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Dardan Berisha

Indiana University Maurer School of Law, dberisha@iu.edu

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Cover Page Footnote

Dardan Berisha has several years of experience in leading the implementation of projects on electoral reform, voter education, strategic and operational planning, voter inclusion, election dispute resolution, results tabulation, and election observation. He holds a Bachelor's Degree on International Relations from the Eastern Mediterranean University in Cyprus and a Master's Degree (LLM) in International and Comparative Law and Globalization from the Indiana University Maurer School of Law in Bloomington.

The Politics of Electoral Systems in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

by Dardan Berisha*

INTRODUCTION

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (“FYROM”) experienced four major changes to its electoral system in the eight parliamentary elections held between 1990 and 2014. The Macedonian 1990 and 1994 parliamentary elections were held under a majority system, in which 120 members of the Parliament were elected from 120 constituencies, one member per constituency. A mixed-majority/proportional representation (“PR”) system was adopted for the 1998 elections, in which eighty-five seats were elected under the majority system from the constituencies, and thirty-five seats were elected proportionally from a nation-wide electoral district. Yet another system was adopted for the 2002 elections, in which the FYROM was divided into six electoral districts electing twenty seats in each district proportionally. The PR system proved to be somewhat more stable, as the pillars of this system remain the same to date. However, an additional tweak was introduced for the 2011 and 2014 elections when three extra seats were added to the parliament for representation of Macedonian citizens living abroad. These three seats are now elected through the majority First Past the Post (“FPTP”) system in three single member constituencies abroad.

Throughout its years of parliamentary democracy, the FYROM experienced multiple political crises, mainly due to the lack of political consensus among parties representing the Macedonian community, but also because of tension and conflict between the Albanians and Macedonians living in the FYROM. This paper will examine the potential influence of electoral systems in political developments in the FYROM—how the electoral systems may have affected the representation of minorities in the parliament and why the FYROM has yet to find a happy marriage with an electoral system. The paper reviews academic literature on the relationship between electoral systems and politics, provides a contextual background of each parliamentary election held in the FYROM from 1990 to 2016, and presents empirical data on the allocation of seats per political party under the different electoral systems.

I. Literature Review

There is widespread literature on the correlation between electoral systems and politics. International IDEA, a global research engine on comparative constitutional and electoral matters, is at the forefront of these fields. Some of IDEA’s work draws on the research of prominent scholars Maurice Duverger and Arend Lijphart. Domestic and international scholars have also researched the FYROM, and this paper references their research throughout.

Choosing an electoral system is one of the most important decisions for any democracy because the electoral system “has a profound effect on the future political life of the country.”¹ Electoral

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systems influence, among other things, the standing of political parties, the nature of the government coalitions, the ability of voters to hold their representatives accountable,² and the degree to which the parliament is composed of marginalized groups, such as minorities and women.

The choice of an electoral system is largely a political decision. Normally, the decision-making process should include a range of actors including political parties, members of the parliament, civil society organizations, representatives of the election commission, and independent electoral design experts. Such an inclusive process of electoral reform enhances the legitimacy of the reform and ensures a greater acceptance of the electoral outcome. However, there are occasions when the selection of the electoral system is largely a power grab, aimed at favoring or disenfranchising one party or group. “Calculations of short-term political interests can often obscure the longer-term consequences of a particular electoral system and the interests of the wider political system.”³ Moreover, “if an electoral system is not considered fair and the political framework does not allow the opposition to feel that they have the chance to win next time around, losers may feel compelled to work outside the system, using non-democratic, confrontationalist and even violent tactics.”⁴

There are many different types of electoral systems, but most of them fall within three broad categories: 1) majority/plurality systems; 2) PR systems; and 3) mixed systems (with elements of both one and two). One easy “way to look at electoral systems is to group them according to how closely they translate national votes won into legislative seats won, that is, how proportional they are.”⁵ Electoral experts agree in that there is no single best electoral system, as “each electoral environment has different factors to take into account,” and that each electoral system has particular general advantages and disadvantages—that may or may not occur in any specific environment—and may fulfill the overall objectives of the election system to a greater or lesser degree.⁶ For this research, the focus will be largely on the majority/plurality and PR systems. Therefore, it is important to consider some of the more generally acceptable arguments in favor of or against these systems—while also remembering that the choice of electoral systems is always contextual.

Much of the analysis in the next few paragraphs draws from analysis in the International IDEA Handbook on Electoral System Design. Majority/plurality electoral systems are more likely to lead to two-party political systems, which inevitably lead to the formation of governments by a single party. These majority/plurality governments create stable single-party executives that are not constrained by governing coalitions, while also giving rise to a single powerful opposition in the legislature that holds the executive accountable. Voters in these systems are allowed to choose between individual candidates, rather than just parties, making the candidate more accountable to voters. On the other hand, majority/plurality systems produce disproportional outcomes that tend

¹ Andrew Reynolds, et al. *Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook*, INST. FOR DEMOCRACY AND ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE, 1 (2005) <http://www.idea.int/publications/esd/index.cfm>.

² Michael Gallagher & Paul Mitchell, *The Politics of Electoral Systems*, OXFORD UNIV. PRESS, 4 (2005).

³ Reynolds et al., *supra* note 1, at 2.

⁴ *Id.* at 6.

⁵ *Id.* at 27.

⁶ Alan Wall and Mohamad Salih, *Engineering Electoral Systems: Possibilities and Pitfalls*, NETHERLANDS INST. FOR MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY, 8 (2007) <http://aceproject.org/ero-en/misc/engineering-electoral-systems-possibilities-and>.

to exclude minorities and smaller parties from representation in the legislature. In certain contexts, this may be dangerous because minority parties may begin to feel that they do not have a realistic hope of ever electing a candidate to the legislature. Additionally, because this system requires the drawing of electoral districts, it may be subject to gerrymandering.

The PR system addresses some of the disadvantages of the majority/plurality system, but it also has downsides. According to the IDEA handbook, in PR systems parties gain seats based on their proportion of votes. As such, the system provides better opportunities for smaller parties and minority cultures/groups to be elected. PR systems ensure that both majority and minority groups are represented in the legislature. On the other hand, these systems tend to be more unstable as they usually require coalitions of two or more parties to form a majority. Possible breakdowns in governing coalitions weaken the stability of the executive and the legislature, which may lead to frequent elections. Moreover, because voters in most PR systems vote for the party, rather than the individual candidates, party leaders tend to have excessive power, and there is a weaker linkage with their voters.

