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ANALYSIS OF THE REFERENDUM AND THE POST-REFERENDUM SITUATION IN MACEDONIA

(July 2004 – April 2005, political scientific study – process tracing)

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Signed on August 2001, The Ohrid Framework Agreement changed what was then Macedonia. Precisely with this peace deal agreement, signed by the government of the Republic of Macedonia (now North Macedonia) with ethnic Albanian's rebels, was started the process of decomposition of dominant political power and establishing the new system of shared power among Macedonians and ethnic Albanians.

From this moment further, significant, unexpected, and shocking political events have occurred in Macedonia, which caused unforeseen turns in the Macedonian politics. By each new event, Macedonia exited one and entered another new political situation. At such a rate of change at that time, the processes in the Macedonian politics became difficult to foresee. It is it was necessary to make not too longer term forecasts. Thus, the status and the trends should be considered only in short term. Therefore, this analysis deals with one segment of the resulting political changes, such as the national referendum about of laws of local government and administrative division.

According to agreement of "shared political power system", at that time the ruling majority in parliament passed a package of laws of local government and administrative division. It was one of parts of peace deal. And it was this solution that shocked most of Macedonians.

Due to that political problem, a national referendum was organized in the country.

The then Prime Minister Hari Kostov stated that he would resign in case the referendum was successful. And despite of the failure of the referendum, the Prime Minister resigned. In order to understand the present political situation, we should see why this referendum was organized and what happened in relation to this key moment of the history of the Republic of Macedonia now – North Macedonia.

REFERENDUM FOR THE TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Background of the issue

The Ohrid Framework Agreement appeared as a relatively acceptable (for all parties) attempt for integration of various ethnic communities in Macedonia, and of the Macedonians and the Albanian ethnic community, in particular. The internal political stability, the territorial integrity and ethnic peace will nevertheless be determined by the balance and equilibrium of the relations between the two ethnic communities – the majority one of the Macedonians - and the minority one of the Albanians. This indicates that the problems of Macedonia are more of political nature than legal one. By itself, this explains to a certain extent the behavior of the subjects involved in the negotiations, even when they sometimes make striking compromises and concessions regarding some basic legal principles – something that otherwise they are not, supposed to do. The Macedonian case is a textbook example for the statement that if something cannot be resolved legally, it may become possible in the politics by adaptation and adjustments. In relation to the political agreements for the survival of the political system, until now and in the future, the presence of the international factor will remain as a key guarantor.

With the Ohrid Framework Agreement, in the Republic of Macedonia the existing majoritarian democracy was replaced by the consensual democracy. For those familiar with theory of consensual democracy it is completely clear that the system reestablished by the Agreement differs in many aspects from the “pure” type of consensualism, described by one of the theoreticians – A. Lijphard. The more the Macedonian consensus system is diverting from Lijphard’s model (and it is significantly diverting because it fails to meet some basic prerequisites and conditions, e.g. the presence of relatively equal power and size of at least three different segments), the higher the number of interpretations and construal of rules and principles in accordance with which the Macedonian political system should perform. The Macedonian type of democracy by consensus is a specially designed model for multi- ethnic/multi-cultural, pluralistic and segmented nature of a comparatively deeply fragmented society. However, the concessions and compromises made the theoretical requirements when designing the Macedonian political model of consensual democracy are obvious.

In its essence, however, what is a basic part of “the pure” model of consensus, is the principle of negotiated distribution of political power between the segments of society. In the case of Macedonia, this distribution has been made between the Macedonian ethnic community, as a majority on the one hand, and the Albanian one as a relatively large minority community on the other hand. The main aim was to avoid the possibility for the Albanians to be outvoted by the more numerous Macedonians with regard to issues of significant importance for the specific

interests of the ethnic group. For this purpose, among other mechanisms, an ethnic minority veto has been envisaged as well, and in this case it was the so-called “Badenter’s majority”. This is, in effect, the main principle, the philosophy or “the spirit of the Framework Agreement” that the Albanians continuously and at any opportunity insist on and refer to, though they cannot explain it: an agreed power-sharing first of all between these two ethnic communities. This is the principle to avoid outvoting by the evidently and objectively more numerous Macedonians.

The set of instruments described proved to be a very weak guarantee of preventing the possibility of outvoting, at a time when parties, associations, organizations and institutions of the Macedonians decided through a referendum to annul a law, which was *inter alia*, adopted also with the described “minority special agreement and in the spirit of the Framework Agreement”.

- **Description of the Problem. Reason for the Referendum**

Decentralization of power and local self-government reforms in the Republic of Macedonia are the key points of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The Law on Territorial Organization of Local Self-government, the Law on Financing of Municipalities, as well as the Law on Skopje City are part of these reform processes.

These Laws as drafted by the Government and in particular the Law on Territorial Organization have been agreed upon by the governing SDSM and DUI. These laws have been adopted by the majority in Parliament in August 2004 and were subject of severe political controversies, public debates and disputes. With regard to the Law on Territorial Organization a civic initiative was launched for collection of signatures, necessary for launching a referendum. The referendum was aimed at finding out whether the citizens were in favor of reinstating the old Laws on Territorial Division and on Skopje City adopted in 1996. The World Macedonian Congress was the association, which initiated and authorized the collection of signatures. Consequently, most of the political parties got actively involved in the campaigning for collection of signatures. On the basis of the collected 180,545 signatures of individuals with right to vote, the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia adopted a resolution for organizing a referendum. The decision was made on September 3, 2004. The referendum was implemented by the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), 34 municipal commissions and 2,973 local electoral commissions.

- **The Referendum: participants, activities, options, results**

Three groups were involved in the activities related to the Referendum. The activities related to the referendum were joined by more subjects who preferred and proposed various options with regard to decentralization, i.e. about the Laws in this field.

