Vetoes, Ethnic Bidding, Decentralisation: Post-Conflict Education in Macedonia

Cvete Koneska[*]
St. Antony's College, University of Oxford

This article focuses on political elites in post-conflict Macedonia and investigates how political elites interact – to accommodate or resist each other – across ethnic lines. Theoretically, the analysis draws upon institutionalist literature, in particular literature on power-sharing institutions and ethnic outbidding among ethnic political parties. Building on this framework, the article proceeds to develop three arguments relating to power-sharing and ethnic outbidding: one on the effects of ethnic outbidding on elite accommodation, and two on the impact of power-sharing structures (veto mechanisms and territoriality) on ethnic elite accommodation. Although the main emphasis is placed on domestic factors, the article also briefly considers and examines the impact of external actors, the EU and the OSCE, on the policy process in post-conflict Macedonia, and how political elites cooperate when external actors get involved in the policy process. This article focuses in greater detail upon education policy in Macedonia, which was one of the most controversial policy issues straining relations between the ethnic Albanian minority and the Macedonian state since independence. The article compares elite cooperation before and after the conflict in 2001 and demonstrates that the dynamics of political elites' interaction have changed to empower ethnic Albanian political elites thanks to the institutional and constitutional system adopted after 2001. However, despite increased accommodation at the central level, ethnic divisions remain at the local level.

Keywords: power-sharing, post-conflict politics, education, Macedonia

1. Introduction

The fall of communism brought an end to totalitarian regimes and the ideological divide that ran across the European continent. It opened up prospects for spreading democracy beyond what was imaginable during the Cold War decades and fuelled these hopes with the pro-democratic slogans of new leaders of former communist states. Yet, for some, the end of communism was marked not by the advent of democracy and the wealth and prosperity it came to symbolize for the population of these states, but with ravaging ethnic conflicts. Tens of thousands were killed and

---

[*] Cvete Koneska is a DPhil graduate from St. Anthony's College, University of Oxford.
Email: cvete.koneska@gmail.com.

injured, many times more displaced and dispossessed while infrastructure lay in ruins – a rather dire disillusionment for those who expected the end of communism to bring about a better future.

The ethnic conflicts that accompanied the violent break-up of the Yugoslav federation diverted the post-communist trajectory of Balkan states, when compared to other former communist states. Today, two decades after the end of communism most Central and East European states are members of the European Union (EU), with relatively stable democratic regimes and market economies. From a social science perspective, the Balkan experience, with its ethnic wars, the redrawing of state borders, secessions and the establishment of new states, places these states in an altogether different context – simultaneously post-communist and post-conflict – where democratization and post-communist economic transition run in parallel with post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction. This unique combination of post-communist and post-conflict societies, which recently embarked upon EU integration and are thus also subject to processes of Europeanization, present a rare opportunity to study the various interactions of these processes and the outcomes they produce in terms of successful consolidation of democracy, stable post-ethnic conflict statehood and progress with EU integration.

Ethic relations and intra-state management of ethnic diversity provide an excellent test for the progress Balkan states have achieved in the triple transformation of their societies. Ethnic relations are one of the key issues for evaluating progress towards democratization, indicating the extent to which norms of human rights protection have been adopted and implemented. Similarly, peaceful management of interethnic relations reveals the extent to which a post-conflict society has recovered from the legacy of ethnic conflict. Finally, successful resolution of domestic ethnic problems also indicates how far a country has progressed in fulfilling the political criteria for EU membership.

Therefore, this article examines political elites in post-conflict Macedonia and investigates how political elites interact – to accommodate or resist each other – across ethnic lines. The discussion in the following sections engages with three arguments relating to power-sharing and ethnic outbidding: one on the effects of ethnic outbidding on elite accommodation and two on the impact of power-sharing structures (veto mechanisms and territoriality) on ethnic elite accommodation. Next, the empirical focus is upon education policy in Macedonia, as one of the most

ethnically controversial policy issues, comparing elite cooperation before and after the 2001 conflict. Finally, the article demonstrates that the dynamics of political elites' interaction have changed to empower ethnic Albanian political elites thanks to the institutional and constitutional system adopted after 2001. However, despite increased accommodation at central level, ethnic divisions remain at local level.