Academics agree with these fundamental benefits and problems endemic to these electoral systems. Maurice Duverger, one of those academics, laid the foundation for what is known as *Duverger's Law*, which—through its “mechanical” and “psychological” effects—attempts to explain how single-member majority/plurality districts almost inevitably lead to a two-party political system.⁷ On the other hand, PR systems are a driving force behind multi-party systems.⁸ Duverger argues that the advantages of PR systems are that they allow differentiated and diverse representation in the legislature, which works best in countries where the majority parties tend to crush the smaller parties.⁹ He goes on to say that PR systems “enable numerous small parties to make their voices heard without hurting either the stability or the effectiveness of the executive.”¹⁰

Following-up on Duverger's work, Arend Lijphart argues that the majority/plurality single-member district systems are winner-take-all methods—in which the candidates supported by the largest number of voters wins everything while all other voters remain under-represented.¹¹ Lijphart studied PR systems in detail, stating that the *d'Hondt* formula (discussed *infra*) “has a slight bias in favor of large parties and against small parties,” compared to other methods.¹² Lijphart also wrote on the inverse influence that district magnitudes have on majority/plurality and PR systems. He found that increasing district magnitude in majority/plurality systems created “greater disproportionality and greater advantages for large parties, whereas under [PR systems] it results in greater proportionality and more favorable conditions for small parties.”¹³ According to Lijphart, for instance, “a party representing a ten percent minority is unlikely to win a seat in a five-member district but will be successful in a ten-member district.”¹⁴ Lijphart further argues that

⁷ Kenneth Benoit, *Duverger's Law and the Study of Electoral Systems*, 4 FRENCH POL. 69, 73-74 (2006).

⁸ *Id.* at 70.

⁹ Maurice Duverger, *Which Is the Best Electoral System?* in CHOOSING AN ELECTORAL SYSTEM: ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVES 31, 36 (Arend Lijphart & Bernard Grofman ed., 1984).

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ AREND LIJPHART, PATTERNS OF DEMOCRACY: GOVERNMENTS FORMS AND PERFORMANCE IN THIRTY-SIX COUNTRIES 130 (2nd ed. 2012).

¹² *Id.* at 135.

¹³ *Id.* at 138.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 139.

only single nation-wide districts, when all other factors are equal, are “optimal for a proportional translation of votes into seats.”¹⁵ It appears that both Duverger and Lijphart agree that PR systems would generally be better for multi-ethnic societies as they would ensure better representation for smaller groups.

Richard S. Katz has also discussed why countries undergo frequent electoral reforms. Katz points out that factors such as government instability, disproportional results, public scandals, and corruption often lead to frequent changes of electoral laws.¹⁶ According to Katz, there are also country-specific reasons why reforms occur, such as the French crisis over Algeria; the Italian communist threat in the 1950s; the 1993 tongue slip made by a New Zealand political leader; and a number of irrelevant issues in 1997 that forced the Maltese government to seek compromise with the opposition.¹⁷ As Duverger has noted, electoral reform is sometimes beneficial, “after a certain period of time, because it introduces an element of renewal in the political game, which, otherwise has the tendency to be frozen.”¹⁸ Most countries that have changed their electoral systems have done so in the direction of increased proportionality, either by adding a proportional element to a plurality system or by completely replacing their old system with Party List PR.¹⁹

II. Historical Background to Elections in Macedonia

The FYROM is a parliamentary republic that held eight national elections from 1990 to 2014. It became independent in 1991 following the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia.²⁰ The FYROM has a population of 2,100,025, of which sixty-four percent is ethnic Macedonian, twenty-five percent is Albanian, four percent is Turkish, three percent Romani, two percent Serbian, and a relatively small percentage of other minorities.²¹

There are currently four main political parties in Macedonia, two from the Macedonian community and two from the Albanian community. Among Macedonian parties, VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM are the two parties that traditionally have the largest share of seats.²² Whichever of the parties wins the largest share of seats is entitled to form the government. Among the Albanian parties, DPA and DUI are the two main parties. It has become a customary practice that the government in Macedonia is established by the largest Macedonian party, in coalition with the largest of the Albanian parties, although there are exceptions to this. A briefing by the Balkan Insight,²³ from which most of the information below was gleaned, best describes the party backgrounds and platforms:

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ Richard S. Katz, *Why Are There So Many (Or So Few) Electoral Reforms?* in *THE POLITICS OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS* (Michael Gallagher & Paul Mitchell ed., 2005), <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/view/10.1093/019257566.001.0001/acprof-9780199257560-chapter-3>.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ Duverger, *supra* note 9.

¹⁹ Reynolds et al., *supra* note 1, at 23.

²⁰ “The CIA World Factbook: Macedonia”, CIA, (2016) <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mk.html>.

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Key political Parties in Macedonia*, BALKAN INSIGHT (Sep. 27, 2010), <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/who-is-who-political-parties-in-macedonia>.

²³ *Id.*

1. **Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE, Macedonian)** was founded in 1990 and sees itself as the successor of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, a 19th-century national liberation movement in the Ottoman Empire. This is a center-right ruling party that advocates for admission to NATO and the European Union. During the 1990s, the party had strong nationalist stance especially against the Albanian minorities, although their campaigns have moderated in the last couple of elections. VMRO-DPMNE has been the party with the largest share of seats since 2006 in FYROM and has been leading the government since then.²⁴
2. **Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia (SDSM, Macedonian)** is the successor to the League of Communists of Macedonia, the only lawful party from 1945 to 1990. SDSM is the leading opposition party, standing for liberal economic policies, co-operation with the international community, and a conciliatory attitude toward ethnic minorities. SDSM has not won a majority since the 2002 election, and has not seen any increase in voter support in the last couple of elections.²⁵
3. **Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA, Albanian)** was formed in 1997 by a merger of two former Albanian parties, the Party for Democratic Prosperity of Albanians and the People’s Democratic Party. DPA served as the main voice for representation of Albanian minorities, especially during the 1990s. DPA has seen a gradual decrease in voter’s support over the years, particularly with the emergence of the Democratic Union for Integration (*infra*).²⁶
4. **Democratic Union for Integration (DUI, Albanian)** formed in 2002 by the leaders of the Albanian Liberation Army in Macedonia and is currently the largest ethnic Albanian party. The party’s main agenda is full implementation of the 2001 Ohrid peace accord, which ended the conflict in Macedonia by offering greater rights to Albanians. DUI has been VMRO-DPMNE’s coalition partner for the third consecutive mandate.²⁷

This paper also looks chronologically at each of the eight parliamentary elections held in FYROM from 1990 to 2016. This section will provide detailed information about the electoral system and political context under which the elections were held by looking at reports from local and international scholars and organizations, old election laws and regulations, and empirical data from the websites of the Assembly of Macedonia and the election commission. For each election, there is data on the election results, seat allocation, and formation of governing coalitions.