First Group – “In favor of the Referendum”: Those who were in favor of keeping in force the old Laws of 1996 or drafting and adopting new ones which should include other

criteria, at any rate, however, revoking the new ones from August 2004. This group was represented by a variety of subjects, including the representatives of the political opposition, then the ones who only appealed to the citizens to vote – the subjects who asserted that their main goal was only to revoke “a law detrimental to the nation and to the state”. Despite the differences between themselves, very often they all were referred to by a common name: “The Opposition Block” (or “the United Opposition” or “the anti- Government Front”). In fact, there were opinions expressed that their actual goal was fighting for power rather than revoking the law *per se*. That group included SMK (World Macedonian Congress), the opposition of VMRO-DPMNE and Liberal Party, the three parties of the so-called “Third Way”, other smaller parties with “VMRO” prefix, the Civic Movement of Macedonia and the independent Member of Parliament Trifun Kostovski, other citizens’ organizations, associations, unions, intellectuals, artists, popular individuals and other public figures. VMRO-DPMNE and LP on the one hand, “The Third Way”, on the other hand, the Civic Movement of Macedonia on the other hand, as well as VMRO- NP (VMRO-People’s Party) , participated in pro-referendum activities, each with its own campaign, more or less accommodated and coordinated within the joint Coordination Center For the Referendum, headed by Todor Petrov, Chairman of SMK. In the course of the process, many assumptions concerning the various motives and end goals of these subjects were considered in the public media (as described below), but there is one thing common for all of them – that the new Law should be rejected. As of the end of the campaign the Macedonian Orthodox Church also called the citizens (the supporters) to vote at the referendum.

Second group “Against the Referendum”: Subjects, who are in favor of the new laws adopted in August 2004.

This group includes: the coalition partners of the government, who agreed upon the Law – SDSM and DSI (Democratic Union for Integration); the President of the Republic of Macedonia, Branko Crvenkovski; PDP (Party for Democratic Prosperity) and with some reservation, DPA (Democratic Party of the Albanians) as well; the Social Democratic Party; other politicians; functionaries and members of the governing parties of the majority of the Parliament. These entities organized campaigns, appealing to the citizens to boycott the referendum. There were people with different opinions within the ranks of SDSM (the supporters of Tito Petkovski) in conflict with the official position of the party. The same happened also within LDP (Liberal Democratic Party), since Liljana Popovska considered the law as unacceptable because it was detrimental to the nation and the state. Due to her position, which opposed the position of the party, Popovska was removed from the office of Deputy Chairperson of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia. In the course of the process, many assumptions were made in public with regard to various motives and reasons of the entities, which have agreed upon and adopted the law (as described below).

Third group “International”: The foreign subjects, which issued clear signals to Macedonia that it should observe the agreements signed – a recommendation, which goes far beyond the issues of the referendum itself. The third group included: most of the European diplomats, high US representatives, international policy experts, unions, institutions, states, and politicians. In recent months the Western media and analytic centers, with the exception of the British ones, paid little attention to the referendum in Macedonia. The western analysts were unanimous in their evaluation that the success of the referendum would seriously destabilize Macedonia. This evaluation was also shared by the high representatives of the USA and EU, who exerted strong influence on the Macedonian public to not support the referendum.

Three possible options of the citizens’ behavior were expected in the process of pro-, and anti-referendum campaigns:

1. The citizens to go out in large numbers and vote “in favor” of the issue raised;
2. The citizens to go out and vote in accordance with their convictions;
3. The citizens do not go out to vote and should ignore the issue raised.

A number of commentators, analysts, journalists took part in the public debates on the choice between the three options. They made their cases or debated in favor or against the arguments of the one or the other group.

The first two options of citizens’ behavior were the choice of those, who opposed the current Law on Territorial Organization of the Local Self-government, adopted in August 2004. Their arguments were as follows:

- the political agreement between SDSM and DSI will disrupt the interethnic relations and this will result in setting ethnic borders and gradual federalization of Macedonia.

- The Law infringes upon some basic principles of the Framework Agreement, such as:
(a) “there are no territorial solutions concerning ethnic issues”;

(b) “revision of the municipal boundaries involving Local and Central Governments, and international participation.”

- The law does not comply with Article 5 of the European Charter of Local Government, ratified in 1997, which has a legal supremacy over all domestic laws.

- In order to satisfy some requirements provided for in the Constitution, it has been resorted to inappropriate merger of rural and urban municipalities, thus changing artificially the demographic (ethnic) structure of the municipalities concerned.

The third option of citizens’ behavior was the choice of those, who were in favor of the new law, those who agreed upon and adopted the Law in August 2004, as well as of most of the foreign factors. Their arguments were as follows:

- The new law implements and is in favor of the unitary nature of the state.
- The law is a product of political agreement, mostly between the coalition partners, which have a parliamentary majority and which have voted in favor of the law.

- The reinstatement of the old Law of 1996 into force as a lasting solution for decentralization is in conflict with the commitment of the Framework Agreement for revision of that Law.

- The referendum is a means for revising the Framework Agreement. The strategic goals of the campaign for referendum are different aspects of revision of the Framework Agreement. The repeal of the adopted Law, *inter alia*, also with the political will and agreement of the Albanians is a precedent, which later on will turn into practice, i.e. other laws which are an expression of their political will may be revoked, as well. In such a way, actually, the old rule comes into play: to outvote the Albanians and by the power of majority to impose decisions on the minority, despite of the protection mechanism of Badenter's rule.

- Compliance/non-compliance with the framework norms will be a key criterion when formulating the evaluation for the candidature of Macedonia for EU membership. Brussels calls for implementation of the package of Laws on Decentralization of Power as a basic measure for bringing Macedonia closer to the EU and NATO.

