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THE DEMOS AND THE ETHNOS: EXPERIENCES OF THE THIRTY-FOUR YEAR MACEDONIAN TRANSITION (SOCIO-POLITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONTEMPORARY MACEDONIAN STATEHOOD)

Анстракт. – Современата македонска држава е конституирана со одлуките на АСНОМ во 1944 година и е создадена врз основа на концептот на национална држава или демос. Фундаментален документ на концептот демос изграден на овој начин е „Декларацијата за основните права на граѓаните во Демократска Македонија“, усвоена на 2 август 1944 година. Овој концепт на демос, кој се темели на принципот на национална држава, е направен според францускиот модел, за разлика од претходно формираните балкански национални држави, кои во втората половина на XIX и почетокот на XX век беа создадени според германскиот модел. Целта на ова истражување е да се направи темелна социо- политичка анализа на триесет и четири годишната македонска транзиција со цел да се покаже дека во својата суштина, концептите демос и етнос станале заложници на дневно- политичката пропаганда и негативната селекција што произлегла од тоталната партизација и политичкиот популизам на политичките елити, на сметка на навидум декларираниот граѓански концепт за еднаквост на сите граѓани во македонското општество.

Клучни зборови. – Македонска држава, АСНОМ, демос, етнос, социо-политичка транзиција.

INTRODUCTION

When we speak about the historical foundations of the creation of the Macedonian state, we inevitably come to two strongly interconnected

elements: "first, the formation of the Macedonian nation during the period of national revival in the XIXth century, and second, the organized forms of struggle in various forms from the period of the Eastern Crisis in the Ottoman Empire to the national liberation struggle during the Second World War, i.e., the fight for the creation of an independent state."¹

It is evident that the occupation and annexation during the Second World War imposed the sole task of achieving victory through their own forces, whereby the vision of creating a Macedonian state inevitably became the main driving force around which the majority of the population was mobilized and united. In those conditions, it is significant to emphasize that the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, at the May Consultation of the Central Committee in 1941, regarding the situation in Macedonia, concluded that: "Macedonia, too, experienced the misfortune of being divided among several conquerors... The task of the Macedonian communists is to rally the masses in the struggle against the forcible annexation and division of Macedonia, and for the free national self-determination of the Macedonian people and for their national independence and freedom."² The orientation of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) and its stance on the "free national self-determination of the Macedonian people and their national independence and freedom" was, in fact, the orientation that opened the perspective for the affirmation of their own ethnic, i.e., national identity and state-building. Consequently, ASNOM, as the "supreme representative of the sovereignty of the Macedonian people and the Macedonian state," emerged as a logical outcome of the realization of the Macedonian people's right to self-determination. This right was achieved through the collective struggle of all progressive forces in Macedonia, regardless of faith or ethnicity, against fascism. In doing so, it consistently upheld the revolutionary traditions of the state being built, proclaiming the equality of all citizens before the law while simultaneously ensuring all rights for the free national life of minorities. Thus, it is an undeniable and unchangeable fact that the modern Macedonian state was constituted through the ASNOM decisions in 1944 and was established based on the concept of a nation-state or demos. The fundamental document of this demos-based concept is the "Declaration on the Basic Rights of Citizens in Democratic Macedonia," adopted on August 2, 1944, at the St. Prohor Pčinjski

¹ Билјана Поповска, Историските основи и современиот развој на Република Македонија, статија, Зборник во чест на животот и делото на Васил Гривчев, Скопје, 2002. р. 233.

² Документи за борбата на македонскиот народ за самостојност и за национална држава, том втори, Скопје, 1981. р. 348.

Monastery. This conceptualization of the demos, rooted in the principle of the nation-state, was modeled after the French approach (in contrast to the previously formed Balkan nation-states, which in the second half of the XIXth century and the early XXth century were created according to the German model).³ In this way, the nation represents a political community within which all ethnic collectives in Macedonian society are integrated.