A. 1990 Parliamentary Election

The first multi-party parliamentary elections in the FYROM were held in 1990—one year prior to the declaration of independence of the FYROM. The elections were held during a period that marked the beginning of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, during which most elections in other republics resulted in the victory of newly proclaimed democratic parties at the expense of the

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *Id.*

communist party in Yugoslavia.²⁸ These elections were held under a two-round majority system with 120 single member districts.²⁹ There were eighteen political parties and forty-three independent candidates who competed in the elections.³⁰

The Albanian minorities in Macedonia won twenty-three³¹ of the 120 seats (nineteen percent). In the first round, of the 1,339,021 registered voters, the turnout was eighty-five percent, and it declined to seventy-seven percent in the second round.³² Due to the determined irregularities, the elections were cancelled in 176 polling stations from thirty-three Electoral Units in fourteen municipalities.³³

The seat allocation was as follows: thirty-eight for VMRO-DPMNE, thirty-one for SDSM (then SKM-PDP), seventeen for PDP, eleven for SRSM, five for PDA (then PDP/NDP), four for SPM, and fourteen seats for other smaller parties and independent candidates.³⁴ There were two governing coalitions led by different parties within this legislature. The first governing coalition, which lasted two years, known as the ‘government of experts’, was formed by VMRO-DPMNE, but following a vote of no-confidence, a new government was formed led by SDSM.³⁵ These were the only elections in Macedonia in which two governments were formed within the same mandate of the legislature.

B. 1994 Parliamentary Election

The 1994 elections were held under the same majority single-member district system used in 1990. Article 54 of the Macedonian election law provided that “[a] candidate shall be elected for a representative if he received the majority of votes from voters that voted in an electoral district, on condition that the number of votes he received is not smaller than one third of the total number of voters according to the voting list.”³⁶

The 1994 elections were the first parliamentary elections in the FYROM following the declaration of independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. There were thirty-eight political parties and 283 independent candidates.³⁷ The rise in the number of political parties and independent candidates from the 1990 to 1994 elections is contrary to the general view of the literature that majority systems reduce the number of parties, or eventually lead to two-party systems. Of the 1,360,729 registered voters, the turnout was seventy-eight percent in the first round, and declined to fifty-eight percent in the second round.³⁸

²⁸ JANE DIMESKI, *THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA’S 2014 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS HANDBOOK*, 21 (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung ed. 2d ed. 2014).

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ Wolfgang Wagner, *The overstated merits of proportional representation: The Republic of Macedonia as a natural experiment for assessing the impact of electoral systems on descriptive representation*, *ETHNOPOLITICS* 488 (2014).

³² Dimeski, *supra* note 28, at 22.

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ *Id.* at 21–22.

³⁵ Bogdan Szajkowski, *Elections and Electoral Politics in Macedonia*, *TRANSITIONS* 55-56 (1998).

³⁶ *LAW ON ELECTION AND RECALL OF REPRESENTATIVES AND ASSEMBLYMEN*, art. 54 (1994).

³⁷ Dimeski, *supra* note 28, at 24.

³⁸ *Id.*

The results from the first round elections were disappointing for VMRO-DPMNE, which credited its defeat to the SDSM-led coalition to administrative voting irregularities and fraud. Both domestic and international reports³⁹ admit that there were administrative irregularities with regard to voting invitations and voter registration, but they do not seem to report whether the irregularities distorted the results to the extent as to justify VMRO-DPMNE's decision to boycott the second round of elections. Because of the boycott, the seat allocation following the second round of elections was as follows: sixty seats for SDSM, twenty-nine for LP, eleven for PDP, nine for SPM, and eleven seats for other smaller parties.⁴⁰ SDSM leader Branko Crvenkovski formed the government, which included ministers from SPM, PDP, and LP.⁴¹

Following the 1994 elections, the FYROM underwent an electoral reform process. According to reports from local organizations, the majority electoral system of the 1990 and 1994 elections produced disproportional results that were not suitable for Macedonia.⁴²

C. 1998 Parliamentary Election

In July 1998, the parliament adopted a new electoral system after four years of debate.⁴³ The election system was changed to a mixed majority/proportional system. Article 2 of the 1998 FYROM election law read: “[O]f the total [120] number of Members of Parliament 85 are elected according to the majority principle in the electoral districts defined by law, and 35 are elected according to the principle of proportionality, whereby the territory of the Republic of Macedonia represents one electoral district.”⁴⁴

For the eighty-five majority seats, a candidate was elected if he or she won the majority of the votes in the first round, provided the number of votes won is not less than one third of the total number of voters registered for the electoral district concerned.⁴⁵ If no candidate secured the majority in the first round, a run-off election was held between the top two candidates.⁴⁶ There were twenty-two political parties, four coalitions, and seven independent candidates running for the majority seats.⁴⁷ There were also accusations of gerrymandering in delineating electoral districts. The 1998 Election Observation Report from International Crisis Group stated that districts comprised of ethnic Albanians had on average 20,000 voters, whereas constituencies predominantly comprised of Macedonians had on average 16,000 voters—which meant that a vote cast by an ethnic Macedonian was worth more than one cast by an ethnic Albanian.⁴⁸ OSCE noted that District Sixty-One, which joined Macedonian villages together with Albanian villages in one

³⁹ Szajkowski, *supra* note 35, at 57.

⁴⁰ Dimeski, *supra* note 28, at 25.

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² MOST Citizen's Association, *Final Report: Parliamentary elections 2006*, 3 (2006).

⁴³ INT'L CRISIS GRP., *1998 Elections in Macedonia*, ICG BALKANS REPORT NO. 45, 4 (1998).

⁴⁴ LAW ON THE ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA [ELECTORAL LAW], art. 2 (1998).

⁴⁵ *Id.* at art. 88.

⁴⁶ *Id.* at art. 88.

⁴⁷ Dimeski, *supra* note 28, at 26.

⁴⁸ INT'L CRISIS GRP., *supra* note 43, at 6.

area, was one example of such gerrymandering intended to create an additional seat for ethnic Macedonians.⁴⁹

For the thirty-five proportional seats, an electoral threshold of five percent was introduced, and the seats were calculated using the D'hondt formula.⁵⁰ Some literature argues that the D'hondt formula favors the larger parties at the expense of the smaller parties.⁵¹ In addition, a five percent threshold can be viewed as too high for Albanian and other minority parties—which needed to merge or form coalitions in order to survive in the electoral competition. There were twelve parties, four coalitions, and a group of voters competing for the proportional seats.⁵²

The seat allocation was as follows: forty-nine seats for VMRO-DPMNE, twenty-seven for SDSM, fourteen for PDP, thirteen for DA, eleven for DPA, and four seats for other smaller parties.⁵³ After the elections, the leader of VMRO-DPMNE, Ljubco Georgievski, established a coalition government together with DA and DPA.⁵⁴

D. 2002 Parliamentary Election

Two events occurred between the 1998 and 2002 elections that are relevant to this paper. First, because of the 1999 conflict in neighboring Kosovo, about 250,000 Kosovar Albanians fleeing from ethnic cleansing sought refuge in the FYROM.⁵⁵ While this created a significant political and economic burden for the FYROM, there is no evidence that this had any effect on the 2002 parliamentary elections held in the FYROM. This could have led, however, into the existing division of Albanians and Macedonians living in the FYROM, and played a role in the results of the second event, the 2001 conflict between the Macedonian state forces and the Albanian National Liberation Army in Macedonia. The 2001 conflict resulted in significant casualties, and displacement of 170,000 people (74,000 internally), finally concluding in the peaceful negotiation of the 2001 Ohrid Agreement.⁵⁶

The 2001 Ohrid Agreement between the Macedonian and Albanian leaders, which included a package of constitutional amendments, provided greater rights to Albanians in language, education, and culture, and provided for more proportional representation in public administration positions.⁵⁷ The agreement does not include any provisions with regard to changes of the election system, though it does address issues of municipal boundaries,⁵⁸ which, as stated earlier, were problematic particularly during the 1998 elections. The Ohrid Agreement, Point 3.2 provided that

⁴⁹ ORG. FOR SEC. & COOPERATION IN EUROPE, *Parliamentary Elections in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, 6 (1998).