The Group "For the Referendum" used to ground its arguments mainly on the strength of law. This group called for the citizens to go out to vote in large numbers in order to meet the required threshold of fifty percent plus one.¹ and also to vote in favor of the referendum so that to revoke the new law. The Civil Movement of Macedonia is concentrated in this group and it points out its position only as an entity which disputes the law only from an expert point of view. This movement explained in public that the law was detrimental and legally unfounded and called for the citizens to vote, and refrained from directly telling them how to vote.

The second group "Against the Referendum" referred mainly to political aspects of the problem and called for the citizens to boycott the referendum.

Most of the important factors of international politics – **the third group "The International group"** through some of its institutions, diplomats, representatives and politicians got involved forthrightly in the processes related both to adoption and to contesting the law. The attention was focused on three points: firstly, on July 27, 2004 in Brussels, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the EU member-states formulated conclusions calling for implementation of the package of Laws on Decentralization of Power, as a main measure for getting of Macedonia closer to the EU. Secondly, ten days or so prior to the referendum, the German Bundestag adopted a recommendation to the German Government in relation to the use of the constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia. The third important signal arrived from the State

Department of the United States with the decision to recognize the constitutional name ten hours prior to commencement of the day for reflection before the voting. The USA, EU, NATO, Russia, some countries in the region, most of the foreign analysts and institutions considered that a successful referendum would radically destabilize the political situation, and hence the domestic relations in the Republic of Macedonia.

• Results

On November 7, 2004 in accordance with the results announced by CEC 437,347 persons with right to vote or 26.58% of the citizens registered in the voters' register voted. In order to be deemed valid, there should have been more than 50% turnout of the total registered 1,709,536 voters. The opposition failed to encourage the Macedonians to vote in the required number, so that the results of the Referendum for reinstatement of the old Laws from 1996 and for repealing of the new Law on Territorial Organization were a failure.

The opposition and pro-referendum oriented entities (with the exception of SMK) did not contest the results of the voting. The opposition parties used to warn that to the extent the threshold of 50% was reached, 427,112 votes in favor should have been very close to the required 427,385 votes for a successful referendum. In addition to that, the opposition pointed out that it could not be considered that the citizens who have not voted were against the referendum, and they may be deemed only "abstaining from voting", i.e. they have not voted either in favor or against. The Government cannot assume, i.e. interpret these undetermined voters as "votes" supporting the Government option, neither the Government policy as a whole. In accordance with the interpretation of the results by the opposition, the referendum would have been successful if the Government did not exert a strong pressure on the citizens not to vote. Nikola Gruevski considered that the results committed the Government to make amendments to the law, and the expressed will of those who voted in favor would be incorporated into another higher quality bill by VMRO-DPMNE, which should be elaborated by the party.

By a turnout of 26.58% (400,422 less voters than the required 854,786 voters) the Government and those who were against the referendum considered that the majority of the citizens supported the Law. The majority of the citizens with right to vote did exactly as required by them –to abstain from voting and boycott the referendum. To be precise, they have chosen the option "abstaining from voting", however the opponents of the referendum wanted exactly this from the citizens. Hence, the Government made their case that the majority in Macedonia has supported the law, and thus the policy of the Government for settlement of the inter-ethnic relations, which the Law itself stems from. This is the policy explained and reasoned by the Government politicians in the course of the referendum campaign.

From point of view of the Government, for the leading parties of the governing coalition

the referendum was a success! The Prime Minister unexpectedly gave his resignation. Harry Kostov blamed the coalition partner – the DSI party that during the whole period of his mandate it has pursued “a policy of extortion and blackmailing”, that it had focused only on implementing the rule of fair representation of the ethnic communities (in this case – the Albanian one) in the administration and on account of the conducted reforms at that. Besides, Kostov blamed in his resignation DSI (Democratic Union of Integration) also for promoting “the national and narrow party interests, including nepotism, corrupt practices, without a real desire and measures to combat corruption. He has particularly alleged that “the principle for laying down conditions on expert opinion and changing it according to political agreement and political bargaining was becoming a normal practice”.

These are, however, the issues for which the opposition has been persistently blaming the government for two years now. The resignation of the prime minister was a catalyst of the election process for a leader of the governing SDSM. This process, however, brought to the spotlight factional and group fights within the party itself. In the meantime, armed groups appeared in the village of Kondovo – just attached to the Capital City of Skopje, which threatened to bomb the center of the City by rocket-propelled grenades.

Due to the allegations of corruption of the Minister Agron Budjaku (from DSI) made by the former Prime Minister Kostov, the newly elected leader of SDSM Vlado Buchkovski (who was mandated to establish a new Cabinet) had serious problems with DSI concerning the inclusion of Budjaku in the new cabinet.

• Conclusion

Underestimating the Ohrid Agreement, with all the significance attached to it by important factors of the international politics is a wrongly conceived policy. The formulation of a long-term and stable policy on the basis of underestimating the Agreement would mean building a policy on the basis of inadequate political research, evaluations and forecasts.

The foreign policy orientation of the country, i.e. pro-western, pro-NATO should not be questioned. The fluctuations of the geopolitical and geostrategic compass, as demonstrated by VMRO-DPMNE at the end of its mandate, when it favored its collaboration with Ukraine in military terms and used anti-western and anti-NATO rhetoric, and the fate it happened to live through, have clearly demonstrated how detrimental such an orientation may be.