ETHNO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF MACEDONIA IN THE YUGOSLAV FEDERATION

In the period from 1944 to 1991, we can distinguish three main phases in the state-legal development of Macedonian statehood. These are: "The administrative-centralist period in state governance (1945-1953); the period of 'stable' self-managing socialism (1953-1970); and the period of 'liberal' delegate socialism and contractual economy (1971-1991)."⁴

In this context, it is essential first to examine the constitutional provisions that defined Macedonia's position within the Yugoslav federation. From this starting point, we can trace the development of changes expressed in the political system of the former federation, particularly with regard to the definition of the republics, their position, and the nature of governance. Accordingly, in the Constitution of the People's Republic of Macedonia of 1946, specifically in Article 1, it was established that "the People's Republic of Macedonia is a people's state with a republican form of governance."⁵ Regarding the sovereignty of the Macedonian state, according to the Constitution of 1946, Article 9 explicitly states that "the People's Republic of Macedonia exercises state authority sovereignly, transferring to the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia only those rights established by the Constitution of the FPRY." In other words, it confirms the internal sovereignty of both the Macedonian state and the other republics within the Yugoslav federation. Thus, it is evident that the jurisdiction of the People's Republic of Macedonia was de-

³ Иванка Василевска Додовска, Версајскиот систем од 1919 (Механизмите за доброволна размена на малцинства и нивното влијание врз Македонското прашање во првата половина од XX век), Скопје, 2016. p. 162.

⁴ Новица Велјановски, Периодизација и историографијата 1944-1991, Ст. Прилози од научниот собир по повод 50-годишнината од работата на Институтот за национална историја „Македонската историска наука – достигнувања и проблеми“, Скопје, 2000. p. 374.

⁵ Документи за борбата на македонскиот народ за самостојност и за национална држава, том втори, Скопје, 1981. p. 648.

terminated based on the principle of divided sovereignty. However, when examining the Federal Constitutional Law of the FPRY, we can conclude that, according to it, the republics were not fully endowed with the attributes of sovereign states. The Federal Constitution of the Federation listed all aspects under its jurisdiction, while everything else, or "beyond that, the Republic is sovereign."⁶

Furthermore, the Constitutional Law on the Foundations of the Social and Political Order and the Authorities of the People's Republic of Macedonia of 1953, in Article 1, defined the Macedonian Republic as a "socialist democratic state of the working people of Macedonia, voluntarily united with the working people of the other people's republics in the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, as a federal state of sovereign and equal peoples."⁷ Furthermore, Article 2 of the Constitutional Law established that "all power in the People's Republic of Macedonia belongs to the working people."⁸

The process of democratization of socio-political relations in Macedonia took place directly with the adoption of the new Constitution of the SFRY in 1963, which, among other things, arose from internal political developments within the Federation. During that period, a change occurred at the top of Macedonian political leadership, with Lazar Koliševski being replaced by Krste Crvenkovski.⁹ - This period is considered a particularly developmental period in terms of Macedonia's greater role within the Federation, although "the republics were not considered the territory of a particular nation, i.e. the republic was not treated as a national state of the nation on whose national territory it existed, but rather it was formulated as a socio-political community of the people, and the republic represented a community of all nationalities and all citizens who lived and worked on its territory or otherwise belonged to it as its citizens. At the same time, this essentially meant that it did not take away the historical-national peculiarity, nor did it neglect the national structure of each republic."¹⁰ During this period, it is important

⁶ The Constitution of the People's Republic of Macedonia of 1946, according to Article 44, provided for: the adoption, amendment, and supplementation of the Constitution; ensuring its implementation; decisions regarding consent for changing the borders of the People's Republic of Macedonia; its administrative division; the protection of the state system; the rights of citizens; the management of the economy; and so forth.

⁷ Official Gazette of the People's Republic of Macedonia, No. 3 of February 10, 1953.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Невен Радически, *Либерализмот во Македонија* (1966 – 1974), Скопје, 2013. p. 71.