⁵⁰ ELECTION LAW, art. 93 (1998).

⁵¹ Arend Lijphart, *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws*, 84 AMER. POL. SCI. REV. 2, 485 (1990).

⁵² Dimeski, *supra* note 28, at 26.

⁵³ *Id.*

⁵⁴ *Id.*

⁵⁵ “Human Rights Watch: Macedonia”, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/wr2k/Eca-14.htm>.

⁵⁶ Global IDP, *Profile of Internal Displacement: Macedonia*, NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL/GLOBAL IDP PROJECT, 7 (2004) www.internal-displacement.org/assets/library/Europe/FYR-Macedonia/pdf/Macedonia-February-2004.pdf.

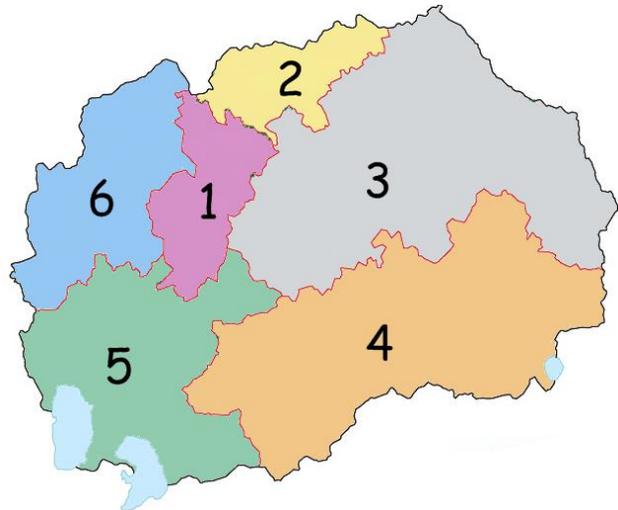
⁵⁷ FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA: FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT, VENICE COMM. (2001) [http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL\(2001\)104-e](http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL(2001)104-e)

⁵⁸ *Id.*

“[b]oundaries of municipalities will be revised within one year of the completion of a new census, which will be conducted under international supervision by the end of 2001.”⁵⁹

In addition, the adoption of the new electoral law in 2002, while not directly a product of the 2001 Ohrid Agreement, addressed the inter-ethnic political instability in the FYROM. The 2002 OSCE election observation report notes that “the new election laws were part of a larger package of legislation intended to implement the [Ohrid Agreement]”, reduce inter-communal tension by dividing the election contests among six regions, and enhance the representation of minority and other small parties.⁶⁰

According to Article 2 of the new 2002 electoral law, 120 members “shall be elected according to the proportional model, whereby the territory of the Republic of Macedonia shall be divided into 6 election districts . . . each of which shall elect 20 Members of Parliament.”⁶¹ The D’hondt formula was utilized to calculate seats.⁶² Although lawmakers removed the five percent threshold, there effectively continues to be a natural threshold from the application of six electoral districts.



Six electoral districts in FYROM, since 2002

With regard to districts, the 2002 OSCE election observer report provides that “districts are nearly equal in the number of registered voters with almost 280,000 each. Two of the districts (No. 3, in the central and northeast areas; and No. 4, in the south and southeast) are overwhelmingly ethnic Macedonian in their composition. Two more (No. 1, in the area of the capital, Skopje, and No. 5, in the southwest) are predominantly ethnic Macedonian. One (No. 6, in the northwest) is predominantly ethnic Albanian, and one (No. 2, in the northeast) is ethnically balanced, also including numbers of Roma and ethnic Serbs.”⁶³ In the 2002 elections, seventy-three percent of the 1,664,298 registered voters cast a ballot.⁶⁴ The coalition “For Macedonia Together,” formed under the leadership of SDSM, won the majority of votes.

The seat distribution resulting from the 2002 election was as follows: forty-three seats to SDSM, twenty-seven for VMRO-DPMNE, sixteen for Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), twelve for LDP, seven for DPA, and five for LP.⁶⁵ In this election, the emergent DUI—the new Albanian party formed by the leaders of the National Liberation Army—won sixteen seats. The SDSM leader Branko Crvenkovski formed the new government and included LDP and DUI elements.

⁵⁹ *Id.*

⁶⁰ OSCE, *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Parliamentary Elections 15 September 2002, Final Report*, 4 (2002) <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/fyrom/15961?download=true>.

⁶¹ ELECTORAL LAW, art. 2 (2002)

⁶² *Id.*, at art. 96, § 4.

⁶³ OSCE, *supra* note 60, at 4.

⁶⁴ Dimeski, *supra* note 28, at 27.

⁶⁵ *Id.*

However, the Macedonian public did not warmly receive the DUI since it viewed the representatives of this party as initiators of the military conflicts in 2001.⁶⁶

E. 2006 Parliamentary Election

The 2006 election was held in light of the FYROM's acceptance of candidate status for the European Union, and these elections were considered a test of the country's democratic commitment to the European integration process. The election was held under the same electoral system as in 2002, a system in which 120 members were elected in a closed-list proportional system, in six twenty-member districts with no threshold.

Despite retaining its electoral system, there nevertheless were changes made to the electoral framework. In March 2006, the parliament adopted a new electoral code, which consolidated all electoral legislation in a single code.⁶⁷ Parliament also strengthened criminal code provisions for violations of the electoral law.⁶⁸

There were twenty-five political parties, six coalitions of political parties, and two lists of independent candidates, seconded by a group of voters running for the elections.⁶⁹ Of the 1,741,449 eligible voters, only fifty-six percent voted.⁷⁰ The coalition "For Better Macedonia," led by VMRO-DPMNE, won the election. The seat allocation after the 2006 elections was as follows: thirty-eight seats for VMRO-DPMNE, twenty-three seats for SDSM, fourteen for DUI, eleven for DPA, three for SPM, three for PDP, and twenty-eight seats for other generally small parties that were part of the coalition with the large Macedonian parties.⁷¹

VMRO-DPMNE leader Nikola Gruevski, in coalition with DPA and NSDP, formed the government.⁷² This was the first time in which the second largest, rather than the largest, Albanian party joined the governing coalition. DUI, which considered itself representative of the Albanian people because it had a larger share of seats than DPA, protested against the governing coalition.⁷³ DUI considered it necessary to call for snap elections to correct the initial outcome in which DPA, the party with a lesser mandate, won and represented the Albanians in the executive.⁷⁴

F. 2008 Snap Parliamentary Election

In April 2008, with DUI's initiative, the parliament voted to dissolve itself for two principal reasons: (1) the DPA had left the governing coalition, which meant that the legislation required

⁶⁶ *Id.* at 28.