It is a dangerous political ploy to initiate talks, to advocate, to support, to organize a referendum in a multiethnic state with a consensual democracy with the aim to impose decisions

¹ Fifty percent plus one of the people who have voted, out of the total number of the people in the voters' register.

by one of the segments onto the other segments. Such intentions may always be interpreted as attempts to undermine or disrupt the consensus-based legal political order. In the case of Macedonia, by the plebiscite just implemented, the pro-referendum political entities were just one step away from the idea that they were nostalgic and felt like restoring the old system.

The acceptance of realities, taking into consideration the standings of the international political factors and the correct foreign policy orientation are the winning combination, which actually saved one of the weakest governments from falling (in accordance with the rating, which continues to decrease uncontrollably). The strength of the above-mentioned winning combination can be seen also in the fact that it did not lose even when clashed with the broad citizens' discontent, organized by a number of political forces, including reputable and popular personalities, intellectuals, whose rating on the eve of the referendum was the highest than the government politicians.

Though Hari Kostov gave his resignation, it was not a direct consequence of the referendum, but a decision of his own, i.e. he was not obliged by the results. Anyway, the Government, as well as the previous and the present functionaries should seriously consider its own rating and legitimacy, because they were accused of corruption, nepotism, ineptness, personally by the then-Prime Minister himself! The structural weakness and internal crisis of the opposition, the internal strife, and the weak positions before the international factor is saving, for the time being, the governing parties from losing the power.

There are a number of evaluations and forecasts that can be made in relation to the behavior of the political parties concerning the Framework Agreement:

1. The evaluations by the early warning system of the US intelligence community and the standings of the US foreign policy, the NATO projects for the Balkans, as well as the security reports of EU indicate that Ohrid Framework Agreement is at least for the time being the optimal solution for closing the "Pandora's Box" of the Balkans – Macedonia.

2. The international community appears as a guarantor of the implementation of the Agreement, supporting the process by EUR 588.77 Mil.

3. Each political entity trying to reject or repeal the Framework Agreement faces the risk of full international isolation. The collapse of the model envisaged by the Agreement would throw Macedonia into a new spiral of violence and armed conflicts. In view of the pluralistic nature of the Macedonian society, the changed internal political correlations as well as the constellation of forces in international politics require a delicate behavior of the political entities involved in the Macedonian political process. For the time being there is nothing more to be proposed from the provisions of the Agreement, as far as the political entities read and interpret it in the same way.

4. The gradual development of a large and mass movement, which in its essence is anti-

Ohrid and anti-government one, gives reason to consider that all entities more or less treat “the historical Agreement” as an artificial and imposed decision. This means that something else is needed, which, besides the Agreement would get parties involved turn their agreement into something continuous and lasting, until the implementation of the common concept. The present situation may be described as a situation of making internal compromises as a result of exerted strong external pressure. The international community plays a vital role in the whole process and is deeply involved in the Macedonian affairs.

5. Following the relatively unbeneficial outcome for Macedonia from the EU summit in Thessalonica, it has become clear that the United States could ensure and guarantee to Macedonia something, which the EU was not able to do: a bearable level of instability of the interethnic relations (an inherent feature of the Macedonian community); security; lobbying in favor of Macedonia for NATO membership. By signing the Agreement on Treatment of the US Citizens in relation to the International Criminal Court and by its joining the anti-terrorist coalition – Macedonia has chosen its strategic partner. The new Government, and in particular SDSM and DUI see the US strategy for normalizing and stabilizing the internal political situation in Macedonia as a working formula. The Government shares the view of the United States that the prosperity will mitigate the ethnic controversies and will prevent armed conflicts. This would be achieved also by establishment of regional and international financial institutions extending loans for reconstruction and setting up of free trade zones. The Government recognizes the key role of the United States as a peace-keeper and intermediary in building-up the internal political stability and the relations between the two ethnic communities. Washington impacts in parallel both sides, combining the balance of forces with measures for trust building.

The United States have in effect determined the fate of Macedonia by recognizing the constitutional name, thus confirming for a long term the international legal and political capacity of the state. At the same time, the United States have emphasized their own support also for the internal structure of the state, indirectly supporting the political forces which are deemed by them guarantors of the performance of this order.

The support, received by Macedonia from the United States should have a positive impact also in internal political terms, as a function of the long-term stability of Macedonia. Taking into consideration the political aims of the United States and EU in the Balkans, the position of Macedonia should be strengthened in the future.

The key support for Macedonia came exactly at the point when the internal political terms were described in an article (published in the local paper “Utrinski vesnik”) as a situation of Weimar Germany: a feeling of a lost war and “occupation of parts of the territory”, “reparations and compensations to the victor”, demilitarization (elimination of large parts of the defense arsenal), desperation from the system and order, and most important a severe economic

crisis, lack of funds, and enormous unemployment. An empty political space opened up, which might be filled in uncontrollably, as it happened in the Weimar Republic before it vanished.

Immediately before the tragic and sad death of the President Boris Traikovski, the situation of the collapsed economy and severe economic crisis was assessed as critical and this finding was substantiated by most of the investigations and opinion polls conducted by significant domestic and foreign institutes. Such a social and economic crisis was indicated to be a major threat for the security and peace of the state. In terms of the threat for the state stability it was treated with a higher priority than the inter-ethnic relations, which were traditionally considered to be most important threat for the stability. In accordance with most of the analysts, domestic and foreign institutes for early warning and forecasts, the multiple election cycles, which followed the tragic event, have saved and are still saving Macedonia from “a social explosion”. To date this “time bomb” has not been disarmed yet.

CONDITION AND TRENDS OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES, MOVEMENTS, ASSOCIATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

THE SOCIETY AND POLITICAL REGIME

• The power

The above-mentioned problems are actually problems, for which the Government faces bears a subjective and objective responsibility. Easing of social tensions after the referendum and in particular after the decision of the United States to recognize the name of the Republic is a short-term victory. The Government will try to protract the resolving of the problems and conducting of reforms until the local elections scheduled for March 2005.