1.1 Post-conflict elite accommodation in Macedonia

Among the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, the Macedonian conflict has received the least academic attention for a number of reasons. The conflict in Macedonia took place much later than the other conflicts, in 2001, when interethnic violence in the Balkans did not appear as shocking to the international public. It lasted for only about six months before the representatives of the international community reached a compromise acceptable to both sides and a peace agreement was signed (the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA)). Finally, there were no stories of war atrocities and genocide acts to stir outrage and make the headlines of international media. The Macedonian conflict thus became rather the example of successful conflict management by the international community, which was keen to show that it had learnt the lessons from previous conflicts in the region. It therefore acted in a timely and decisive manner to prevent further escalation of the hostilities and to reach an acceptable solution to the problems between the ethnic Albanian minority and the Macedonian state. By focusing on Macedonia, this article aims to add to the literature on the ethnic conflict in Macedonia and examine Macedonian post-conflict politics within a much more deliberate frame than as an instance of successful conflict management by international actors. This article looks into the complex internal political mechanisms and practices that political elites employ to balance the precarious post-conflict institutional and political equilibrium.

Within the larger context described above, there is a specific puzzle driving the research behind this article. Macedonia is considered an example of relatively successful conflict settlement. The institutional and political set-up designed after the conflict is seen to be working well to promote inclusion and cooperation between the political elites of the two ethnic groups. Yet, stepping one level down from the aggregate state level to examine political elites' accommodation and resistance on different policy issues within the state, a different picture emerges. Political elites in

Macedonia have a mixed record of accommodation. On some issues political elites are easily accommodated across ethnic lines and come to a mutually acceptable policy solution, while on other policies these same elites resist the other group's position and block the policy process without reaching a compromise. The situation on the ground is much more complex than aggregate analysis would predict, and this variation in the behaviour of political elites demands a closer look and analysis in order to understand and explain it.

Within the larger frame of interethnic relations in post-conflict Macedonia, this article focuses on minority education issues. Education has been a controversial issue in interethnic relations in Macedonia, the source of much ethnic tension both before and after the conflict in 2001. As such, successful accommodation over education issues indicates a wider trend towards reconciliation between ethnicities at the societal level. Education reforms also underscore the sustainability of the post-conflict ethnic balance, as new generations are socialized through the educational system and come to embrace the dominant values in society. Shedding additional light on the ethnic dynamics in education therefore traces important parameters for the ethnic balance in Macedonia.

2. Political elites and power-sharing

2.1 Political elites

Interactions in the policy cycle, and specifically in decision-making settings, take place between political elites. They are the main brokers of political power in the state. This article works with a functionalist definition of elites, defining political elites as 'persons holding strategic positions in large or otherwise powerful organizations and movements, who regularly influence political decision-making' (Burton and Higley, 1987). In this article, political elites include mainly politicians, those who debate and make policy decisions and take responsibility to implement them, from all ethnic groups in Macedonia, although the main emphasis is on accommodation between the two largest ethnic groups, Macedonians and Albanians.

2.2 Power-sharing arrangements

One of the main factors that shape ethnic accommodation in Macedonia is the institutional set up in which political actors operate. These institutional constraints after 2001 are set out in the peace agreement that terminated the violence – the OFA. The OFA provided for the establishment of political institutions to ensure that all ethnic groups had access to political power – which is the essence of power-sharing. Considering that institutional reform and redesign is at the heart of the OFA, and institutions shape and constrain the space for political elite interactions and behaviour, power-sharing literature is a fertile source of explanations for elite accommodation in Macedonia.

Arend Lijphart introduced the four main principles of power sharing: grand coalitions, veto rights, territorial autonomy, and proportionality. They ensure that minority groups in divided societies are given a share in political power and decision-making rights at the central, as well as the local, level, which prevents domination of the majority over other groups (1977). His "consociational" approach to democracy in divided societies is at the heart of many post-conflict institutional arrangements in recent decades, including Macedonia, which since 2001 has introduced some of the major power-sharing principles. Despite criticism about the elite-dependent success of the system and the hardening of ethnic divisions due to their entrenchment in institutional rules, that critics launch at "consociational" power-sharing arrangements (Barry, 1975; Tsebelis, 1990), consociationalism remains at the heart of most actual power-sharing arrangements implemented in post-conflict states. Therefore, this article examines the elements of power-sharing arrangements in Macedonia and examines their impact on political elites' ethnic accommodation.

Although power-sharing is often seen as a single, homogeneous approach to politics in divided societies, its elements are not mutually dependent and can be analyzed independently. This article does not treat power-sharing as a unified institutional tool. Rather, it aims to distinguish between the effects of its different elements in terms of ethnic accommodation. Looking at separate power-sharing elements allows for a more nuanced and detailed understanding of how power-sharing works in practice and, ultimately, of the reasons behind ethnic accommodation and resistance on specific policy issues.

