; furthermore, Pescanik, Okolina jezika, September, 2017. https://pescanik.net/okolina-jezika/; and Jutarnji list, PIŠE ANTE TOMIĆ:Zašto sam potpisao Deklaraciju o zajedničkom jeziku Hrvata, Srba, Bošnjaka i Crnogoraca, March, 2017. https://www.jutarnji.hr/komentari/pise-ante-tomic-zasto-sam-potpisao-deklaraciju-o-zajednickom-jeziku-hrvata-srba-bosnjaka-i-crnogoraca/5829027/;

and assists in our social existence. These statements are applicable to the individuals, but also to the social communities.

The politically motivated instrumentalization of the Serbo-Croatian language in the previous decades had a huge impact on the creation of the ethno-centric surrounding, the regional disintegration, but also on the practical segregation. In this paper, by examining the factual conditions in the concerned states, but mostly by reviewing and examining the conclusions from the expert and scientific literature of eminent world-renowned linguists, I managed to formulate argumentation in favor of the claim that the Serbo-Croatian language did not "disintegrate" as a result of its linguistic, sociological, and political contradictions, but that the politicians with nationalistic orientations abused the language issues in order to stimulate intranational tensions, social confrontations, and to maintain the state of conflict.

In the end, it should be highlighted that the aspirations of the countries from the Western Balkans towards EU membership, can be seriously disrupted unless the nationalistic confrontations and linguistic manipulations are put an end to. By following and applying the positive example with the German language, we can work on creating a positive intercultural atmosphere of mutual reverence and understanding. The European experiences are not precious only in the field of the economic or the social component. If we are determined for a common future within the European family of nations, it is necessary to act in direction of building bridges of friendship and alliance, where the common language can be of great value.

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Short Biography

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Gracija Nikolovska

IMPORTANCE OF E-GOVERNANCE AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

INTRODUCTION

Today's society undoubtedly overwhelmed by the growing wave of new technology that is becoming increasingly widespread and advanced. The information and communication technologies are becoming ubiquitous and inevitably needed by the modern human. Thus, starting from a point where the society and the world, in general, are observed through the prism of internet and automation, the unavoidable question arising is: if and how these new trends could be successfully implemented in the area of the public sector, administration and government and which would be the resulting benefits? When it comes to the use of the information and communication technologies (ICT) in state institutions, the actual concept being implied here is e-governance. The objective of e-governance is to improve the current governance through the

use of electronic media[1]. According to the UNESCO definition[2], e-governance implies use of information and communication technologies in the public sector, and the idea behind the ICT is, in fact, based upon the aspiration to overcome the passive approach towards citizens centered only around the provision of information in order to achieve their active participation in the decision-making process, as well as to create a more accountable, transparent and efficient government. E-governance includes new leadership styles, new types of debates and decision-making on policies and investments, new ways of approaching education, new forms through which citizens can express their views and new ways of organization and of provision of information and services. E-governance may bring to life new concepts of citizenship, in terms of the needs of the citizens as well as their responsibilities. It has the objective to engage, offer opportunities and empower the citizen.[3] Every region, or precisely, every country is developing their own strategy on implementation of technologies in the administration, and every country is reaching a different degree of development and progress, which depends on a number of factors. The most striking examples of countries with successful development outcomes are Estonia, Slovenia and Denmark. The European Union also has a number of projects which elaborate on this issue by creating strategies for its successful implementation. The Republic of North Macedonia, on the other hand, has not reached a particular success in this area, mostly as a result of not dedicating sufficient time and resources as appropriate.[4] This research paper has the objective, through a more detailed analysis, to point to the methods applied by countries which are considered successful in implementing technologies in their traditional processes, and to compare them to the approach employed by RNM in regard to this rapidly growing trend. Specifically, this idea is revolving around the obvious necessity to have more serious commitment to ICT and develop understanding about the importance it assumes in all spheres of modern society.

E-GOVERNANCE – BENEFITS, RISKS AND PROBLEMS

The ubiquity of technology in almost all aspects of modern living puts enormous pressure on the traditional system of state management, including not only the state institutions, but also the private sector, non-governmental organizations and various associations[5]. Namely, if the ICT implementation is well-functioning in a number of areas, then why not encourage it in all spheres of the society,

1 Smilka Janeska-Sarkanjac, Models of e-governance (Skopje: E-publishing if UKIM, 2015), 7-17, http://www.ukim.edu.mk/e-izdanija/FINKI/Modeli_na_e-upravuvanje.pdf

2 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

3 "Defining E-Governance", Unesco Portal, visited on 8 August 2019, http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=4404&URL_DO=DO_PRINTPAGE&URL_SECTION=201.html

4 Smilka Janeska-Sarkanjac, Models of e-governance (Skopje: E-publishing of UKIM, 2015), 16, http://www.ukim.edu.mk/e-izdanija/FINKI/Modeli_na_e-upravuvanje.pdf

5 Ibid, 64

such as health, education, government, agriculture etc.? Some of the most important advantages in prospective implementation are as follows[6]:

■ Increase the transparency through uploading on internet any information about the work of institutions. Thus, the public may be able to have access to this information at all times and be more informed about what is going on in the country.