The Government should have a ready, well-considered strategy and policy to the issue for the status of Kosovo. “Readiness”, by the way, will be considered to be present also if the Government resolves the issue concerning the border issue between Macedonia and the neighboring protectorate of Kosovo.

Some domestic analysts, as well as one of the leading political analysts in the neighboring state of Macedonia – Bulgaria, believe, *inter alia*, that the Law on the Territorial Organization is part of the strategy of President Crvenkovski for the Albanian issue to be separated from the resolving of the Albanian issue in the immediate surrounding in the region. It will be a great political and strategic success if it is assumed that by the Law on Territorial Division the Albanian issue in Macedonia is to be settled.

- **Opposition. Political parties**

1. **VMRO**

Multiplying, splitting-off of parties with “VMRO” prefix is a main feature and a sign, figuratively speaking, of the right-wing political space in the past 14 years of political pluralism. Disintegration of the opposition is, of course, favoring the Government, but this is not to the benefit of the development and stabilization of the overall democracy in the state. The constant splitting-off and disintegration of VMRO-DPMNE is not a novelty. During the whole period from the establishment of the party till the year 2000, it made great efforts to prove that it was not “Bulgarophile on anti-Macedonian basis”, “Varhovist”², terrorist”, anti- Serbian and anti-Greek”, and also in fighting UDB³ and the special services. Since the year 2000 to date it has been alleged that it was not any of these, but quite the opposite. After the expansive penetration of the Greek capital into the Macedonian national economy, which happened exactly at the time of the governing mandate of the party, some analysts believe that VMRO is a political exponent of the Greek economic interests in Macedonia. Some opinions were voiced that the fight against the secret services has not only been a bluff, but also that this party was a creation exactly of the former KOS and UDB, that it was in fact “a police project” of the former communists aiming to exercising control over the opposition, and over the Macedonian right-wing. In view of the then Serbian domination in these former special services and the secret communist police, the analysts believe that this is the source of a pro- Serbian positioning of the party, expressed at certain point, of the anti-Albanian position, as well as of anti-NATO and anti-Western rhetoric. Hence, the explanations for the inadequate attitude towards the ideology of the historic right-wing, and the historic VMRO. The latest events in and around this party, as represented in the national press lead to the conclusion that the Parliament was about to succeed to achieve something, which Ljupcho Georgievski, the leader of the modern VMRO failed to achieve, that is to conquer the party from within, by transfer of MPs from VMRO DPMNE into his VMRO NP. Most of the evaluations made, assert that this is feasible only with the will and the assistance of SDSM, of course, provided preliminary calculations are made (a possibility for political extortion and blackmail of the leader and the party functionaries, etc.) On the other hand, some opinions have been published in the press, that certain entities have the idea to strengthen the powers of the President of the Republic by amendment of the Constitution. It is possible, through political bargaining with Ljupcho Georgievski to implement this idea, i.e. being a leader of the opposition, to participate in ensuring a parliamentary majority for constitutional changes as a reward for “the service” made. One of the prerequisites for that this suits two entities; they count on a two- pole party model and to be precise, on “a system 2+2”. This model suggests a coalition of one left-wing Macedonian + one left-wing Albanian party against the coalition of one right-wing Macedonian + one right-wing Albanian party, where they would constantly, of course by

general elections, take turns in the government of the state. To the extent in the parliamentary group of VMRO-DPMNE the forecast transfer of most of the MPs of the newly formed VMRO-NP is realized, the positions of the present leadership of DPMNE will be considerably shaken and destabilized. It cannot be excluded that in a mid-term there could be a general unification of the parties, which have quite recently originated from VMRO-DPMNE, just around the axis of Georgievski. These likely options, of course, will either happen or not happen, depending to a great extent on the views and positions of the factors in the international politics, about which we have already mentioned that they play a vital role in the whole process and are deeply involved in the Macedonian affairs.

2. SDSM

At present SDSM is the largest and the most powerful political party, the resources of which - particularly financial resources and influence in all spheres and areas - perhaps exceed those of the Government itself. Of course, this all has been a heritage of the former communist party, which has ruled the state continuously for a period of almost sixty years. In the period around the election of a party leader "groups and teams" crystallized, which were divided with regard to the personality to be elected as a leader. Stratification within that party and processes similar to the above-mentioned are possible. Particularly, if the counter-position of Tito Petkovski is taken into consideration with regard to the official party position concerning the referendum, as well as concerning the general party policy. Until now, it has been protected from serious factional disintegrations only by strongly developed consciousness for membership affiliation and attachment to a special ideological matrix, and maybe the perception for belonging to a special social stratum. This is the source of arrogance of this party, for which it has been accused all the time, indicating it as a cause for the party degradation. On the other hand, the tendency to extreme pragmatism (where the party evaluates that there are conditions for taking the power) is another characteristic of SDSM. This explains also (besides the suggestions from abroad) the decision of the party to enter into a coalition with DSI under the conditions of general dissatisfaction and national disappointment.

If in the Cold War era, communism was the main enemy of the liberal democracy, today, after the end of this era, the enemies are nationalism and religious fundamentalism. SDSM, though it is a successor of the former communist party succeeded to present itself before the world, before the West as a party distant from the two modern enemies of the liberal democracy. This transforms it into an acceptable political partner of the Macedonian politics in the relations with the west. And this element of the party politics is part of what we defined as "a winning combination".

While at the time of "the Gligorov era" SDSM considered binding of the country with the

United States as a necessary conforming with “those in authority” and using the position of the powerful partner for promotion of the young state, as well as ensuring the legitimacy of the then-governments, currently the pro-American orientation of the party has grown into a lasting strategic solution.