¹⁰ Александар Христов, *Државно-правниот статус на СР Македонија во нацртот на уставните амандмани*, Годишник на Правниот факултет во Скопје, 1971. p. 8.

to say that "the Macedonian leadership sought to achieve greater equality in interethnic relations in the SFRY. Particularly active on this issue, given his clear patriotic orientation, as well as the state and party republican and federal functions he held, was Krste Crvenkovski. He strongly opposed the ideas of some Serbian nationalists, especially Dobrica Ćosić, for the creation of a Yugoslav nation, based on the common Slavic origin of the peoples of the SFRY. He perceived these aspirations as attempts to expand Serbian hegemony, that is, as pressure on the Macedonian population to abandon its national distinctiveness."¹¹

According to the opinion of Stefan Trebst, it is evident that: "until the sixties, the thin personnel cover of SR Macedonia had a preferential... development of a unique symbiosis of historiography and politics (..). This degree of interdependence of historiography and politics has no equal in Eastern and Southeastern Europe".¹²

Furthermore, it is important to mention that according to the Constitution of the SRM of 1974, the republic in Article 1 thereof is defined as: "a national state of the Macedonian people and of the Albanian and Turkish nationalities within it, based on the sovereignty of the people and on the power and self-government of the working class and all working people, and a socialist self-governing democratic community of the working people and citizens of the Macedonian people and the nationalities with which it lives, i.e. with the Albanian and Turkish nationalities."¹³ - It is clear that the process of dissolution of the SFRY began as early as 1974, primarily with the adoption of the new Constitution of the SFRY, which introduced the liberalization of the political system and the decentralization of power, i.e. the power from the central level was transferred to the republic level, which strengthened the positions of the republican governments in relation to the federal one. On the other hand, with the 1974 Constitution, the federal republics and provin-

¹¹ "He expressed a similar view regarding the previous practice in the population census of having the possibility of declaring one's national affiliation as Yugoslav. This became relevant during in 1970, when preparations were being made for a new population census of the SFRY. At the session of the Executive Bureau of the Presidency of the Yugoslav People's Party, a decision was made to omit this national determination. As one of those responsible for internal political relations, Crvenkovski, together with Vida Tomšić, informed Tito of the decision, who was visibly dissatisfied with this solution." Н. Радически, *Либерализмот во Македонија...* р. 87.

¹² Стефан Требст, *Бугарско-југословенската контраверза за Македонија 1967-1982*, Скопје, 1997. р. 66 и 308.

¹³ Уставни амандмани (1971) Устав на СР Македонија (1974), Култура, Скопје, 1979. р. 127.

ces gained greater autonomy, which revived the national aspirations of some of the republics as well as in the province of Kosovo, which were particularly expressed in the 1960s.

In fact, within the Federation itself, there were already deeply divided historical, religious, economic and cultural differences between the Yugoslav peoples that had caused disagreements and conflicts in the past. This was due primarily to the fact that Yugoslavia, which was formed after the Second World War, was a mix of different ethnicities with shared differences aimed at living together. Such antagonisms were further intensified by the different economic development and stability between certain parts of the Federation, which was very difficult to neutralize. In Macedonia, in this third phase of the development of statehood within the Federation, as early as in the early 1970s, the clashes between liberal tendencies versus orthodox Yugoslav socialism crystallized.¹⁴

THE CHALLENGES FOR THE MACEDONIAN STATE FROM INDEPENDENCE TO THE PRESENT DAY

With the proclamation in the Macedonian Parliament of the "Declaration of Sovereignty of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia" on 25 January 1991, for the first time after 47 years of development of the demos within the Yugoslav federation, this document highlighted the possibility of the Republic of Macedonia to constitute itself as an independent and sovereign state, primarily through the proclamation of its sovereignty. This step also paved the way for the adoption of the new Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia on 17 November 1991, which was adopted by a Decision of 96 out of a total of 120 MPs, while 24, i.e. representatives of the ethnic Albanian community, did not support its adoption. In the Constitution, the Macedonian state is defined as a sovereign, independent, democratic and social state, with clearly defined civil sovereignty. The Constitution also promoted a unitary state with a majority model of democracy, which decisively guaranteed the full equality of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia. Even in the preamble of the Constitution, it was decisively declared that it calls for the continuity of the struggle of the Macedonian people to create their own state and the state-legal continuity based on the state-legal traditions of the Krusevo Republic, the ASNOM decisions and the development within the framework of