■ Increase the involvement of citizens by enabling them to express themselves online through a number of surveys and questionnaires, as well as increase their involvement in political campaigns. Moreover, citizens would be more involved if they'd have the chance to communicate and ask questions, submit requests and pleas to the competent ministers or other responsible parties in specific areas which are in their interest. At the same time, the increased involvement in voting may be achieved by implementing e-voting software.

■ Increase the speed of services by offering them online, and thus avoid the lengthy queuing up and going from an institution to an institution.

■ Reduce corruption by avoiding the direct contact between citizens and authorized persons in institutions.

■ These are the most significant benefits of using information and communication technologies in state institutions. However, e-Governance is a two-edged sword and a controversial topic as such, in particular because not all countries have equal possibilities and mechanisms for its development, and are at the same time facing varied risks and likely problems with its implementation. As much as it can be beneficial for the society, E-Governance can be equally destructive and inefficient in conditions of insufficient education, advancement, in the sense of[7]:

■ Transparency; even though transparency may be considered a great benefit for the citizens, it may also pose a huge problem in conditions of illusory and false transparency. Anyhow, even though the information about the government work is processed and uploaded on internet by the government itself, how can we be confident that what we read is accurate? This possible problem may be overcome by putting an impartial player onboard, some kind of independent non-governmental organization that would monitor the contents published by the Government.

■ Cyberattack; a possible attack against personal data may be seen as a huge danger, in a situation when all data are placed on the internet. Also, during e-voting, a particular and likely single risk would be hacking the system. Anyhow, this threat may be reduced to the minimum by developing software that would be well-protected and maintained, but this on the other hand would imply increasing costs.
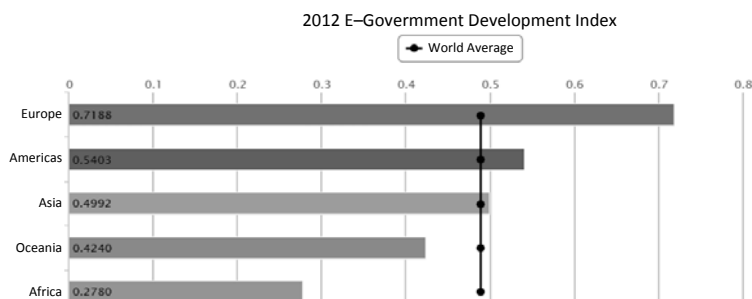
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6   Ibid, 84-86
7   Ibid, 87-88

■ Digital gap; a huge problem, especially in less developed countries, is seen in the access to internet and possession of computer or smartphone. There are already many projects enabling a great part of the population to have access to the internet. For example, in Republic of North Macedonia a project entitled "computer for every student" was implemented, under which a great part of the primary and secondary schools had received computers from the government, even though the PCs were never put into use.

A very small part of the projects, only 15% respectively, have been successfully implemented. Of the remaining 85%, 35% have proved fully unsuccessful, that is to say the initiative has never been implemented, whereas the remaining 50% have proved partially unsuccessful, i.e. the main objectives behind the initiative have not been achieved[8]. Achieving changes of such proportions requires undertaking a number of reforms in the public sector which almost no country has done. The successful customization and efficacy of the new digital tools are measured by the development index[9], which considers the infrastructure and the level of education by each country individually. As from 2012, a huge difference between various regions and continents has been noticeable in regard to their respective development index, which is presented in the following graph.[10]

Graph 1

Graphic presentation of the Development Index across continents in 2012

2012 E–Goverment Development Index

Source: "E-Government as an Efficient Tool towards Good Governance (Trends and Comparative Analysis throughout Worldwide Regions and within West Balkan Countries)", Violeta Madzova, Krste Sajnoski, Ljupco Davcev, June 2013

In this graph, Europe's supremacy, when it comes to E-Governance, can be even more clearly discerned. This European supremacy is continued making Europe the most developed continent also in 2018. Africa, on the other hand, is the least developed continent in the area of technology. If we analyze this situation into

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8   Richared Heeks, Most eGovernment-forDevelopment Projects Fail: How Can Risks be Reduced? (Manchester: Institute for Development Policy and Management, 2003), 2, http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/NISPAcee/UNPAN015488.pdf

9   "E-Government Development Index", UN E-Government Knowledgebase, visited on 22 August 2019, https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/About/Overview/-E-Government-Development-Index

10 Violeta Madzova, Krste Sajnoski, Ljupco Davcev "E-Government as an Efficient Tool towards Good Governance (Trends and Comparative Analysis throughout Worldwide Regions and within West Balkan Countries)" in **Balkan Social Science Review**, vol. 1, (Shtip: Goce Delchev University, June 2013), 163, http://js.ugd.edu.mk/index.php/BSSR/article/view/587/563

more details on the level of states, the research of 2018 shows that Denmark is the state with the highest development index, as high as 0.9150, whereas the Republic of North Macedonia occupies the 79th position in the list of 193 states in total, with index equaling 0.6312[11].