This approach to power-sharing has the additional advantage of allowing diverse arguments about the effects of power-sharing mechanisms on interethnic politics. Rather than advancing an overall generalized claim about the merits of power-sharing in post-conflict Macedonia, this article offers two specific arguments about two power-sharing mechanisms. By allowing each ethnic group equal bargaining power, veto mechanisms led to greater accommodation between Macedonian and Albanian politicians. In contrast, by devolving policy-making powers to local ethnic politicians, territorial decentralization has caused greater resistance between political elites. The divergent effects of these two power-sharing mechanisms paint a more complicated picture about the state of ethnic relations and reconciliation in Macedonian politics, than an aggregate study of power-sharing institutions.

Blocking or bargaining: veto mechanisms

The availability of veto mechanisms undoubtedly has a strong purchase on politicians' actions in the policy process. However, no consensus has emerged about the effectiveness of veto mechanisms to contribute to ethnic accommodation. Elsewhere in comparative politics literature, more veto points and veto players in the political process are seen as likely to cause stalling of the policy process and policy "bottlenecks" where policies and reforms are stopped (Ganev, 2001). Moreover, Bieber has also pointed out the harmful effects that wide veto powers of political elites can have in post-conflict states, such as in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where vetoes can be invoked in state parliament on a wide range of issues (2005). However, this article argues that double majority voting in Macedonia, by giving minority politicians the right to veto specific legislation, compensates for their numerical inferiority in parliament and allows them equal say in policy process. Introducing vetoes has enabled greater accommodation across ethnic lines.

Self-governance or exclusive power: the merits of decentralization

Territorial power-sharing, as territorial autonomy for an ethnic group within a common state or limited territorial implications of certain policies, is usually acclaimed by power-sharing proponents as the best means of self-government for a group (Lijphart, 1977). However, territorial measures for managing ethnic tensions have also attracted abundant criticism. Roeder (2007), for instance, claims that the

single most important factor in secessionist conflicts is the territorial autonomy that the seceding region enjoyed before secession, thus suggesting that territorial autonomy allows political leaders of ethnic groups to launch secessionist claims, which is totally opposite to ethnic accommodation. In their earlier critique of power-sharing arrangements, Roeder and Rothchild (2005) suggest that territorial autonomy and the decentralization of decision-making powers gives ethno-politicians the 'institutional weapons' to mobilize the local population and demand more political power from the centre, which will inevitably lead to tension between the majority and the minority elites. Thus, territorial power-sharing, contrary to its intended purpose to curb secession claims, seems to breed ethnic resistance among political elites.

This article argues that territorial power-sharing, through decentralization of policy-making and political power, leads to greater resistance between political elites at the local level, where reconciliation mechanisms are less effective than at the national level. *Apropos* of territoriality, this article adopts a wider view, including not only formal territorial autonomy or federalism, but also policies within unitary states which have territorial implications for the territory where minority ethnic groups live. Such a widening of the scope of territorial power-sharing is necessary to capture some of the particularities of Macedonia's political system. Macedonia is considered a unitary state with no territorial power-sharing elements. However, many of the rights and competences awarded to minorities have a limited territorial application, as these only apply to territories (municipalities) where the ethnic groups comprise more than 20% of the population. From this perspective, the fact that Macedonia is a unitary state does not imply that territorial power-sharing has no significant influence on the Macedonian political elites or makes ethnic Albanian political elites more inclined to accommodate the positions of their Macedonian counterparts.

2.3 Ethnic political parties

Other major influences in accommodation between ethnic political elites are political parties and the rules of political party competition. Ethnic parties are among the most prominent features in post-conflict politics in ethnically divided states. Indeed, political parties in Macedonia seem to have virtually complete control of the political agenda, not only ethnic issues. Often linked to and encouraged by power-sharing institutions, ethnic parties promote ethnically excusive agendas, addressing members

of a single ethnic group and usually excluding others (Chandra, 2011). Leaders of these political parties are often engaged in ethnic outbidding – a spiralling process of intra-bloc party competition where each party claims to be the most effective defender of bloc interests (Coakley, 2008) – thus undermining prospects for greater ethnic accommodation. Whenever a policy issue triggers ethnic outbidding among ethnic parties, accommodation seems an unlikely outcome, as even moderate politicians bid high on the ethnic scale and drive the policy agenda towards a more radical discourse.