¹⁴ Славко Милосавлевски, Страв од промени Кризата на политичкиот систем на Југославија во седумдесетите години, Скопје, 1991. p. 106.

the Yugoslav federation and on the basis from which the right to self-determination arises, it states the fact that the Macedonian state is constituted as a national state of the Macedonian people in which full civil equality and permanent coexistence of the Macedonian people with the Albanians, Turks, Vlachs and other smaller national minorities living in the Macedonian state are ensured. In the Preamble of the Constitution, (Article 7, paragraph 1) it was stated that: "In the Republic of Macedonia, the official language is the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script."¹⁵ - With such a conception, the 1991 Constitution outlined the historical foundations for the creation of the Macedonian state, starting from the state-nation thesis or in other words, in accordance with the historical foundations, the thesis of the Macedonian people as constitutive in the creation of the Macedonian state. It clearly declares the civic orientation, the pluralistic model and the development of the liberal and democratic institutions of the system, along with the significance of the development of interethnic relations and the spirit of mutual understanding and building coexistence. As the bearers of sovereignty, the Constitution (Article 2, paragraph 1) determines the citizens or "In the Republic of Macedonia, sovereignty emanates from the citizens and belongs to the citizens". - Here we mean people's sovereignty, national sovereignty and civil sovereignty.¹⁶ But, here some other dilemmas arose that in the first decade of the independence of the Republic of Macedonia, brought to light the obvious internal antagonisms, especially in the field of interethnic issues, which led to a serious crisis within Macedonian society.

From the very beginning of the proclamation of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia in 1991, in addition to the boycott by representatives of Albanian parties in the Macedonian Parliament during the voting on it, there was also a boycott by the Albanian community of the census. During that period, representatives of Albanian political parties raised the demand for equal status for the Albanian ethnic community with the constituent Macedonian people. In essence, they demanded a change in the Constitution and their incorporation into the political system as a people, and not as a nationality as had been the practice until then. Furthermore, in the set of political demands, they insisted on redefining the Macedonian state as a binational state, obtaining the status of a second state language for the Albanian language and opening the possibility of studying at a state university in the Albanian language. They legitimized their demands by claiming that the Al-

¹⁵ Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, No. 52 of 22.11.1991.

¹⁶ Светомир Шкариќ, Уставно право, втора книга, Скопје, 1995. p. 9.

banian population in the Republic of Macedonia amounts to about 40% of the total population.

In the period of a decade from the plurality of the Republic of Macedonia, until the outbreak of the military conflict in 2001, it became obvious that the concept of *demos* and the concept of *ethnos* were in serious crisis. It became obvious that the influence of ethnicity came into collision with the national concept of organizing the Macedonian state and they intertwined in the overall discourse of transition in which, among other things, the concept of liberal democracy was seriously threatened. It contributed to the outbreak of the conflict that resulted in the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, in August 2001, which in turn initiated the adoption of constitutional amendments that provided for the decentralization of local self-government in order to increase the inclusion of all ethnic communities in the Macedonian state. The Ohrid Agreement was signed by the then President of the state, Trajkovski, and the leaders of the four largest political parties in Macedonia, as well as by representatives of the European Union and the United States, who were a kind of mediators of the process and witnesses who verified the stages of ending this interethnic conflict.