⁶⁷ ORG. FOR SEC. & COOPERATION IN EUROPE, *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Parliamentary Elections: Election Observation Mission Final Report*, 4 (Sept. 18, 2006) <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/fyrom/20630?download=true>

⁶⁸ *Id.* at 1, 5.

⁶⁹ MOST FINAL REPORT, *supra* note 42, at 2.

⁷⁰ *Id.* at 2.

⁷¹ *Id.*

⁷² Dimeski, *supra* note 28, at 29.

⁷³ *Id.*

⁷⁴ *Id.*

under the Ohrid Agreement could not be passed,⁷⁵ and (2) the government failed to receive an invitation for membership in NATO.⁷⁶ The electoral system remained the same, and there were no changes to the electoral law for these elections.

The coalition “For Better Macedonia” led by VMRO-DPMNE, won the election. The seat allocation was as follows: fifty-three seats for VMRO-DPMNE, eighteen for SDSM, eighteen for DUI, eleven for DPA, and twenty for other smaller parties.⁷⁷ Once again, the VMRO-DPMNE leader Nikola Gruevski, in coalition with DUI and other smaller parties, formed the government.⁷⁸

Observers reported the election went well, although numerous incidents of violence were observed, mainly in ethnic Albanian areas.⁷⁹ This could be seen as an effect of the electoral system as the system created greater competition on an intra-communal basis by intensifying the rivalry between the parties during the elections.⁸⁰

G. 2011 Snap Parliamentary Election

Snap parliamentary elections were held in 2011 after a serious political crisis in the FYROM. The opposition parties, with the exception of LDP, boycotted the parliament after accusations that the government’s freezing of the bank accounts of local media outlets was an attempt to silence them.⁸¹ The opposition requested an official dismissal of the parliament and the snap parliamentary elections, which was accepted by Prime Minister Nikola Gruesvki.

The electoral code was amended again before the election. Although the reform resulted from a consultative process that included representatives of the parliament and the civil society, the opposition parties ultimately boycotted the reform.⁸² Amendments were passed by a slim majority of the parliament—only 68 of the 120 members.⁸³

The framework of the electoral system remained largely the same since its establishment in 2002, with the six districts electing twenty seats proportionally. However, a minor change to the system was introduced when three reserve seats were added for representation of Macedonian citizens living abroad, which increased the number of seats in the parliament from 120 to 123. The three reserved seats were elected through the FPTP system in three single-member constituencies abroad: one for Europe and Africa, one for North and South America, and one for Australia and Asia.⁸⁴ The Venice Commission expressed concern that the reserved seats for citizens abroad violated the principles of equality of the vote—leading to situations where the number of voters

⁷⁵ ORG. FOR SEC. & COOPERATION IN EUROPE, *International Election Observation Mission Early Parliamentary Elections*, 3 (Jun. 1, 2008), <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/fyrom/32139?download=true>.

⁷⁶ Dimeski, *supra* note 28, at 30.

⁷⁷ *Id.* at 31.

⁷⁸ *Id.*

⁷⁹ ORG. FOR SEC. & COOPERATION IN EUROPE, *supra* note 75, at 1.

⁸⁰ *Id.* at 4.

⁸¹ Dimeski, *supra* note 28, at 32-33.

⁸² Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR, *Joint Opinion on the Revised Electoral Code of “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”*, 3 (Oct. 17, 2011), <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/84226?download=true>

⁸³ *Id.*

⁸⁴ Dimeski, *supra* note 28, at 35.

electing these MPs will differ significantly to in-country seats, and that these seats can serve just as a bonus for a party.⁸⁵

The seat allocation was as follows: forty-seven seats for VMRO-DPMNE, twenty-nine for SDM, fourteen for DUI, eight for DPA, five for SMP, and twenty for other generally small parties and independent candidates.⁸⁶ After the election, the leader of VMRO-DPMNE, Nikola Gruevski, formed the government for the third time with the coalition partner DUI under the leadership of Ali Ahmeti, as representatives of the Albanians.⁸⁷

H. 2014 Snap Parliamentary Election

Yet another snap election was held in the FYROM in 2014. The parliament was dissolved because of a breakdown in the governing coalition, as VMRO-DPMNE and DUI could not agree on a “consensus” candidate for the election of the President.⁸⁸ DUI boycotted both rounds of presidential elections and called its supporters not to vote, as the candidate of the coalition partner VMRO-DPMNE was not a consensus candidate who would represent both the Macedonian and Albanian communities.⁸⁹ Before the election, amendments to the electoral code were adopted with cross-party consensus in 2014, not for the purpose of changing the electoral system, but rather strengthening of campaign regulations, improving voter’s list inspection mechanisms, and improving the procedures for submission of electoral disputes.⁹⁰ There were nine political parties and five coalitions competing in the election, which represented the lowest number of participants in the parliamentary elections of FYROM.⁹¹

Following the election, the seat distribution was as follows: sixty-one seats for the coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE, thirty-four for the SDSM-led coalition, nineteen for DUI, seven for DPA, one COM and one for ND.⁹² The VMRO-DPMNE’s leader Nikola Gruevski, in coalition with DUI, formed the government. This was the third consecutive governing coalition between these parties.

The opposition did not accept the outcome of the election, and demanded a new election immediately after the results were announced. The leader of the SDSM coalition Zoran Zaev, a few minutes after the polls closed stated: “I’m here to say that SDSM and our opposition coalition will not recognize the election process, neither the presidential nor the parliamentary.” He went on to accuse Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and his party of “abusing the entire state system”, saying there were “threats and blackmails and massive buying of voters.”⁹³

⁸⁵ Venice Commission, *supra* note 82, at 7-8.

⁸⁶ Dimeski, *supra* note 28, at 33.

⁸⁷ *Id.*

⁸⁸ MOST FINAL REPORT, *supra* note 42, at 3.

⁸⁹ ORG. FOR SEC. AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE, *International Election Observation Mission (IEOMI)*, 3 (Apr. 27, 2014), <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/fyrom/118078?download=true>

⁹⁰ *Id.* at 5.

⁹¹ MOST FINAL REPORT, *supra* note 42, at 3.

⁹² Dimeski, *supra* note 28, at 115.

⁹³ Kole Casule, *Macedonia's disputed elections were orderly: OSCE*, REUTERS, (Apr. 28, 2014), <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-macedonia-election-osce-idUSBREA3R0WV20140428>.