While it is often argued that ethnic outbidding is the result of power-sharing arrangements that institutionalize the division of power strictly along ethnic lines (Horowitz, 1985; Rabushka and Shepsle, 1972), recent research into the effects of power-sharing arrangements suggests that this might not always be the case. Chandra (2005) claims that institutionalizing ethnicity in the mid-term actually leads to political moderation of initial ethnic outbidders; Mitchell *et al.* (2009) claim that, despite the electoral success of ethnically more radical parties, popular attitudes to ethnic issues become progressively more moderate, and so do the enacted policies. In line with this stance, this article argues that ethnic outbidding is not inevitable, and initial ethnic bidding does not result in outbidding when a mutually acceptable compromise has been achieved in the government coalition. Examining the effect of ethnic outbidding on elite accommodation will help to better understand how and when ethnic outbidding takes place, as well as its relation to power-sharing institutions.

The aim of this this article is to assess the often-missing domestic politics component of post-conflict politics. This literature is dominated by the external perspective focused on humanitarian intervention, international administration, effects of development and reconstruction aid, as well as crafting the institutional and constitutional design of post-conflict states. Domestic factors tend to play just as important a role in post-conflict politics; this article is an effort to shed further light on how domestic factors contribute to greater ethnic accommodation between elites and thus also to functioning democracy and greater security in post-conflict states. The impact of external actors, in particular the EU and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), will be briefly investigated as well, since the process of EU integration, which coincides with the post-conflict period in Macedonia, has a profound influence on the policy processes in Macedonia.

3. Education policy in Macedonia

Education is not the obvious choice for policy analysis in post-conflict states, as most often the subjects of analysis are security- and reconstruction-related policies, such as army and police reform, judicial reforms and transitional justice. However, in the context of the Macedonian conflict, education is the most appropriate choice for policy analysis, as it had been among the most contentious issues in the relations between the Macedonian state and the Albanian minority since independence in 1991. Therefore, how political elites came to cooperate, and how and to what extent they could accommodate each other's demands on this issue before and after the 2001 conflict and peace agreement, best illustrates how the post-conflict institutional structure and political developments in Macedonia have influenced the behaviour of political elites.

3.1 Pre-2001 education policy: the apple of discord in Macedonian politics

Ever since Macedonia's declaration of independence, which followed the referendum on independence of 8 September 1991, education policy has been a thorny issue in relations between the ethnic Albanian minority and the Macedonian state. In 1991, Macedonia had only two state (public) universities where the language of instruction was Macedonian. Until independence, this was not a major problem for the Albanian minority, since within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) there was a public university – Prishtina University in Kosovo – where the language of instruction was Albanian and where Albanians from Macedonia could study in their mother tongue. However, with independence the right to receive higher education in their own language was denied to ethnic Albanians in Macedonia, since universities did not offer any courses in Albanian and Kosovo became part of different state, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Therefore, demands for Albanian-language university education date from the early 1990s, and this issue has always been high on the agenda of Albanian political elites in Macedonia.

Language, however, also strikes a sensitive note with ethnic Macedonians. Since the codification of the Macedonian language in 1945 until the late 1990s it has been the subject of constant attacks by the Bulgarian government and cultural elites, which did not recognize the existence of a separate Macedonian language, but

claimed it was a dialect of Bulgarian. These language arguments marked official Yugoslav–Bulgarian relations by animosity for many decades before the dissolution of the SFRY (King, 1973). After independence there was the name dispute with Greece and the lack of international recognition of Macedonia as a sovereign state, which came as an additional blow to the already low self-confidence of Macedonian political elites who were sensitive to all challenges to the Macedonian nation or state. Thus, they became defensive of the language, as one the most pronounced and most challenged identity markers of the Macedonian nation, and any demands for increased use of the Albanian language were perceived as attacks on Macedonian statehood and nation "from the inside".

Before 2001, the newly established Macedonian state had no formal power-sharing mechanisms. The 1991 constitution provided for a unitary state with a democratic political system, while the electoral system inherited from Yugoslav times was majoritarian. None of the four major principles of power-sharing (veto rights, coalitions, proportionality or autonomy) was present in Macedonian politics. However, although the electoral system did not favour coalition governments and there were no formal requirements for interethnic coalitions, the informal practice was to include an Albanian political party as a junior partner in government. The 1992-1994 and 1994-1998 Social Democratic Union (SDSM)-led governments had the Albanian Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP) as a coalition partner. Both parties were communist successor parties, which sprang from the Communist Union of Macedonia, and their leaders and members had good mutual relations. This practice of including Albanian parties as coalition partners became widely accepted in Macedonian politics, so that when a conservative and more nationalist Macedonian party – VMRO-DPMNE – won the majority of the vote in the 1998 elections, they included the Albanian Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) as their coalition partner. This happened eight years after the first free elections in 1990 when VMRO-DPMNE refused to form a cabinet which included an Albanian party. However, in 1998 DPA, a more radical breakaway faction of PDP, won the majority of the electoral vote of ethnic Albanians – thanks to its strategy of ethnic outbidding through which it blamed PDP for not properly defending and promoting the interests of the Albanian population – and became a junior partner in the government coalition. Thus, by 2001 the expectation that an interethnic coalition would be in power was so strong

that even two political parties that were further to the right on the political spectrum, and entered the elections with nationalist platforms, formed a government coalition.