The fundamental issue that arose as a result of the Constitutional amendments of November 16, 2001, as a result of the Ohrid Agreement, has not been fully clarified because they led to an emphasized ethnicization of the Macedonian state-legal system and evidently opened the way for a change in the very character of the Macedonian state, i.e. the concept of a nation-state and consequently, the question of the fate of its unitary character. Experiences in the socio-political sense have shown that the thus declared concept of the development of a multicultural society has actually grown in a completely different direction, i.e. into a multiethnic state, and this is today seriously reflected in the issue of the stability of the civic concept of the state and the danger of regionalization. "The democratic transition places in the focus of political events the issues of the *demos*, i.e. the citizens, and the state, which represents an appropriate unit capable of making decisions, in accordance with the principle of state sovereignty."¹⁷ - In other words, it can be concluded that the military conflict of 2001 led to changes in the political system that did not arise from the shortcomings of the state-legal concept of the state, but rather had a completely different political background, and this can most evidently be stated and is most obvious through the example of the total dominance of political parties with an ethnic connotation and through

¹⁷ Robert Dahl, *Democracy in Crisis*, New Naven, 1989. p. 207.

the corruption of the system and its deformation, which is most obvious through the partocracy, which strongly contributed to the instability and inefficiency of the institutions of the system today.

In its format, the Framework Agreement represents a "harmonized framework for securing the future of democracy in Macedonia" which: "promotes the peaceful and harmonious development of civil society, while respecting the ethnic identity and interests of all (Macedonian) citizens."¹⁸ The basis of this political agreement, as mentioned above, was to put an end to the military conflict. Accordingly, the Ohrid Agreement is a kind of peace agreement. Since its goal was aimed at normatively guaranteeing political rights for all citizens in the Republic of Macedonia, then we should have no doubts that it is also a political agreement. The Ohrid Agreement actually represents a unique model of building a political consensus that moves between the principles of consociational and unitary state organization. It is an "unusual attempt to combine a civic approach and equal rights for all citizens, with the elements of consensual democracy."¹⁹

Based on the definitions in the new preamble, the Constitution, through the Framework Agreement, introduced normative changes that represent a guarantee for the affirmation of the multiethnic character of the Republic of Macedonia. The Framework Agreement also introduced a threshold of 20% as a minimum condition for the implementation of key provisions, such as the use of the language or the right to university education in the mother tongue for non-Macedonian communities. Furthermore, the Agreement specified the regulation of a series of principles that declared the state's intention to eliminate discrimination and achieve full social equality between members of different ethnic groups. The Agreement also calls for the development of local authorities, while strictly referring to the need for a significant transfer of competencies from the central to the local government; further, the elimination of discrimination by stimulating the initial representation of all ethnic communities in the public administration, in accordance with their procedural representation in the state; introduction of special parliamentary procedures, the aim of which is to protect non-majority communities from oversight in the Parliament; development of rights in the sphere of education and full implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement re-

¹⁸ Preamble to the Framework Agreement, Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, (2002), PE "Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia".

¹⁹ Farimah Daftary, Conflict Resolution in FYR Macedonia: Power-sharing or the 'civil approach', Helsinki Monitor, Vol.12, No.4, 2001. p. 291-312.

garding the use of languages; as well as the rights in the sphere of free and full expression of the identity of non-majority communities. - "The main question that arises here is whether the Constitutional amendments of 16 November 2001, voted on the basis of the Framework Agreement, meant and mean a change in the character of the state itself, which refers, firstly, to the nation-state character, and secondly, to its unitary character."²⁰

Following the constitutional amendments in 2001, in 2004, the Law on Territorial Division of the Republic of Macedonia was adopted. It amended the existing municipal borders, with the municipalities of Vrutok, Dolna Banjica, Čegrane and Srbinovo being added to the municipality of Gostivar (with this amendment, the percentage of the Macedonian population decreased from 26% to 19%), the municipalities of Džepčište and Šipkovića being added to the municipality of Tetovo (here the percentage of the Macedonian population was reduced from 28% to 23%), the municipality of Čaška (the percentage of the Albanian population increased from 7% to 33%), and a similar change was made in the municipality of Dolneni. In the municipality of Kičevo, with some delay, after eight years, the rural municipalities of Oslomej and Zajas were added, making this municipality predominantly Albanian. The largest and most problematic changes were made in the municipality of Struga, to which the municipalities of Veleshta, Delogozdi, Labunishta and Lukovo were added, and with these changes the number of Macedonians fell from 47% to 32%, and the number of Albanians increased from 41% to 56%. The rural municipalities of Saraj and Kondovo were artificially added to the city of Skopje, which increased the number of Albanians from 15% to over 20%. This contributed to the realization of the idea of introducing bilingualism, which, according to the Framework Agreement of 2001, had a threshold of at least 20% ethnic representation.²¹

²⁰ Б. Поповска, *Историските основи и современиот развој...* p. 242.