ESTONIA AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

One of the most successful stories regarding E-Society development is the one of Estonia, which over a period of less than three decades only has transformed itself into one of the most advanced technological centers in the world. Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union and after gaining its independence in 1991, this country had been found in an unenviable economic and financial situation[12]. The shortage of resources and people have made the idea to create a classic bureaucratic system of management similar to the one in other European countries almost impossible. In such circumstances, Estonia decided to receive the assistance offered by its neighbors, and by starting from a zero point it had invested the largest portion of its finances in the IT sector. Sometime in the year 2000, the first digital service was presented to the Estonians– e-tax, implying the possibility to pay taxes online. Gradually, this country was becoming increasingly digitalized, so that nowadays it has reached the record number of services and processes available on the internet, as much as 99% of the total services in the country. The remaining 1% includes only conclusion of marriages, divorce and buying real estate. Linnar Viik, one of the founders of this project, says that everything started out of necessity and lack of finances[13]. How is all of this functioning, above all? Citizens of Estonia have electronic personal identification card[14], which is the source document for the person's identification. These personal identification cards entered into use in 2002 and are compulsory for every person older than 15 years. Today, a record 98% of Estonians possess e-personal identification cards, enabling them to travel to EU countries, conduct their bank transactions, cast electronic vote, start businesses, sign documents by digital signature, as well as perform full-scale revision of the medical history of the person and take medication prescriptions.[15] Digital signatures, which have been in use for signing all electronic documents for 19 years now, are used more in Estonia than in all other countries of the EU in total[16]. Speaking about personal data, as a result of the lack of a centralized database, all data for all citizens of this country are kept in several mutually

11 "Country Data", UN E-Government Knowledgebase, visited on 22 August 2019, https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data-Center

12 France 24, "Welcome to e-Estonia, the world's first digital nation!", Youtube Video, 4 January 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sh-7W3kudseg&t=320s

13 Ibid.

14 European Commission, eGovernment in Estonia (European Union, February 2016), ed. 18.0, 35, https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/inline-files/eGovernment%20in%20Estonia%20-%20February%202016%20-%2018_00_v4_00.pdf

15 "e-Identity", e-Estonia, visited on 16 August 2019, https://e-estonia.com/solutions/e-identity/

16 Ibid.

interoperable independent bases. It means that once you enter certain personal data, the data will never again be requested, as all bases communicate among each other and take all needed information regarding that person. When it comes to the security of the transfer of data, Estonians have resolved this problem by creating a platform called X-Road[17], which enables access to data only for those who have the license to use it, thus keeping the integrity of data, and at the same time keeping it confidential. The existence of X-Road saves about 1.400 years of the working time of citizens and employees[18]. Also, as of 2017 using self-driving cars in Estonia is allowed under the condition that there is still a driver in the vehicle[19]. This county is an example of how digitalization can largely contribute to the development of a country, as well as to reducing costs and saving time, thus creating a modern, developed and satisfied society. A proof to the successful implementation of the ICT projects in Estonia can be seen in the statistics presented in tables 1 and 2 on the use of the internet over the past few years for the purpose of contacting public authorities, obtaining information from sites, downloading and submitting prepopulated official forms, compared to the European Union statistics in the same areas[20].

On the other hand, the European Union developed the idea of information society back in 1994. Since then, it has developed a number of strategies for integration of the information and communication technologies in the administration, such as: the Lisbon Strategy 2000, the action plan eEurope 2002, followed by eEurope 2005, i2010, Europe 2020 as well as the latest program, Digital Europe for the period 2021 to 2027[21]. Notwithstanding, despite the many strategies and invested funds, in the European Commission survey of 2014 interviewing 28.000 citizens, they had evaluated the current situation as a "quantity over quality", meaning that a large number of services are available online, but in practice are not used. Some of the major aspects that need to improve in order to reach the desired outcome are: increased transparency and information to citizens about e-services, improvement of the speed and availability of these services as well as cross-border mobility[22]. When comparing Estonia and the European Union, Estonia's dominion and superiority are noticeable and were most striking in 2015[23].