III. Analysis: Electoral Systems and Politics in the FYROM

This section presents empirical data (*see* Appendix) on the trends in distribution of seats in the parliament of the FYROM under various electoral systems over the past quarter of a century and combines the key findings of the empirical data with the literature that is available on the relationship between electoral systems and politics. The paper cross-checks the relationship between the two to examine whether the empirical data reconciles with the generally acceptable standings in the academic literature. For example, there is a widespread view in the literature that in multi-ethnic countries, a proportional system would be preferred to a majority/plurality system as it provides a better framework in which all groups would have the opportunity to be elected and represented in the legislature. By looking at empirical data on the seat allocation under a proportional system by ethnicity, one would be able to conclude whether this has been the case for the FYROM.

There are two important limitations to consider when going through the empirical data. First, most of the data presented in the table was obtained from unofficial sources. The report authored by Jane Dimeski entitled “The Republic of Macedonia’s 2014 parliamentary elections handbook” was the primary source for gathering the data.⁹⁴ The data on the proportion of Albanian minority seats were obtained mainly from Wolfgang Wagner’s study on the overstated merits of proportional representation.⁹⁵ However, the data was crosschecked and corrected (where applicable) in some instances where official data was available on the website of the State Election Commission and Parliament of FYROM. Second, from 1990 to 2014, political parties experienced significant changes in ideology, structure, or name/acronym identification. Additionally, political parties have merged, split, or faded. The table presents the data for the main parties in accordance with their present status and name, and, where relevant, it has identified in the endnotes any relevant events or changes that occurred to the respective party. Moreover, there were parties that ran in coalition with each other in some elections, but ran independently in other elections. Where possible, these temporary coalitions are also tracked in the endnotes.

The following conclusions can be drawn from reviewing the literature on the correlation between Macedonia’s electoral systems and politics by analyzing the contextual background of each of the eight parliamentary elections held in the FYROM since 1990, and looking at the trends in the seat distribution in the parliament of Macedonia.

A. The Proportional Election System Was Far More Suitable for the FYROM Than the Majority and Mixed Election Systems

Most of the literature presented in this paper affirms that proportional systems are more suitable for multi-ethnic countries as they enable all groups to have a voice in the political decision-making process. This assertion also holds true in the context of the FYROM—at least from the perspective of suitability of an election system to the political context of a country.

First, majority/plurality and mixed election systems fed into many of the intra-ethnic tensions in the first few election cycles (1990, 1994 and 1998). According to observer reports, these electoral

⁹⁴ Dimeski, *supra* note 28.

⁹⁵ Wagner, *supra* note 31.

systems produced disproportional results that were unacceptable to political parties.⁹⁶ A party may feel compelled to work outside the system if they do not consider the electoral system to be fair, which could explain VMRO-DPMNE's decision to boycott the second round of elections in 1994. Moreover, because of the boycott, the system produced a legislature that governed from 1994 to 1998 with practically little to no opposition.

Second, due to district delineation issues, majority systems also fed into the inter-ethnic tensions and led to greater divisions along ethnic lines between the Macedonians and Albanians living in the FYROM. It is almost inevitable that in countries like the FYROM, there will be problems in drawing districts, particularly when one group is dominant over the other. As observer reports point out—more expressively in 1998 elections—there were allegations of gerrymandering in a way that disenfranchised Albanian voters, which created better opportunities for Macedonians to be elected.⁹⁷ The background section also discusses how dissatisfaction with representation could have fed into the 2001 conflict between these ethnicities in Macedonia.

Third, the FYROM seems to have found a happy marriage with an electoral system only after adopting the PR system in 2002. While the first few election cycles dealt with frequent changes to the election system, there have not been extensive changes after the adoption of the proportional system. The pillars of the proportional election system have remained largely the same since then, despite the addition of three extra seats for representation of the Macedonian citizens living abroad in 2011.⁹⁸

B. The PR System Has Led to a More Balanced Representation of Albanian Minorities in the Parliament of the FYROM

Much of the literature dealing with the effects of Macedonia's implementation of the proportional system affirms the view that the proportional system provides a better framework for minority groups and smaller political parties to get elected, because the seats are calculated based on the proportion of the votes won. Empirical data in the FYROM supports this position. As demonstrated from the graph below, the proportion of the seats held by Albanian minorities has progressively increased after the adoption of the proportional system, although it marked a slight decrease in the last two legislatures.⁹⁹ The proportion of Albanian seats was the lowest ever under the fully majoritarian system, nineteen percent in 1990 and only sixteen percent in 1994.¹⁰⁰

There was, however, an increase to twenty-one percent under the mixed election system in 1998, which could have resulted from two factors. First, in this system, eighty-five seats were elected under the majority and thirty-five were elected proportionally in the nation-wide districts. The introduction of the proportional seats could have compensated for some of the damage caused by the fully majority systems in 1990 and 1994. Second, as explained in an article by Bogdan Szajkowski, the top two Albanian parties (PDA & PDP) signed an agreement and formed a

⁹⁶ MOST Final Report, *supra* note 42, at 3.

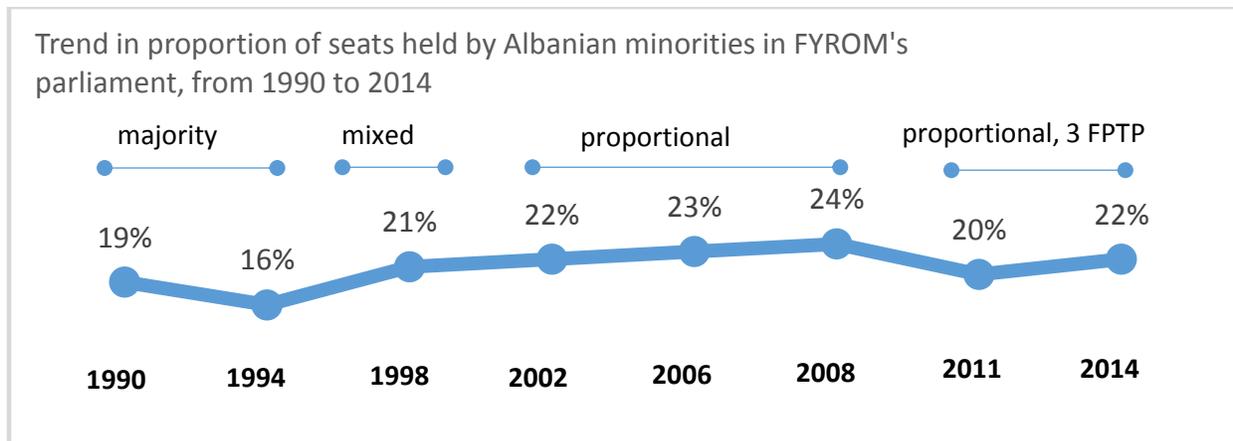
⁹⁷ ORG. FOR SEC. & COOPERATION IN EUROPE, *Parliamentary Elections in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, 6 (1998).

⁹⁸ ELECTORAL CODE art. 4, § 2 (2012).

⁹⁹ See Appendix *infra*.