²¹ According to the Ohrid Framework Agreement of 2001 and the constitutional amendments, the following rights are guaranteed: in addition to the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script, any other language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its script shall also be an official language, with certain specifications and qualifications. Furthermore, in local self-government units in which at least 20% of the population speaks a language other than the Macedonian language and its script, their language shall be used as an official language. With regard to languages spoken by less than 20% of the population in the local self-government unit, local authorities shall decide on their use in public bodies. Also, any personal documents of citizens speaking an official language other than Macedonian shall also be issued in that language, in addition to Macedonian.

In 2008, the "Law on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Members of Communities That Make up Less Than 20% of the Total Population of the Republic of Macedonia" was adopted.²² It referred to rights in the area of employment in accordance with the principle of adequate and equitable representation of members of the communities, the use of language, education (primary, secondary and higher), culture and other areas in which the rights of members of the communities are regulated by law.²³ The use of the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia and in the units of local self-government was regulated by a special law, i.e. "Law on the Use of a Language Spoken by at Least 20% of the Citizens in the Republic of Macedonia and in the Units of Local Self-Government".²⁴ Such solutions clearly did not lead to satisfactory results, which is why in 2018 a new "Law on the Use of Languages in the Republic of Macedonia" was adopted. According to this law, in all state institutions, alongside the Macedonian language and Cyrillic script, the language and script spoken by 20% of the citizens of the Macedonian state will also become official. There is undoubtedly significant dualism in Macedonian society regarding the need for and implementation of this legal solution, due to the refusal of the former president of the state to sign the law. After a second vote in the Macedonian Assembly on March 14, 2018, the law was published in the Official Gazette without the president's signature, which from the outset raised questions about its constitutionality. The primary issue with the law is the soft underbelly of the state's unitarity, as this legal solution made the Albanian language the second official language in the Republic of Macedonia. According to the Law on the Use of Languages, two bodies are established: the Agency for the Implementation of the Language Spoken by at Least 20% of the Citizens in the Country and the Inspectorate for the Use of Languages.²⁵ - The establishment of these two institutions has sparked a current dilemma in Macedonian society, as, in addition to the financial unsustainability of this concept, it also disrupts the balanced coexistence that was its original intention. This move

²² Official Gazette No. 92 of 22 July 2008.

²³ See Article 3 of the Law on Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Members of Communities that Make up Less Than 20% of the Total Population of the Republic of Macedonia. Official Gazette No. 92 of 22 July 2008.

²⁴ Official Gazette No. 101 of 13 August 2008.

²⁵ Анализа перцепции и искуства на раководители и службеници од државната администрација за имплементација на Законот за употреба на јазиците од 2008 година во државните институции, Здружение на граѓани за поддршка на меѓуетнички дијалог и развој на заедницата „Заеднички вредности“, Скопје, 2018. p. 6.

unequivocally and gradually alters the unitary structure of the Macedonian state and, instead of fostering progress, exacerbates the differences among members of different ethnic communities.²⁶

Regarding the thirty-four year transition of the *demos* and *ethnos* in the Macedonian state, it is important to mention the two international agreements: one between the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Bulgaria, signed in 2017, known as the bilateral agreement for friendship and understanding, and the other with the Republic of Greece, known as the Prespa Agreement, signed in 2018. These agreements resulted in the change of the constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia to the Republic of North Macedonia in 2019. The Prespa Agreement conditioned the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Republic of Macedonia on the change of its constitutional name to "Republic of North Macedonia," which led to a politically dictated self-revision of the history of the Macedonian nation and the end of "Macedonism."²⁷ This fact clearly opened wide the Pandora's box of the XIXth century regarding the old paradigms of the ambitions of the great Balkan states, who's most important question was: To whom does Macedonia and its population belong the most? – In this regard, it is evident that the agreements impose a revision of the Macedonian national narrative by replicating the national histories of Bulgaria and Greece, which fundamentally challenges and delegitimizes the identity of the Macedonian nation. This is expected to be reflected in the revised school textbooks from which new generations will learn about the new history of the citizens of "North Macedonia"!