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17 "Interoperability services", e-Estonia, посетена на 16 август 2019, https://e-estonia.com/solutions/interoperability-services/

18 Ibid.

19 "Estonia allowing a number of self-driving cars on the streets starting today", Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications of the Republic of Estonia, објавено на 02 март 2017, https://www.mkm.ee/en/news/estonia-allowing-number-self-driving-cars-streets-starting-to-day

20 "Using e-government services for private use", Eurostat – Statistical Office of the EU for Europe, visited on 20 August 2019, http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu
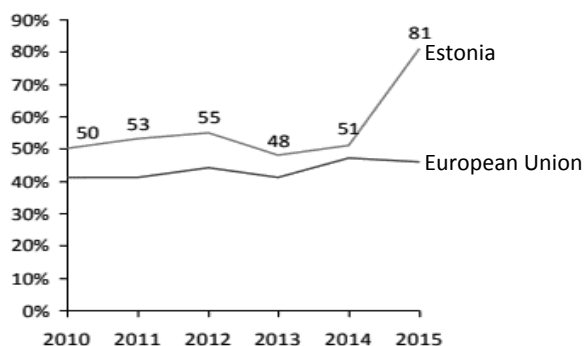
21 Smilka Janeska-Sarkanjac, Models of e-governance (Skopje: E-publishing of UKIM, 2015), 177, http://www.ukim.edu.mk/e-izdanija/FINKI/Modeli_na_e-upravuvanje.pdf

22 "The European Commission E-government Benchmark: Action Required to Meet Commitments for Digital Transformation of Public Services", Capgemini, visited on 17 August 2019, https://www.capgemini.com/news/the-european-commission-egovernment-benchmark-action-required-to-meet-commitments-for-digital/

23 European Commission, eGovernment in Estonia (European Union, February 2016), ed. 18.0, 6, https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/inline-files/eGovernment%20in%20Estonia%20-%20February%202016%20-%2018_00_v4_00.pdf

Graph 2
Graphic presentation of the percentage of individuals who
communicate with authorities in the public sector

Source: "eGovernment in Estonia", European Union, February 2016, Edition 18.0, pg. 6

Namely, when it comes to using the internet in the past years for the purpose
of interacting with public authorities, obtaining information from sites and
downloading and submitting prepopulated official forms, surveys show that the
percentage of citizens from the European Union carrying out these activities
online has been constantly lower than the one in Estonia[24]. The statistics from
this survey can be seen in the following two tables.

Tables 1 and 2
Using e-government services for private use

	2015		2016	
	Estonia	EU	Estonia	EU
Using the internet for contact/interaction with public authorities/public service	81	46	77	48
Using the internet for obtaining information from the websites of the administrative authorities	71	40	66	42
Using the internet for downloading official forms	39	28	41	29
Using the internet for submitting completed forms	71	26	68	28

Source: Eurostat – Statistical Office of the EU for Europe

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24 "Using e-government services for private use", Eurostat, Statistical Office of the EU for Europe, visited on 20 August 2019, http://appsso.
eurostat.ec.europa.eu

	2017		2018	
	Estonia	EU	Estonia	EU
Using the internet for contact/interaction with public authorities /public service	78	49	79	52
Using the internet for obtaining information from the websites of the administrative authorities	65	41	69	44
Using the internet for downloading official forms	40	30	48	31
Користење интернет за поднесување пополнети формулари	70	30	71	34

Source: Eurostat – Statistical Office of the EU for Europe

In the same year 2015, the citizens of the European Union demonstrated visibly greater satisfaction with the digital services offered by private enterprises and banks (8.5/10), than with those offered by the public sector (6.5/10)[25]. In less than six months, the project Europe 2020 will expire and the European Union will start to implement a new program called Digital Europe, with a total of 9.2 billion euros investment in it. This program represents an EU digitalization strategy for a six-year period, i.e. 2021 to 2027. The program will provide funding for projects in five different areas: artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, advanced digital skills, advanced computing and data handling and widespread use of digital technologies across the economy and society[26].

REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

Following the analysis of the statistical data regarding Estonia and the European Union, we can now review the situation in North Macedonia in regard of using the ICT. First and foremost, the question to answer is what was the percentage of citizens using a computer over the past few years?

Table 3 Computer users over the last 3 months, presented per year for the period of 2013 till 2017

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Total number of persons (15-74) using a computer for the last three months	66,3	67,6	69,2	...	66,4
Men	69,3	70,1	72	...	69,7
Women	63,2	65,2	66,4	...	63,1
Age group from 15-24	96,5	94,2	90,6	...	88,5
Age group from 25-54	73,1	75,8	78,8	...	75,7
Age group from 55-74	27,4	30,5	32,7	...	33

Source: MACStat – State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia

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25 "The European Commission Egovernment Benchmark: Action Required to Meet Commitments for Digital Transformation of Public Services", Capgemini, visited on 17 August 2019, https://www.capgemini.com/news/the-european-commission-egovernment-benchmark-action-required-to-meet-commitments-for-digital/

26 "Digital Europe programme – Council agrees its position", Council of the European Union, published on 4 December 2018, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/12/04/digital-europe-programme-council-agrees-its-position/

No survey was conducted in 2016, which is why we don't have any data for this year.