¹⁰⁰ *Id.*

coalition to stand together on the 1998 elections, rather than separately, and this seems to have benefited the Albanian parties.¹⁰¹ According to Szajkowski, the coalition enabled the Albanian minorities to win all seventeen constituencies in which they competed, and in nine out of ten of those constituencies, they secured victories in the first round.¹⁰²



While the numbers show a general increase of Albanian representation in the parliament over the years under the proportional system, there is academic literature that opposes this view. Research done by Wolfgang Wagner argues that the benefits of the proportional system in the context of the election of Albanian minorities in FYROM are overstated for two reasons. First, Wagner argues that some scholars who have dealt with the matter have reported only members of political parties, while ignoring the independent candidates in the parliament in 1994.¹⁰³ Second, Wagner argues that when comparing the share of seats before and after the introduction of PR, the growing share of Albanians in the population is ignored.¹⁰⁴

While Wagner's views are prevalent, there are several weaknesses in the method he utilizes to arrive at his conclusions. First, with regard to the failure to report independent candidates, even if we consider all independent candidates as done in the graph above, there is nevertheless a progressive increase in the proportion of Albanian seats in the parliament of the FYROM. Second, with regard to the failure to take into account the growing share of the Albanian population in the FYROM, there are flaws in the methodology by which Wagner calculated the growing population because he relied mainly on birth-rate forecast data from unofficial sources. There was no population register in the FYROM since 2002, and because of ethnic divisions, data on the percentage of population by ethnicity is not made public. Third, even if there was a growing share of Albanians in the population of the FYROM, this is not determinative to the seat allocation in proportional election systems. What matters instead is turnout in a particular district, by specific ethnic groups. If, hypothetically, in a particular district the turnout of the Albanian ethnicity is one hundred percent and the turnout of the Macedonian ethnicity is zero percent, with all other things being equal, this would lead into a scenario in which all seats elected would be of ethnic Albanians. Therefore, the proportion of population they represent is not the only factor. Similar to the census

¹⁰¹ Szajkowski, *supra* note 35, at 63-64.

¹⁰² *Id.* at 69.

¹⁰³ Wagner, *supra* note 31.

¹⁰⁴ *Id.*

issue, because there is no data on the turnout in the FYROM by ethnicity, conclusions such as those given by Wagner are fundamentally flawed.

In the last two legislatures, there is a slight decrease in the proportion of seats held by the Albanian minority, and this may be partially affected by the introduction of the three reserve seats for Macedonian citizens living abroad, because it is more likely that candidates of Macedonian ethnicity fill these seats.

C. The Cost of the Proportional System Is Weak Governing Coalitions and Frequent Dissolution of the Legislature

In parliamentary democracies, the dissolution of legislatures leading to extraordinary elections is a common phenomenon, and frequently the dissolution occurs because of breakdowns in the governing coalition. This is especially common in the Balkan countries, including Kosovo, Serbia and more recently, Greece. Generally, the literature finds that unlike majority systems which in the long run lead to stable two-party political systems, PR systems lead to the election of multiple parties and normally require formation of weak coalitions for the establishment of the government.

The literature seems to be in line with the context of Macedonia in this respect. Since 1990, the FYROM held eight parliamentary elections, of which five were regular and three were extraordinary elections. There were no extraordinary elections in the FYROM under the majority (1990, 1994) and largely majority (1998) systems. Although this is only a few election cycles in which to prove a trend, and although in all of these legislatures a coalition was actually formed to establish a government, this is an indicator of stable legislatures and governments served through to the end of their mandate. As mentioned in the Introduction, it is interesting that in the first legislature 1990-1994, the breakdown of the governing coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE after two years of governance did not lead to extraordinary elections; instead, the legislature established a new government led by the runner-up party SDSM.

A distinct feature of the Macedonian election system is that it has no threshold—a minimum percentage of the total votes that a party needs to qualify for seats in the legislature.¹⁰⁵ This has increased the number of smaller political parties represented in the legislature. This is why the table on the seat distribution above shows an ever-growing number of parties falling in the category “other generally small parties”. In the 2006-2008 parliament, there were twenty political parties and four independent candidates represented in the legislature, and similarly in 2011-2014, there were twenty parties and two independent candidates. The last three elections in Macedonia (2008, 2011 and 2014) were extraordinary elections, which as described in the background section resulted mainly from breakdowns in the governing coalitions and subsequent dissolution of legislatures. Even the elections scheduled to be held in December 2016 will be extraordinary, following a European Union brokered agreement between political leaders of Macedonia, which aims to overcome the political crisis that was caused by the wire-tapping scandal through which

¹⁰⁵ “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – Electoral System”, INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION (2016) www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2313_b.htm

the opposition parties allege that the government was involved in illegal surveillance, organized crime and corruption.¹⁰⁶

D. The Frequent Changes of Electoral Systems Is a Result of an Absence of Constitutional Provisions Regulating the System.

The background section provided some of the factors that triggered electoral system reform in the FYROM. Another area in which the literature and the context of Macedonia seem to reconcile is that factors such as government instability and disproportional results affect and lead to frequent changes of electoral law. However, one country-specific issue that is important for the FYROM is that its constitution does not have any provisions pertaining to the design of the election system.

The constitution does not even provide for a specified number of seats in the FYROM Parliament. Article 62 of the constitution reads, “[t]he Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia is composed of 120 to 140 Representatives.”¹⁰⁷ Matters such as the number of seats, type of election formula, number of districts, threshold, and closed/open list are left for regulation by law. The lack of constitutional provision regulating election systems made it easier for the parliament to adopt frequent changes to the election system. The International IDEA electoral system handbook states “that constitutionally entrenched laws are much harder to change than ordinary laws, [as they] usually require[] a special majority in the legislature, a national referendum, or some other confirmatory mechanisms which shield such systems from easy alteration.”¹⁰⁸ The FYROM electoral system was changed four times over the eight parliamentary elections held since 1990. The changes to the electoral law addressing issues such as composition of election management bodies, voter registration, and adjudication of electoral complaints have been even more frequent.

These changes, which usually occurred weeks before elections and often without the backing of the opposition parties, were in most instances arbitrary actions to empower or disenfranchise one party, group, or ethnicity, while in the long run fueling the political crisis in Macedonia.

E. Corrupt and Under-Performing Governing Coalitions

Electoral systems can also help explain the current political crisis in Macedonia. The government of Macedonia, led by VMRO-DPMNE’s leader Nikola Gruevski, is being accused by the opposition parties of corruption and organized crime. The scandalous publications issued by the opposition party SDSM show evidence of government’s wiretapping of over 20,000 people, involvement in judicial decisions, and orchestration of crimes against minorities, among other crimes. For more than one year, the opposition boycotted the legislature, and there have been multiple attempts by the European Union to mediate a solution between the government and opposition parties in Macedonia, but, so far, this has proven unsuccessful. There are protests being organized by the opposition parties in Skopje, requesting the resignation of the government, and appointment of an independent prosecutor for investigation and adjudication of the alleged crimes.