These developments triggered strong reactions in academic circles in the Republic of Macedonia, as well as in Bulgaria and Greece, due to the fact that scientific conclusions ended up in the hands of politicians who are not only incompetent to deal with issues related to national history but also encroached upon the framework of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to self-determination and sovereignty of the Macedonian state as the highest postulates of an independent state. The questions that scientists most often debate at international academic conferences have, through these actions, become subjects of banal mercantilism and a vulgar attack on Macedonian national historiography and its efforts and achievements built over the past eight decades.

²⁶ <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/29714131.html>

²⁷ Mitko Panov, Will Zoran Zaev "solve" the Macedonian people?, Column. <https://www.expres.mk/kje-go-reshi-li-zoran-zaev-i-makedonskiot-narod-pishuva-prof-mitko-b-panov/>

CONCLUSION

It is undeniable that the decisions of ASNOM (Anti-Fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia) have retained their full vital significance for the Macedonian people. This is because they laid the foundation for the creation of an independent and democratic Republic of Macedonia. Although the decision to join the newly established state to the Yugoslav federation was made simultaneously with the creation of the Macedonian national state, this does not alter the essence of the main goal—namely, the establishment of the Macedonian state as the ultimate imperative of the centuries-long struggle for the creation of a sovereign national state for the Macedonian people. The democratic messages regarding citizens' rights, the proclamation of equality and coexistence of all nationalities living in Macedonia, the declaration of mutual tolerance, and respect for the religious, cultural, and national characteristics of every individual demonstrate that in 1944, a historic culmination occurred, which is as fascinating in itself as it was a ripe moment for the inclusion of the Macedonian constituent people in the modern international order, while simultaneously affirming its institutional recognition through a clear stance on its inalienable national and state existence. Hence, it is evident that the decisions of ASNOM took into account the Atlantic Charter of the time, as well as the principles of the new post-war international order, which shortly thereafter found expression in the formation of the United Nations. The participants in ASNOM came from different generations, encompassing the Gemidzhii, the Ilinden fighters of 1903, and the partisans who fought against the fascist occupiers. For these reasons, the enduring historical fact remains the unchangeable truth that the Macedonian state was established on August 2, 1944, based on the foundational decisions adopted at ASNOM. It is also important to mention that the Macedonian constitutional system historically records the use of different terminology for naming members of ethnic communities. Until 1974, the following terms were in use: nationalities and national minorities, but with the 1974 Constitution this terminology focuses on the term nationalities.²⁸ This narrative of the constitution-maker leads to the observation that in the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, three terms were used: people, nationalities, and ethnic groups. With the independence of the Republic of Macedonia in 1991, pluralism brought about a peculiar political euphoria in which, among other things, "history became the only science that, in the then-current Macedonian conditions,

²⁸ See "Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia", Official Gazette No. 7 of 25 February 1974.

was politicized and transformed into the most opportunistic science for the political rating of the newly established political parties... In such a politicized atmosphere, with evident manipulation and abuse of history, Macedonian historiography became the main subject of the political struggle between ruling and opposition parties, aimed at their mutual discrediting. However, such newly offered history was neither scientifically grounded nor could it be critically examined; rather, its simplicity was a kind of 'instant history,' tailored to the needs of the time and, of course, to garnering the votes of the people.²⁹