Although interethnic coalitions in government were an established practice, it is notable that none of the government cabinets from 1990 to 2001 included an Albanian Minister of Education. The field of education, along with other policy areas such as Interior and Defence, were considered too sensitive to be allocated to the Albanian party in power. This testifies to how important education policy was to both Macedonian and Albanian political elites and populations.

The official government stance on the issue of higher education in Albanian was that such a proposal was unconstitutional: because the Constitution recognized Macedonian as the only official language, to provide higher education in another language would be unconstitutional. Therefore, the issue of an Albanian-language university was not even included in the official political and legislative agenda, though it remained part of the Albanian political parties' agendas. Since formal institutional channels for solving this issue were closed, and higher education in Albanian was not allowed, the years preceding the 2001 conflict saw several incidents that tested the cooperation and accommodation potential of the political elites of the two ethnic groups in Macedonia.

In June 1994, a group of Albanian politicians, intellectuals and civil associations initiated a project to establish an Albanian-language university in Macedonia. In December 1994, when the new Tetovo University was due to open, the government sent police forces to break up the opening ceremony. In the subsequent clashes between the police and the crowds, several people were injured and one ethnic Albanian was killed. What is perhaps more surprising than the fact that education issues caused violence and claimed the life of one victim, was that all these efforts were openly supported by PDP – the junior ethnic Albanian partner in the Social Democrats-led government; after the police blocked the entrance to the building where the opening ceremony was to take place, the Declaration for Establishment of Tetovo University was read in the headquarters of PDP in Tetovo by Fadil Sulejmani, the new rector of Tetovo University.[1] The establishment of Tetovo University was supported by local government representatives from municipalities with majority ethnic Albanian populations, such as Tetovo, Gostivar, Debar, as well as by representatives of ethnic Albanian political parties. They thus lent their legitimacy as

elected and appointed members of the state administration to the new higher education institution that the government refused to acknowledge.

This reveals that the coalition, which was otherwise stable, was only working superficially; on many issues, such as higher education policy, the coalition partners had radically different and even opposing stances. Political elites from the two governing parties were not making policies jointly, nor were there any attempts at accommodation to reach a common government stance. The two partners in government did not have equal weight in adopting education reforms, with the junior one wielding significantly less powerful to place issues on the agenda, and to influence the contents of education policy. However, the coalition survived this crisis, and stayed in power until the next elections in 1998.

The violent incident over Tetovo University did eventually push the government towards finding a solution to the problem of higher education for Albanians. In 1997 it proposed a law on languages of instruction at the Pedagogical Faculty which allowed for Albanian-language instruction in Skopje University Pedagogical Faculty where teachers for primary and secondary schools in Albanian were to be trained.[2] The opposition, led by VMRO-DPMNE, launched massive student protests against the law and brought thousands of students and citizens onto the streets, chanting slogans of ethnic hatred and intolerance. Meanwhile the opposition leaders labelled the law a 'dangerous precedent of raising the rights of national minorities above international standards',[3] using nationalist rhetoric to bid against the ruling party. The ruling SDSM responded with accusations of extremism, stating that 'VMRO-DPMNE's option [was] collectivist, in which all others are considered guests and second class citizens'.[4] The opposition even took the law to the Constitutional Court, although the court ultimately did not rule against the constitutionality of the law.[5]

There were no further instances of ethnic accommodation on the sensitive issues of language and education and the Macedonian elites in government, who were outflanked by their nationalist opposition, retreated and abandoned ethnic accommodation. Nationalist rhetoric and ethnic bidding by the opposition did not lead to outbidding by the government. However, it strangled fledgling attempts at ethnic accommodation in government coalitions. Despite the relatively moderate stances by both Macedonian and Albanian partners in government, the weight of the Albanian party in the policy- and decision- making process was too light, and little progress

was achieved without formal power-sharing arrangements. Education remained a highly contentious issue between Macedonian and Albanian political elites well into 2001, when the violent conflict took place.