As expected, the highest percentage of people using a computer in the last three months are those aged between 15 and 24, and the lowest percentage is the oldest age group, aged between 55 and 74. No striking difference is noticeable in the gender of computer users.
However, the overall percentage of individuals using a computer is relatively low. Now let's have a look at the data on internet usage during the period of the last three months from 2013 to 2018.

Table 4 Internet users in the last 3 months, presented per year for the period of 2013 to 2018

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total number of persons (15-74) using computer for the last 3 months	65,4	68,1	70,4	72,2	74,5	79,2
Men	69	71,1	73,5	73,7	76,1	80,9
Women	61,8	65	67,3	70,6	72,9	77,4
Age group from 15-24	96,5	93,7	93,3	98,7	97,7	97,5
Age group from 25-54	71,7	77,5	80,4	81	85,1	89,5
Age group from 55-74	27	28,7	31,7	36,9	37,8	46,7

Source: MACStat – State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia

Again, gender doesn't play a significant role in regard of using the internet. The percentage is continuously increasing and it is a sufficient indicator for the successful functioning of the possible e-government. In the European Union, the total penetration of the internet in the last three months was 85%, and the percentage of daily users is 76%[27]. The following table shows information on the use of e-services.

Table 5 Using e-government services for private use, in a period of 12 months per year during the period of 2013 to 2018

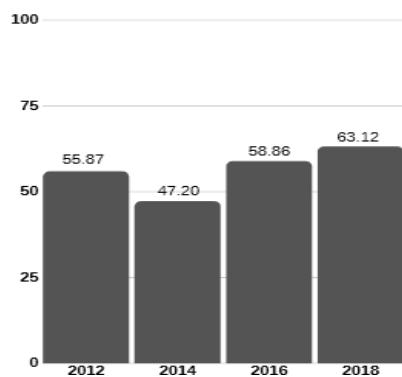|	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Using the internet for contact/interaction with public authorities /public service	7,3	27,4	22,7	17,2	24,2	19,6
Using the internet for: obtaining information from the websites of the administrative authorities	6,2	25,1	19,1	14,5	16,1	23,3
Using the internet for: downloading official forms	4,5	7,3	9,7	7,3	13,3	10,1
Using the internet for submitting the filled forms	2,2	11,8	8,1	6,1	8,8	6,6

Source: MACStat – State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia

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27 "Internet users in the last three months", Eurostat – Statistical Office of the EU for Europe, visited on 20 August 2019, http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu
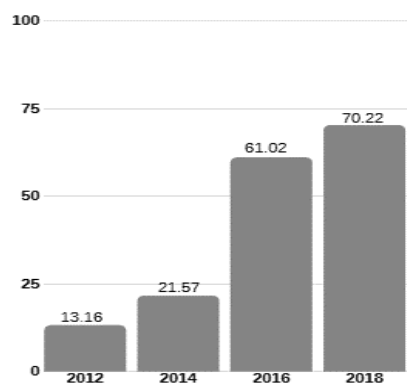
From the information presented in this table it is noticeable that there is apparent shortage of ICT in the government and institutions. In 2018, the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia used the internet mostly for obtaining information from websites, and then for some kind of interaction with the public authorities, whereas only 6.6% for submitting prepopulated forms. This suggests that even when such online services are used, they merely enable fulfilling only a part of the complete service. Most of the time, in the end it is still needed to go to the counter to receive the required document or confirmation or to submit forms. If we compared these data to those of Estonia, and even to those of the European Union presented above in Table 1, we'd get a clearer picture of how RNM is, in fact, legging behind in the digitalization process. The next analysis refers to the state and progress of RNM measures by two indexes: the E-Government Development Index – EGDI, which is the key United Nations e-government development indicator, and the E-Participation Index, which is an additional measure to assess the state of e-government. The e-government development index is a composite measure comprising three important dimensions of the e-government, namely: telecommunication structure, human resources and online services[28]. The e-participation index, on the other hand, focuses on the use of online services as a means to simplify and facilitate the government submission of information to the citizens, establish interaction with stakeholders and involve citizens in the decision-making processes[29]. The following two graphs show the percentage of development of RNM in the last few even years with regard to the e-government development index of this country (graph 3) and with regard to its e-participation index (graph 4)[30].