3. “The Third Way”

Maybe it is still early to discuss the disappearance of these political entities from the political arena. But it is well known that they will be outsiders, marginal entities, local political parties, if the referendum fiasco is taken into account. This group has no significant political support by the important factors in the international politics. It is possible that the interests of some states of the region or of those considered as competitors and countering the American ones to be promoted through some or all parties of this group.

4. DSI

The Democratic Union for Integration of Ali Ahmeti is an unusual political entity, a phenomenon and occurrence, which from now on will be subject of sociological and political investigation and survey. UCK or ANO, as this guerilla structure used to present itself in Macedonia is the basis on which the present DSI has developed. Therefore, in its military past, this party succeeded by armed struggle against democratically elected institutions to gain more political rights for the ethnic community, which it claims to represent, at the same time managing to obtain also international legitimacy concerning the undertaken military actions. The interesting fact in this case is that it was one more example applicable to the theories of the international public and military law as to how thin is the border line between “terrorist” and “legitimate politician”, so that there is only one step from “guerilla” to “competent moderate politician”! Long since, however, such examples are not considered as precedents, but as regular occurrence in the comparable political systems. Yasser Arafat, Fidel Castro, Nelson Mandela, Gerry Adams... are only a small portion of a larger group of former fighters, called terrorists or guerrillas, who were later amnestied and promoted into politicians and “wise statesmen”. Some of them are also Nobel Prize holders – recognition in reward of their contribution to global peace! Acting as a purely political entity in the Macedonian political process, the DSI party (or movement) have scored one more, this time peaceful victory: the Law on the Territorial Division of the Municipalities. For the time being, this is the political asset with which the party will

² A term from the early development of late 19th and early 20th century VMRO, coming to denote the movement within VMRO which aspired to unification with the Kingdom of Bulgaria. In contrast, the other trend – “autonomists” aspired first to achieving autonomy for Macedonia with the Ottoman Empire.

³ The Yugoslav secret services.

present itself before the electorate of the Albanian ethnic community. If assumptions are made that by the Law, when negotiating on the municipal boundaries, the coalition partners have made also “an electoral geometry”, then there is a high likelihood for the DS to achieve one more, this time, third victory: local elections in March 2005. Particularly, if it is taken into consideration that DSI has available in “its pocket” 130,000 votes obtained in the presidential election. If the demarcation of the border with the protectorate of Kosovo occurs during the mandate of this party, then it may quite properly boast that the recognition of the name by the United States was a result of the activities of the Albanian lobby there! Anyhow, DSI deems itself a social democratic party.

4. DPA

Though it is trying all the time to convince the Albanians that it will make a greater progress in resolving the Albanian issue, taking into account that the mentality of the Albanian electorate will chose the more radical of two radical entities – DPA still fails to score a victory against its competitor DSI. It is possible the Albanians to have changed their expectations from politics, expectations from life itself? It is difficult, at present, after the well-known outcome of the referendum and the involvement of the USA in the Macedonian affairs to forecast the electoral positions of DPA. Anyway, DPA was asked to get involved, to use its authority and influence for resolving the crisis situation in the village of Kondovo. The interference, however, of the vice-chairman of the party proved to be more detrimental than useful, both for his own and his party rating, due to inadequacy and radicalism of the armed guerillas barricaded in the village.

- **Religious institutions**

To put in secular language the involvement of the Macedonian Orthodox Church or any other religious institutions and organizations in the political strife is politically unfair, detrimental and dangerous, and it is a sin in accordance with the religious canons and dogmas. To stir up religious passions or religious intolerance in multi-religious environment is extremely dangerous. The political entities are obliged to safeguard the neutrality of the religious institutions, at least because in case of their possible political loss, the respective religious institution may also happen to be in the loser group. The religion, the faith may not and should not prove a loser in any combination, whatsoever. In accordance with the sociologist S. Mladenovski: “The process of the referendum has two truths and two sides – ‘FOR’ and ‘AGAINST’, and even a third-one, which “DOES NOT WANT TO VOTE”. The very fact that there are more truths about the referendum, in its new role of a campaigner for something against somebody, the Church creates confusion, since it openly takes side.”

- **Non-governmental, non-political, civil sector**

SDSM has enjoyed an excellent collaboration with the non-governmental organizations. This is the reason why since long among the public it has persistently been maintained that in general, the organizations and institutions of that sector have not lived up to their main mission, participating in the political process and even more, taking sides in favor of one or another political option. The existing total political elite of the Republic of Macedonia has been manifesting a behavior of a separate, isolated class, of an enclosed and prominent caste, showing rude, overbearing and arrogant attitude towards the population, condescending to communicate with the same only as an electorate during the election period. A strong, powerful, and sound civil society is lacking in Macedonia to control with the help of efficient tools this class in the period between two election cycles. On the other hand, however, the civil sector, the non-governmental organizations and associations are satisfied that the Government, unlike the previous governing power, does not treat this segment as “the fifth column in the country”. This sector however has the observation that the Government has no serious and clear concept about a genuine and real collaboration, and the organizations of this segment have been left on their own.

- **The World Macedonian Congress**

SMK has surprised and lightened up the Macedonian political skies like a comet and has very quickly gone out after that. And this organization will certainly be subject of sociological and political research, in order to identify who manipulates it within and for what purposes. SMK has vigorously joined the pro-referendum activities in order to undergo a real fiasco after the well-known development of the events. SMK was accused of being “a Trojan Horse” through which a group of politicians from the opposition wanted to take the power in the state. In view of the results from the voting, most likely, the citizens have accepted this statement as true, so that the very idea of the referendum to repeal a Law that is detrimental to the nation was compromised. Now, SMK is a discredited organization and an outsider in the Macedonian political life.