3.2 Post-2001 education policy: power-sharing and accommodation

Between February and August 2001, the north-western parts of Macedonia were the stage of violent clashes between Macedonian armed forces and the armed paramilitary troops of the National Liberation Army (NLA), the ethnic Albanian rebel army. The swift intervention of the EU and United States representatives and flexible diplomatic efforts on both sides of the conflict resulted in the cessation of hostilities and signing of the OFA on August 13, 2001. The OFA, which was signed by the leaders of the four largest political parties in Macedonia (SDSM, VMRO-DPMNE, DPA and PDP), set the frame for constitutional amendments and changes in the institutional and political set-up of Macedonia.

OFA introduced power-sharing principles into Macedonian politics, instituting qualified majority voting requirements for certain policy areas, such as education, a proportional electoral system and proportionality in the distribution of resources through decentralization of government and equitable representation in public administration.[6] Fifteen amendments to the constitution were adopted in 2001, ranging from the preamble to the official language, to the equality of all religious communities, and introducing substantial changes to the constitutional system in Macedonia.

In the years that followed, as the provisions of the OFA were being implemented, an entirely new dynamic of political elite interaction emerged. The new government coalition after the 2002 elections comprised SDSM and the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) – the new Albanian political party established by the political (and military) leadership of the NLA – and for the first time had an Albanian Minister of Education, Azis Pollozhani. This was of great symbolic importance for the Albanian population, which for the last decade had seen its aspirations for higher education in Albanian blocked and ignored by the Macedonian state. SDSM and DUI had a common agenda for education reform, which they negotiated before establishing the coalition and which they followed over the course of the next four years. Thus, between the government coalition partners there was substantial power

sharing in policy- and decision-making, supported by the fact that a majority of Albanian deputies was required for the passage of any education-related legislation.

Although the behaviour of the opposition varied, depending on the policy proposal, on education issues generally the Albanian political opposition supported educational reform and the legalization of Tetovo University, while the Macedonian opposition, VMRO-DPMNE, kept a more nationalist stance and often resorted to ethnic bidding strategies.

Legalizing Tetovo University

In 2004, Tetovo University was legalized with the adoption of the Law on Establishment of State University in Tetovo. Passage of the proposal, which put an end to decade-long ethnic and political tensions over higher education in Albanian, was the result of one of the longest plenary sessions of the Macedonian parliament, with ten sittings and two separate sessions. Virtually all constitutional mechanisms –
including ethnic bidding, veto mechanisms, parliament orders, and the constitutional veto actors, such as the president, – were used to influence the content of the legislation as well as the final outcome of the decision-making process. It was a difficult challenge for power-sharing in post-conflict Macedonia, testing the strength of the new institutional set-up and the resilience of political elite accommodation.

The law was adopted in accordance with the double majority voting requirement in parliament, and was thus supported by an overall majority as well as the majority of ethnic Albanian deputies. The ruling SDSM–DUI coalition controlled enough seats in parliament to be able to pass the law without opposition support. VMRO-DPMNE strongly opposed the proposed law and used all available institutional means to block its adoption. VMRO-DPMNE accused the 'government and Parliament of RM [of] legalizing a university that does not recognize the Macedonian state and its symbols, while the citizens will fund from their own pockets an institution which is fighting for [the] disintegration of the state'.[7] It filed for the interpellation of the Minister of Education, took up filibustering in parliament, and challenged the law before the Constitutional Court.[8] Interestingly, the Albanian opposition party DPA was not overly supportive of the proposal either. The DPA head of the education committee, Damir Zika, criticized the proposed solution as partial and as endangering the ten-year continuity of Tetovo University, even though DPA deputies in parliament voted in favour of the law.[9] DPA's attitude towards DUI's

proposal was also an attempt at ethnic bidding – criticizing the ethnic party in government for insufficient protection of the interests of the ethnic groups through "partial" and bad policy solutions for the ethnic group. Despite attempts at outbidding and aiming to outflank the incumbent DUI in terms of ethnic nationalism, DPA still voted for the law establishing Tetovo University and thus formal consensus was reached among ethnic Albanian political elites. The only dissenter rejecting the education reform remained VMRO-DPMNE, the largest Macedonian opposition party.

With the legalization of Tetovo University, and the previous establishment of the private South East European University, the issue of Albanian-language higher education in Macedonia was resolved. After 2006, the new VMRO-DPMNE and DPA government did not problematize the policy and legislative solutions reached by the previous government, despite its protests when the policies were enacted. The double majority voting rule on education issues discouraged a rolling back of education reforms, as it would have required the assent of the majority of ethnic Albanian deputies voting for such an initiative, which was highly unlikely. Thus, VMRO-DPMNE continued the practice of appointing ethnic Albanians as Ministers of Education and did not attempt to repeal the legalization of Tetovo University or any other educational reform.