Graph 3

E-Government Development Index of RNM

Graph 4

E-Participation Index of RNM

Source: UN E-Government Knowledgebase, https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/Country-Information/id/170-The-former-Yugoslav-Republic-of-Macedonia

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28 "E-Government Development Index", UN E-Government Knowledgebase, visited on 22 August 2019, https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/About/Overview/-E-Government-Development-Index
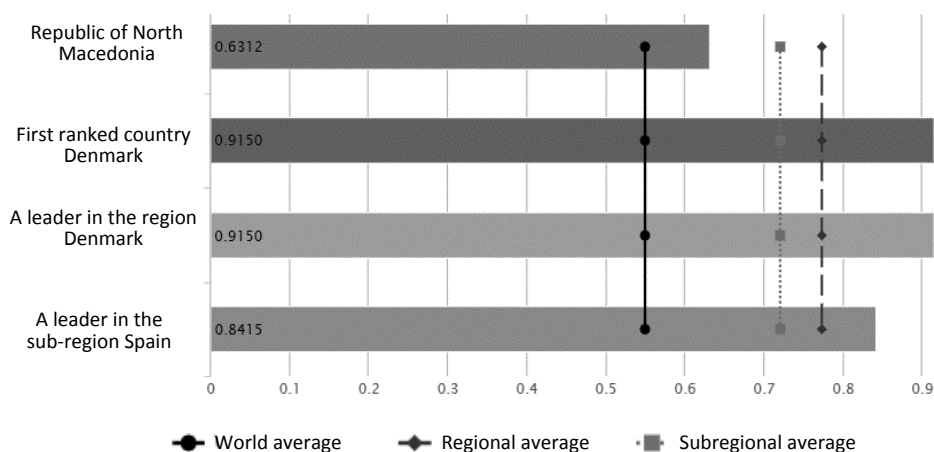
29 "E-Participation Index" UN E-Government Knowledgebase, visited on 22 August 2019, https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/About/Overview/E-Participation-Index

30 "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", UN E-Government Knowledgebase, visited on 22 August 2019, https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/Country-Information/id/170-The-former-Yugoslav-Republic-of-Macedonia

The e-government development index has improved within a period of 6 years, though it has not reached the desired and anticipated level of development. In 2018, the Republic of North Macedonia was ranked 79th out of 193 countries worldwide. Although it is ranking in the first half of countries in the last, this data is not satisfactory because if we consider only the countries in Europe, then it is found among the least ranked states, namely 41st out of 43 countries. On the other hand, the e-participation index has marked huge increase over the past 6 years, and from 13.16 per cent in 2012, it reached 70.22 per cent in 2018, thus putting RNM on the 71st position on a global scale[31]. The following graph shows the e-government development index of RNM compared to the first-ranked countries in the region and the sub-region, as well as to the global, regional and sub-regional average[32]. From this statistics it can be seen that it exceeds the world average, but is significantly underdeveloped when compared to the regional and sub-regional average.

Graph 5

Comparative analysis of the e-government development index of RNM

In any case, despite the fact that the Republic of North Macedonia is still not being at the expected level when it comes to using information and communication technologies in the administration, it is still putting a lot of efforts to develop e-society. Some of its most relevant projects currently implemented or pending are the following[33]:

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31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 "Projects", Ministry of Information Society and Administration of Republic of North Macedonia, visited on 20 August 2019, http://arhiva.mioa.gov.mk/?q=node/15

■ The single national electronic register of regulations of RNM– ,,ENER represents an electronic system which apart from the existing regulation in the Republic of Macedonia also contains notification of the beginning of preparation of a draft law, draft RIA Reports, draft laws of ministries which are under preparation, consolidated texts of laws, Annual Plans for Implementation of RIAs by Ministries, relevant documents derived from the analyses carried out by the ministries as well as comments, views and opinions of those concerned following the specific draft legislation. ENER is a tool intended primarily for electronic information of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, as well as for the representatives of NGOs, chambers of commerce, legal entities, government representatives, as well as individual ministries."[34]

■ E-health– introduction of integrated health information system (IHIS) and electronic health card[35]

■ Computer for Every Student - The biggest investment in education in the past 17 years has been made with the Computer for Every Student project. This project provided 17.818 PCs, 98.710 LCD monitors, 98.710 keyboards and mice and 80.892 tin-clients for primary and secondary schools in Macedonia, meeting two-thirds of actual needs[36]. These computers were supposed to be used as teaching tools and means to access the educational digital content found on the global Internet network. However, many of these computers were never used for educational purposes.

■ E-Judiciary - 150 computers have been installed in 33 courts, and are used within the Integrated Judicial Information System (ISIS). Through this system, the cases are distributed electronically to judges, thus avoiding subjectivity of the human factor when assigning them. Displays have been installed in all courts, where trials and hearings can be monitored at any time. A data center will also be introduced to connect the various segments of the judiciary to enable efficient and secure exchange of data and reports.[37]

■ Open e-services - The current situation in state bodies and institutions indicates that only a limited number of e-services are offered to citizens and the business community. The electronic services significantly facilitate the provision of service to users in terms of costs and time and have proven to be an efficient and effective way for delivering services[38]. An example of a successful e-service is a electronic submission of claims for certificate issuance, where the whole procedure is available online, and where the user