- **Coalitions and inter-party relations**

VMRO-DPMNE has not given up the idea to collaborate with “The Third Way” aiming at obtaining power. It remains unclear how a party, which claims to be a classic Christian-democratic, center-right, even with conservative views, may pursue such a policy with one typical for left-wing parties. What type of a common political and ideological platform can they make? The results of the referendum have approximately shown the electoral significance of the parties concerned. If at the presidential elections VMRO-DPMNE gets 330,000 votes, one should calculate the share in total 449,324 votes cast at the referendum contributed by each party, given that in the campaign calling for the citizens to vote many other parties took part, among which civil movements, organizations and associations. From this, a conclusion for the strength of “the

Third Way” may be drawn. By their parallel Declaration for Support of the Strategic Interest of Macedonia, Nikola Gruevski and Stoyan Andov showed that they have not given up the idea that only a large party and civil conglomerate united in a mass anti-government movement is the combination which would topple the Government and thus the supporters shall seize the power. This parallel Skopje declaration by the opposition has essential weaknesses in comparison to the presidential Ohrid Declaration. VMRO-DPMNE, as a main axis has signed it together with 28 small and not so influential political entities, and it was very important to note that there was not single political entity of the Albanians among them! At the signature ceremony there was no representative of the foreign factors, something which is of great importance in the Macedonian politics. Recently, Grujevski, having broken the relations with DPA, stated that the party would enter into coalition with an Albanian entity, which will or should be established in the future...

We have said that it was possible to have unification in the right-wing space, uniting around VMRO-NP as a pivotal point, around which the right-wing parties would group together. This, however, depends on the success of L.Georgievski to “break” or “to conquer” VMRO-DPMNE. Otherwise, his party has a reliable coalition partner in the Albanian block – DPA of Arben Jaferi.

No major changes are expected for the time being in the social-democratic-liberal and multi-ethnic coalition of the ruling majority under these conditions and circumstances. The main “pillars” for the future will still be SDSM and DSI, having achieved a successful collaboration proven after the difficult test with the Law, in which, by the way, there is also “an electoral geometry” drawn advantageously for them. The new leader of SDSM and a Prime Minister – Vlado Buchkovski, maybe a little unexpectedly, has resorted to broadening the coalition with new entities. So that the membership of the new Government includes also a Minister from the ranks of Civil Movement of Macedonia, which has suddenly emerged with lightning speed.

Whatever the coalitions and parties do, it becomes clear that the solution of the economic problems should be their main orientation in the future, the basic part of their political and election platforms, and a priority direction in the political action. The reforms may not be postponed any longer. But they should also be postponed in the future since the implementation of real reforms will make the reformer political force unpopular among the population and in addition to that, may not only topple it down from power, but also keep it away from power for long time. Given the profile of the Macedonian political parties and leaders, there is no entity so courageous and determined.

- **Democracy**

- **Political aspects.** In Macedonia, no package of the so called strict lustration laws, a law on opening of the former secret police files of the citizens has ever been adopted. No

matter which party was in power, one is left with the impression that Macedonia lacks the will to break with its communist past. This is one the roots where the corruption stems from. Corruption and organized crime have been deeply ingrained in the public texture and in the institutional system. Suspected in corruption and weak internal party democracy, as a main source for recruiting of staff for manning the institutions of the system, the parties have been directly contributing to the cumbersome “red tape”, inefficiency and sluggishness of the overstaffed institutional system. From communism to nationalism – this is the trajectory along which the Macedonian historical development has been moving from the collapse of the Berlin wall till now. Had the files of the former secret police been opened, it would have been a lot more interesting to see how many former “orthodox and trustworthy communists” became the today’s “inspired nationalists”, active functionaries, active politicians in the Macedonian politics, public opinion generators and leaders! The parties have a vital need of a new generation of politicians.

- **Economic aspects.** It cannot be expected for Macedonia to be a successful democracy with population in a difficult social situation, caused by the failed economy. Due to this situation there is no social stratification of the society, no establishing of strata and classes to become social bases of the parties. Hence, the inverted situation in the party system: the left-wing parties to pursue typically rightist policies, and the right-wing parties (if any) to count on lower social groups, pursuing leftist policies. The common thing for the two political competitors are the groups of oligarchs, “party bosses”, the so-called “millionaires of the transition”.

- **The Society**

Fear is present in Macedonia. The Macedonians are afraid that in the mid-term the Albanians will push them out of the municipalities (regions), where at present they are in majority, and in the long-term, after “they have failed the model of nation-state of the Macedonians”, they will gradually and slowly seize also the remaining piece of “Macedonian land”, if not by any other means, for sure, by their “powerful weapon – birth rate”. The Albanians are afraid that the Macedonians will not give up the idea that they are the holders of the state (their nation-state), the domineering people, which will always find ways to outvote the Albanian minority, and with the help of various alliance combinations to make their decisions legitimate and to impose them. Fear from the success of the other people, or to put it simply – envy is present in Macedonia. This fear is widely spread in the society, and it is supported and encouraged by the political elite, because this is their main resource on which they draw their political power. The third element typical for the Macedonian society is provincialism. The politologist Denko Malevski thinks that: “We became a society in which one cannot tell good from evil, just from unjust. We became a society with ruined moral values.” He believes that the cause for that is a powerful network of offensive people in politics, in media, in the universities and in the

Academy. “They, of course, are divided by their ideologies or ethnic belonging, what brings them together is the strong links of deceitfulness, cynicism, sarcasm... They exactly recognize each other, hate each other and support each other!”