Regarding the terminological definition of different ethnic groups in the Macedonian state, according to the 1991 Constitution, the term "nationalities" was used. Following the adoption of constitutional amendments in 2001, the terminological designation "members of communities that are a non-majority population in the Republic of Macedonia" was established. However, this solution also reflects differences, as in current usage, a distinction is made between members of communities constituting more than 20% of the population and those constituting less than 20%. This distinction is not merely terminological; it introduces a system for regulating the rights of communities based on these percentages. Following this distinction, the legislator decided to adopt specific laws to regulate minority rights, or the rights of members of these communities. These include the aforementioned "Law on the Use of Languages Spoken by at Least 20% of the Citizens in the Republic of Macedonia and in the Units of Local Self-Government" and the "Law on the Protection and Advancement of the Rights of Members of Communities Constituting Less Than 20% of the Population in the Republic of Macedonia," both enacted in 2008.³⁰

To date, the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia from 1991 has been amended eight times.³¹

It is evident that this thirty-four year transition has had both domestic and international dimensions at the forefront of its events. For these reasons, it is clear that the Macedonian question remains a cause of discord and

²⁹ Зоран Тодоровски, Македонската историографија и политиката (Актуелни рефлексии во македонскиот плуралистички систем), Ст. Прилози од научниот собир по повод 50-годишнината од работата на Институтот за национална историја „Македонската историска наука – достигнувања и проблеми“, Скопје, 2000. p. 507.

³⁰ <https://www.romalitico.org/index.php/mk/io/pr/io-pr-it/113-research-areas/law/policy-analysis/138-%D1>, p. 2.

³¹ 30 години Устав - измена на Уставите во избрани држави во Европа - компаративен преглед, ноември, 2021.

various denials, which require greater space for elaboration. Therefore, in the interest of the topic of this respective research, it is important to note that both during the existence of the Macedonian state within the former federation and after its independence, certain institutions from neighboring countries published documents that raise questions about the need for the existence of the Macedonian state, the Macedonian nation, and the distinctiveness of the Macedonian language. Here, I would mention only: the Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts from 1995, the Memorandum of the Macedonian Scientific Institute in Sofia from 1997, the Bulgarian National Doctrine titled "Bulgaria in the 21st Century" from 1998, the Platform for Resolving the Albanian National Question by the Albanian Academy of Sciences from 1998, and many others that led to the problematic so-called Tirana Platform of 2017 and the Declaration adopted by the Bulgarian Parliament in 2019.

From the perspective of the conducted socio-political analysis of the thirty-four year Macedonian transition, it is evident that, in their essence, the concepts of *demos* and *ethnos* have become hostages to daily political propaganda and the negative selection resulting from the total politicization and political populism of the political elites, at the expense of the ostensibly declared civic concept of equality for all citizens in Macedonian society. This observation holds as long as Macedonian society fails to break free from the thirty-four year transitional vortex. For these reasons, this topic remains open in the near future, that is, until the anticipated integration of the Macedonian state into the European Union. The paradox of unification with the EU is, of course, linked to the dissolution of the SFRY, and it tells us that the Balkan, and in this case, the Macedonian paradigm, is strongly tied to geopolitics—a fact that undoubtedly has been recurring for centuries.

SUMMARY

The modern Macedonian state was constituted by the ASNOM decisions in 1944 and it was created on the concept of a nation-state or *demos*. A fundamental document of the *demos* concept built in this way is the "Declaration of the basic rights of the citizens in Democratic Macedonia", adopted on August 2, 1944. This concept of the *demos*, which is based on the principle of nation-state, is made according to the French model, unlike the previously formed Balkan nation-states, which in the second half of the XIX and early XX century were created according to

the German model. The aim of this research is to make a thorough socio-political analysis of the thirty years of Macedonian transition in order to show that in its essence, the concepts of *demos* and *ethnos* have become hostages of daily political propaganda and the negative selection that resulted from total partisanship and the political populism of the political elites, at the expense of the seemingly declared civic concept of equality of all citizens in Macedonian society.

Keywords. – Macedonian state, ASNOM, *demos*, *ethnos*, socio-political transition