¹⁰⁶ Fajtona Mejdini (2016) Macedonian Election Set for December, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-decides-to-hold-elections-on-december-11-08-31-2016>

¹⁰⁷ CONST. OF MACED. art. 62.

¹⁰⁸ Reynolds et al., *supra* note 1, at 20.

To put Macedonia's crisis into the context of this research paper, we need to review the facts as to how both the governing coalition and the opposition parties respond to the incentives presented by the election system that the FYROM currently employs.

From the perspective of the governing coalition, the VMRO-DPMNE has been the party with the largest share of seats for the fourth consecutive legislature, and has been leading the government for the last ten years. Similarly, since 2002, among the parties representing the Albanian community, DUI has been the party with the largest share of seats for the fifth consecutive legislature. The happy marriage between the VMRO-DPMNE and DUI in the last three legislatures enabled them to strengthen their power and exploit state resources to such advantages that neither party feels that it will lose an election anytime soon in their stronghold areas. Such a prolonged period in power creates a comfort zone for political parties, and they become accustomed with corruption and underperformance.

On the other side, the opposition parties have been somewhat stagnant in the proportion of seats they have held in the parliament over the years. The Social Democratic Union of Macedonia has not won an election since 2002. The Democratic Party of Albanians has not been in a government since the 2006-2008 legislature, and is progressively losing seats in parliament. As the literature above has shown, if the political parties feel that the election system is not treating them fairly, and that they have no chance of winning the next time around, they may feel compelled to work outside the system.

Certainly, the distribution of seats depends largely on voters' preferences, but when governments face problems such as the ones in Macedonia and there is no change in the outcome of the election, then the electoral system should be examined. In the FYROM, while there were frequent changes of the parties that won the election under the majority/mixed system, there were no such changes once the country adopted a PR system. The Appendix shows that under the mixed-majority systems between 1990 to 2002, either VMRO-DPMNE or SDSM was the winning party, each one passing the crown to the other following each election. However, once the pillars of the PR system were grounded, there was no change in the party with the largest share of seats. Thus, at least in Macedonia, the change in electoral systems has led to increased political control by one party.

Appendix: Allocation of seats in the Parliament of FYR of Macedonia - *Sobranie* - 1990 to 2014 (governing coalition in green)

Election system	Majority, 120 single-member districts ⁱ		Mixed, 85 majority ⁱⁱ , 35 proportional ⁱⁱⁱ	Proportional, 6 multi-member districts with 20 seats, closed list, no threshold			Proportional, 6 districts with 20 seats; Majority (FPTP) for 3 reserved diaspora seats ^{iv}	
	1990-1994	1994-1998	1998-2002	2002-2006	2006-2008	2008-2011	2011-2014	2014-now
Political party								
VMRO-DPMNE	38	0 ^v	49	27	38	53	47	61 ^{vi}
SDSM	31 ^{vii}	60	27	43	23	18	29	34 ^{viii}
Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) ^{ix}	5 ^x	4	11	7	11	11	8	7
Democratic Union for Integration (DUI)	-	-	-	16	14	18	14	19
Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	11 ^{xi}	29 ^{xii}	4 ^{xiii}	12	2	-	0	-
Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP)	17	11 ^{xiv}	14	2	3	-	-	-
Socialist Party of Macedonia (SPM)	4	9	1	1	3	3	5	-
Democratic Alternative	-	-	13	0	-	-	-	-
Others, generally small parties	14	7	1	12	26 ^{xv}	17 ^{xvi}	20 ^{xvii}	2
Total seats in the parliament	120	120	120	120	120	120	123	123
Seats held by Albanian minority (%)	23 (19%)	19 (16%)	25 (21%)	26 (22%)	28 (23%)	29 (24%)	25 (20%)	27 (22%)

Table notes

- ⁱ During the 1990 and 1994 elections, in order to get elected in a district, a candidate needed a majority of the votes, but no less than a third of the votes of total number of voters registered in the district. If no candidate won a majority, a second round was held after fourteen days between the candidates who received at least seven percent of votes in the first round. (Article 54 of the 1994 Macedonian Election Law).
- ⁱⁱ During the 1998 elections, candidates running for the majority seats were elected in a district if the candidate won the majority of votes provided that the number of votes is not less than a third of the number of voters registered in the district. If no candidate won a majority, a second round was held after fourteen days between the top two candidates (Article 88 of the 1998 Law on elections of Macedonia).
- ⁱⁱⁱ For the thirty-five proportional seats, the entire country was considered a single electoral district; there was a five percent threshold, and the D'hondt formula was used to allocate seats (Article 93 of the 1998 Law on Elections of Macedonia).
- ^{iv} The three seats reserved for Macedonian citizens abroad are elected using the First Past the Post (FPTP) system. The three single-member constituencies abroad consist of the following: (1) Europe and Africa; (2) Northern and Southern America; and (3) Australia and Asia. (Article 4 (2) of the Electoral Code of Macedonia – 2012 OSCE unofficial translation).
- ^v During the 1994 elections, VMRO-DPMNE boycotted the second round elections due to alleged election irregularities. This allowed SDSM to gain more seats.
- ^{vi} For the 2014 elections, the number of seats also includes the seats gained by small parties that were in the coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE.
- ^{vii} SDSM was a successor of the communist party, which ruled during the Socialist Republic of Macedonia. In the 1990 elections, the party ran in the elections with the name League of Communists of Macedonia – Party for Democratic Change (*Sojuz na Komunistite na Makedonija - Partija za Demokratska Preobrazba*).
- ^{viii} For the 2014 elections, the number of seats also includes the seats gained by small parties that were in the coalition led by SDSM.
- ^{ix} During 1990 and 1994 elections, it was the Party for Democratic Prosperity of Albanians (PDPA) and National Democratic Party. In 1998 it became Democratic Party of Albanians.
- ^x In coalition with People's Democratic Party (NDP) in some districts.
- ^{xi} The Liberal Democratic Party was established on 1990, then known as the Union of Reform Forces (*Sojuz na Reformski Sili*).
- ^{xii} Part of the coalition "Alliance for Macedonia" on a national level, but contesting some constituencies as a separate party or in a coalition with only one party member of Alliance for Macedonia.
- ^{xiii} In 1997, the formerly known Liberal Party merged with the Democratic Party.
- ^{xiv} There is a discrepancy in the literature about the accurate number of seats that PDP gained in 1994. The Konrad Adenauer Stiftung report states eleven, whereas local report from Bogdan Szajkowski states ten.
- ^{xv} Of the twenty-six seats, the New Social Democratic Party (NSDP) won seven seats, VMRO – People's Party (VMRO-NP) won six seats. Other parties were smaller.
- ^{xvi} Of these seats, nine were from smaller parties in the coalition "Sun- Coalition for Europe" led by SDSM, whereas seven were from the coalition "For Better Macedonia" led by VMRO-DPMNE.
- ^{xvii} Of these seats, four were from the smaller parties in the coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE, and thirteen from the coalition led by SDSM.