“From communism to nationalism, and finally to provincialism has been the road of the enslaved Macedonian political mentality in the recent thirteen years”! The party elites support these conditions of the spirit of population as a principle of behavior, mostly because they have acquired their wealth, titles and power exactly by using the mechanisms of power and provincialism. Giving a green light and establishing of liberal- democratic principles of a free market economy and autonomous open civil society means the end of their wealth, domination and power.

Immediately after the referendum, the parties and the entities participating in the Macedonian politics presented their views on further activities and processes.

Vassil Tupurkovski from DA, from “the Third Way” coalition proposed “a shadow cabinet” to be established.

Pande Lazarevski, an analyst from the Civil Movement of Macedonia thinks that together with the outcome of the referendum, an evaluation should also be made of the Law on Territorial Organization by the Constitutional Court with regard to whether it is in compliance with legal procedure, whether it is not in conflict with any international legal act, ratified by the Macedonian parliament (The European Charter on Local Self-government). He proposes the possibility for a two-tier local self-government to be considered, which in accordance with the evaluations of some of the members of this organization would resolve many issues. Nikola Gruevski believes that “after 22 months it will be seen who is the winner, and who the loser in the present post-referendum situation.” Considered from today, he has in mind the regular general elections in 2006. Even if it is not so, it may be considered that VMRO-DPMNE is not prepared to seriously attack the Government with the aim to topple it and take the power -at least until the end of internal party disintegration. One should wait for the outcome of the break-up of the parliamentary group, then one should wait for a process of vertical re-grouping to follow in the structures of the party in the municipalities, and then comes the consolidation.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

○ It is laid down in The Law on Local Self-government, Article 41, paragraph 3 how some specific rights are protected, such as culture, language, writing of citizens, who are below 20% of the total population in any municipality in accordance with these features. The provisions of the law are not a sufficient guarantee against the possibility for the minority at municipal level to be dominated by the majority, as well as these rights are not reciprocal with the rights of 20%

minority at a national level. Amendments should be made to the existing Law on Local Self-government.

- Problems are expected also at the debates on the national symbols: concerning the type of the state coat of arms, the type and use of the flags of the ethnic minority communities, and other problems related to these matters.

- Alternation and increase of the election cycles postpones the reforms. After the resignation of H. Kostov, a new Government was formed, which shall enjoy another 100 days of peace. The consolidation of the new Government suggests that there will be no stronger focus on the economic and social problems, and even less on the conducting of reforms. The governing parties and the opposition parties will begin the preparation for the local elections, scheduled for February/March 2005.

- The serious economic crisis and the collapsed economy, the lack of funds, the enormous unemployment, poverty, and last, but not the least, the great share of gray economy (40.8% of the GDP) are problems which will be controlled even with greater difficulty, before they escalate into a destructive force directed against the system and order, peace and national security.

- If we consider the result from the referendum in terms of the necessary urgent economic reforms, it shows that the Macedonian majority has expressed (through its abstaining from voting) its interest in their quicker commencement.

- The international community has sent direct signals to Macedonia that it should propose soon an alternative to the present situation, which has remained unchanged for 15 years now: political strife and hollow electoral promises for improvement of the living standard of the people in the country.

- In the reported period, in parallel to the efforts for demarcation of the border with Kosovo, the diplomatic contacts on bilateral basis should become more frequent, aiming at recognition of the constitutional name, in the first place by the EU member- states.

- As function from implementation of AMBO oil pipeline, higher level contacts should be made with Bulgaria for signing a Memorandum for construction of the oil pipeline. It should be taken into account that the Russian oil companies Transneft and Lukoil, which actually implement the policy of Kremlin have recently straightforwardly expressed doubts in the economic feasibility of Bourgas–Alexandroupolis oil pipeline. This implies that Moscow turns more towards Keyikay-Ibrikbaba oil pipeline through Turkey as a part of the Southern vector of the Russian energy policy. On the other hand, the strategic objectives of Russia are directed in the first place towards the Asian and American markets, through the development of the Northern and Eastern vectors of the energy policy. These points should be discussed with the Bulgarian leaders, who should be convinced to make a final strategic choice in favor of AMBO.

The foreign political orientation has been defined: NATO-EU-USA-Regional Collaboration-Russia, and *ceteris paribus*, in the long term it is not subject to changes.

With the test passed by way of the Referendum, with the involvement of the USA, as well as with the presidential Ohrid Declaration, the Framework Agreement has been ensured for a relatively long period. But anyway, in the long run, the legal and political order and model, in view of the Framework Agreement, is not guaranteed from encroachments, attacks, attempts at changes... And furthermore from the following:

The new law on Territorial Organization of the Local Self-government comes into effect mortgaged with the resistance expressed at 41 local referendums, as well as with the disapproval of 450,000 citizens expressed at the national referendum.

The politicians have a difficult task. The citizens are not informed and are not familiar with the essence of the consensus democracy. The majority democracy is the ideal for democracy in the people's minds. The leaders of the segments have the difficult duty to achieve political agreements with the leaders of the other segments, and to make concessions on the one hand, and on the other hand to preserve the trust of their own members. In the consensus model, the Government and the regime coincide. Therefore, the dissatisfaction with the Government policy turns quickly into disagreement with the regime.

The consensus democracy of Lebanon has failed, by the way, because it could not ensure easy adaptation of the Christians to gradual loss of the majority status in favor of the Muslims he Macedonians are afraid also that with their policies the Albanians are aiming to undermine the unitary nature of the state, and are leading to federalization... At a seminar on the eve of the referendum one the Albanian intellectual in response to a journalist's question, by the way said that in accordance with the analysis of the demographic trends in 10 to 20 years the Albanians will become a majority in Macedonia and he asked the question why then they would defend federalization of their own state and motherland?

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