High school violence and local political elites
While higher education problems subsided, problems with primary and especially secondary schools mounted. OFA provided for decentralization of political power in many policy areas, including education, so local governments gained substantial powers in primary and secondary education. Local councils and mayors were responsible for managing primary and secondary schools in their municipality and resolving all problems in this area. Ethnically mixed municipalities faced serious problems in running and managing secondary schools, due to interethnic youth violence and lack of resources for accommodating the demands and wishes of students and parents. Thus, ethnic violence between high school students in Struga in 2008 and 2009 resulted in a separation of the students into different "ethnic shifts".

Decentralizing education policy did not inevitably lead to improved interethnic relations at the local level; instead it sometimes created problems that surpassed the authority of the local government. In these cases, such as youth violence

in Struga, the central government had to intervene to find a solution. After the 2008 elections, when the new VMRO and DUI coalition government did not have an ethnic Albanian Minister of Education, the ethnic Albanian mayor of Struga took responsibility for resolving the problem. He also had to cooperate with the central government in order to come up with a solution – the introduction of ethnic shifts.[10] Local institutions could not provide a credible means for resolving the interethnic issue. Ethnic tensions, which despite their local origin could escalate into more serious trouble, needed to be addressed at central level.

Another example of the lack of capabilities and mechanisms for accommodating the challenges of post-conflict education policy at the local level can be found in the insufficient number of Albanian language classes in medical high schools. In the summer of 2009, parents and students protested over what was seen as the small number of places for Albanian students in the elite Pance Karagozov medical high school in Skopje. This problem could not be solved by the school administration or the local government and eventually involved direct negotiations with the Minister of Education. The Prime Minister even assigned one of the Vice Prime Ministers, Abdulaqim Ademi, responsible for implementation of the OFA, to mediate between the protesters and the Minister of Education.[11] The school had neither the capacity nor the resources to accommodate more students and, while this was certainly the most visible incident, there were many similar problems elsewhere in Macedonia, where Albanian students demanded more classes and more opportunities in Albanian, while the local government lacked the resources to accommodate such demands or manage the problems locally.[12]

While decentralization of education policy increased the competencies of the local government in educational affairs and allowed many decisions concerning primary and secondary schools to be taken by the communities involved, it also resulted in increased ethnic tensions at the local level. The above example illustrates how the inability of local government to find adequate resources to accommodate Albanian demands, or to reach a compromise over the issue, poisoned ethnic relations at the local level. Although the OFA provided for the establishment of local-level power-sharing mechanisms, such as double majority voting requirements in local councils, their influence failed to accommodate the Albanian minority, and central-level institutions needed to intervene to overcome the deadlock. The local interethnic

council failed to play a conciliatory role at local level, deferring the most controversial issues to central-level politicians and institutions.

Such trends in education policy in Macedonia reveal the grass-root problems of implementing education reforms in Macedonia. While post-conflict power-sharing mechanisms increased the weight and influence of ethnic Albanian political elites at the central level, allowing the elites to accommodate each other and make decisions about policies that solved outstanding problems in education, problems remained at local and community levels, where power-sharing tools were less successful. Moreover, the insufficient allocation of resources to education issues made the development of mutually acceptable solutions even more difficult, as central and especially local government lacked the money and human resources to make multilingual education available for all.

External influence and compliance

While the EU is undeniably an important and influential actor in domestic politics in the Western Balkans, especially in relation to its impact in improving minority rights in aspiring states (Anastasakis and Bechev, 2003), education is not considered a controversial policy issue and little pressure is placed on progress in this area. For Macedonia, in the annual progress reports prepared by the European Commission (EC) since 2005, progress on education (detailed in Chapter 26: Education and Culture) is evaluated as good for most years; however, the problems with language and ethnicity are not mentioned and progress in education reforms is evaluated against a different set of criteria (such as legislative approximation, budget allocated for reforms and the implementation of the Bologna requirements). In the section on political criteria for membership, minority rights are discussed, and problems with education of minorities are also mentioned. The EC has continuously pointed out that although the right to education in each community's mother tongue is enacted, there continue to be problems of integration between youth at local schools, and incidents of violence and hatred still occur.[13]

The gap left by the non-involvement by the EU was partly filled by other external actors, with greater experience and an established track record in minority and education issues, such as the OSCE. The OSCE had been present in Macedonia since the early 1990s, advising and assisting consecutive governments with solutions to ethnic problems. After 2001 and the educational reforms that followed the signing

of the OFA, the OSCE continued to support ethnic integration through education. Following the ethnic incidents in several high schools, in 2009 the OSCE and the Ministry of Education devised a Strategy for Integrated Education in Macedonia. The strategy was aimed at integrating ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian children from a young age, but was never fully implemented. Unlike the EU, the OSCE lacked the mechanisms to exert pressure on the government, so domestic politicians cherry picked the recommendations they felt would increase their popular support, neglecting others and indicating the limited role that external actors could play in resolving ethnic issues in the post-conflict context.