34 "Single National Electronic Register of Regulations of Republic of Macedonia", Ministry of Information Society and Administration of Republic of North Macedonia, visited on 20 August 2019, http://www.mioa.gov.mk/?q=mk/node/1322

35 "E-health", Ministry of Information Society and Information of RNM, visited on 20 August 2019, http://arhiva.mioa.gov.mk/?q=node/2047

36 "Computer for every student", Ministry of Information Society and Administration of RNM, visited on 20 August 2019, http://arhiva.mioa.gov.mk/?q=node/1974

37 "E-justice", Ministry of Information Society and Administration of RNM, visited on 20 August 2019, http://arhiva.mioa.gov.mk/?q=node/2045

38 "Open e-services", Ministry of Information Society and Administration of RNM, visited on 20 August 2019, http://arhiva.mioa.gov.mk/?q=node/2613

can subsequently choose whether to download the document at the counter or receive it electronically[39].

- E-Democracy Portal - The introduction of the e-Democracy web portal has been done in response to the need to introduce a new modern method of public debate that will provide a simpler and more accessible way for citizens to participate in public policy-making with the support of modern information and communication technologies. This portal solution will enable the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, in a simple and easily accessible way, to give their opinion on the Government's draft documents i.e. to be actively involved in the decision-making process[40].

- MyVAT - this application is available and free for download on all mobile phones. The objective is to enable citizens to scan the barcodes on their accounts and exercise the right to a refund of 15% of the amount of the VAT paid[41].

- Electronic Toll Cards and Tags – as of July this year, electronic cards and tags have been introduced that enable drivers to pay tolls without stopping or by just approaching the card to the reader. This would reduce the toll congestion and the costs for citizens, as paying this way is cheaper than the traditional one. In the first few weeks only, the citizens had already bought a huge number of cards and tags, which is a proof of the great interest taken in this project[42].

In addition, the Republic of North Macedonia has implemented many other projects in the field of e-infrastructure, e-business, e-education and so on. However, some of these projects have proved completely or partially unsuccessful and, although theoretically they may sound great, in practice they are not functioning at all. The main reason for this are not the IT professionals and the software developers, but the lack of IT education for public sector employees and their reluctance to embrace these changes[43]. Many of the websites that offer e-services are not functioning at all. There are many examples of documents being produced and sent to citizens electronically, and then subsequently other institutions do not recognize those digital documents as legitimate and valid. For successful ICT implementation, there are a number of steps required for its introduction, acceptance, spreading and adaptation within the society.

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39 "Electronic submission of claims for certificates issuance", Ministry of Justice of RNM (Registry Office), visited on 22 August 2019, https://www.uvmk.gov.mk/mk/elektronsko-podnesuvanje-na-baranje-za-izvod

40 "E-democracy portal", Ministry of Information Society and Administration of RNM, visited on 20 August 2019, http://arhiva.mioa.gov.mk/?q=node/2630

41 "Conditions, manner and procedure for exercising the right to refund part of the value added tax stated in the fiscal accounts of natural persons", Ministry of Finance of RNM (Public Revenue Office), published on 3 July 2019, http://www.ujp.gov.mk/mk/javnost/soopstenija/pogledni/711

42 "Electronic toll collection system", Public Enterprise for State Roads, visited on 22 August 2019, http://www.ujp.gov.mk/mk/javnost/soopstenija/pogledni/711

43 Smilka Janeska-Sarkanjac, E-governance models (Skopje: E-publishing of UKIM, 2015), 232-233, http://www.ukim.edu.mk/e-izdanija/FINKI/Modeli_na_e-upravuvanje.pdf

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM STRATEGIES (2018-2022)

Public Administration Reforms (PAR) are inevitable part of the progress and development of North Macedonia and key precondition to its European integration. To date, two PAR Strategies have been adopted, one in 1999 for indefinite period of time and the second one covering the period of 2010 to 2015. The implementation of these strategies and action plans has led to improvement of the services that the public administration is offering to the citizens as well as to improvement of the quality of the policy advancement processes[44]. Although in the European Commission Report for Republic of Macedonia for 2016, it is noted that the country is moderately prepared in regard of these reforms and that a certain limited progress has been achieved, the unenviable situation facing the whole administrative system, which has undergone strong politicization and undermining of the rule of law principles, is evident[45]. Consequently, this strategy places the accent on the transparency, accountability and professionalism of the administration, quality of services, protection of the rights of the citizens and the private businesses, objectivity with recruitment and promotion, and respect of the principles of legality and impartiality at work, or in short, complete liberation from political strains and creation of a non-politicized independent public system. PAR has the following vision: "Depoliticized, efficient, effective and accountable public administration which provides for quality and easily accessible services for the citizens and for the business community in the whole territory of the Republic of North Macedonia. The work of the public administration is based on European principles and values and adds to the sustainable economic growth, rule of law, social cohesion and wellbeing."[46] The four priority areas which are subject of reforms according to this project are as follows:

■ Policy creation and coordination

■ Public service and human resources management

■ Responsibility, accountability and transparency

■ Public services and ICT support to administration

In this research paper we shall adhere to the last priority area, namely incorporating the ICT in the public sector. In the private sector there has been already a large part of services available online, and in that regard the citizens call for equal opportunities and quality from the public sector as well. Thus,

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44 Ministry of Information Society and Administration, Public Administration Reform Strategy (2018 -2022), (Skopje, February 2018), 6, http://mioa.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl_files/documents/strategies/srja_2018-2022_20022018_mk.pdf

45   European Commission Service, Report on Republic of Macedonia for 2016 accompanying the Communication on the EU Enlargement Policy for 2016 (Brussels: European Commission, 09 November 2016), 7-8, https://www.sobranie.mk/content/НСЕИ/izveshtaj_na_evropska-ta_komisija_za_republika_makedonija_2016_godina-mk2-raboten_prevod.pdf

46 Ministry of Information Society and Administration, Public Administration Reform Strategy (2018 -2022), (February 2018), 10, http://mioa.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl_files/documents/strategies/srja_2018-2022_20022018_mk.pdf

the general objective of this part of the PAR project 2018-2022 is provision of services in quick, simple, easily accessible manner, while the specific objectives are:

■ Rational investment in digital environment development - centralized coordination of digital transformation to enable planned and uninterrupted development of ICT: strategic approach to digital transformation process, centrally coordinated management of e-government and ICT projects, improvement of channels for electronic communication in the administration and introduction of environmental standards in the operation of the administration.

■ Increased quality and availability of public services - ensuring the expected quality and availability of most services electronically through: improved access to institutions for all citizens, improved quality system, standardization of data in public registries and unification of service delivery, simplifying services, introducing 'One Point of Service' centers, reporting to the administration and to the public on services as well as measuring customer service satisfaction.

■ Digital environment that gives access to and offers possibility for using e-services - building a functional and efficient e-service infrastructure by: increasing the number of highly sophisticated e-services available in one place, introducing an electronic identity to use e-services, e-services and digitizing service registers[47].

The Ministry of Information Society and Administration is responsible for this project as it is also responsible for the project monitoring, reporting and evaluation. Monitoring involves gathering information on the success of PAR activities, the likely problems and possible consequences as well as on the overall progress of this strategy. The reporting process implies MISA reporting to the PAR Council once every six months and once a year to the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia on the implementation of the PAR Strategy 2018-2022 action plan. These reports are published and publicly available on the Government and MISA websites. The last phase, that is evaluation, represents the average of progress and regress in certain areas. This evaluation is done by independent teams which make comparison between the current level of development in the country and the level it was anticipated to have at the given time. Regarding the budget, the total amount estimated to be required to implement the Public Administration Reform Strategy is 2.364.683.700.00 denars. Also, the area affected by the ICT expansion in the public sector receives

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47 Ministry of Information Society and Administration, Public Administration Reform Strategy (2018 -2022), (February 2018), 33, 54-57, http://mioa.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl_files/documents/strategies/srja_2018-2022_20022018_mk.pdf

the greatest amount of allocations for the implementation of its objectives, or more precisely, 1.164.784.900,00 denars[48].

▌ CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this research paper is to highlight and emphasize the importance and necessity of using information and communication technology in all aspects of the functioning of the state through detailed analysis, statistics and research. In doing so, it is crucial to understand how digitalisation can contribute to the development of the state and society as a whole. Unfortunately, this topic has not been sufficiently elaborated in RSM and has not been given much importance, and proof of that is the low budget available to the Ministry of Information Society and Administration since its creation in 2008. However, every year now the government's seriousness with regard to this issue is growing in proportion to its interest, and so the budget and the fund allocations for the ministry and its projects are increasing. Estonia's example shows how a country with a similar political background can be transformed into one of the most successful IT stories in just over two decades. The European Union, on the other hand, is an important factor as it is an organization that North Macedonia is aspiring to join and in order to realize these aspirations, it is necessary to meet some requirements and raise the overall level of ICT in the country. It is also noticeable that the countries that rank highest on the average income lists are those with the most successful IT in all spheres of society. Based on conclusions from previous research, North Macedonia, estimated according to the e-government development index, has been consistently in the top half of the world rankings over the last few years, but still a lot of work and effort are needed in this area. It is a fact that the country is progressing, and with the new strategy to be implemented by 2022 it is expected to reach a satisfactory level and be able to match other European countries.

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48 Ministry of Information Society and Information, Public Administration Reform Strategy (2018 -2022), (February 2018), 60-61, http://mioa.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl_files/documents/strategies/srja_2018-2022_20022018_mk.pdf

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