4. Discussion and conclusion

The above sections suggest several conclusions in relation to the theoretical arguments and explanations presented at the beginning of the article. Firstly, the dynamics of elite interaction after 2001 have shifted significantly from what they were prior to the conflict. Constitutional and institutional changes introduced by the OFA led to a change in the balance of political elites. Veto mechanisms, in particular, by increasing the bargaining and decision-making powers of ethnic Albanian political elites through the introduction of a double majority requirement in the field of education, induced political elites to accommodate much more after 2001. Most of the demands of ethnic Albanians relating to education have been met through educational reforms carried out in the post-conflict period, including the establishment of Albanian-language universities. This change suggests that the post-conflict introduction of power-sharing institutions has led to greater political cooperation and ultimately to a relaxation in interethnic relations at the national level.

Vetoes further prevent the obstruction and rolling back of reforms. Since every change in education policy needs to be approved and supported by the majority of both ethnic communities, it has become increasingly difficult to reverse adopted reforms. Therefore, both ethnic groups need to agree in order to introduce a change in education. This implies that power-sharing, through double majority voting, improved political elite accommodation.

Political decentralization and the increased authority of local government in many areas (including education) was introduced after 2001. However, the record shows that ethnic accommodation and management of ethnic tensions at the local

level does not work as effectively as at the central level. Local elites have repeatedly asked for assistance from the central government in resolving ethnic problems in education, because the institutional tools at their disposal have failed to produce acceptable solutions. Double majority voting and interethnic councils within local government institutions did not yield the expected results in terms of ethnic accommodation, but seem instead to have reproduced the divisions and tensions between ethnic groups that plagued national politics before 2001. Such findings suggest that territorial power-sharing and political decentralization, although aimed at more inclusive decision-making and greater self-governance for ethnic groups, do not necessarily produce the intended outcomes.

Ethnic outbidding was present even before the conflict in Macedonia, as the informal practice of coalition governments encouraged competition within each ethnic political bloc. VMRO-DPMNE resorted to ethnic bidding against the ruling SDSM in 1997 over the controversial law on languages of instruction in universities, while DPA was bidding against the ruling DUI during the process of legalizing Tetovo University in 2004. However, even though ethnic issues gained visibility and climbed up the agenda after 2001, there seems to be little evidence of an increase in ethnic outbidding and a subsequent polarization of politics. The double majority voting requirement made it more difficult for ethnic outbidders to dissent and withhold support for policy proposals they considered insufficiently protective of their group's interests, as they would run the risk of voting against a proposal advancing the rights of their ethnic group. Thus, although ethnic bidding rhetoric can still be found, the voting record suggests that consensus within the ethnic group is easier to reach within the existing institutional set-up, and that no serious new ethnic parties have appeared in the last decade to threaten the support and legitimacy that current political parties enjoy.

Finally, the EU, as an external actor, has not been very influential in education policy. On the one hand, it did use its power to apply pressure for the implementation of the OFA and minority rights in general, by including the OFA within the list of political criteria for membership; on the other, education is now perceived as a less controversial and problematic area than it was immediately after the conflict, so no additional pressure or conditionality is applied. Other external actors, such as the OSCE, had sufficient interest and expertise in educational issues, but lacked the coercive power to induce domestic politicians to implement the proposed reforms.

Although the external input was present in post-conflict education policy dynamics, it did not play a decisive role in the decision-making process. Rather, domestic political elites approached the external input selectively, choosing those solutions that were most likely to strengthen their domestic political position.

Notes

1. Redzepi, Z. 'Osnovanje na univerzitetot na albanski jazik vo R. Makedonija. In *Opstesteno-politickite nastani kaj Albancite vo Makedonija 1990-2001*. Skopje: Ars 33, 2007.
2. Law on the Languages of Instruction at the Pedagogical Faculty. *Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia* (No. 05/97), 6 February 1997. Also available at: www.pravo.org.mk Retrieved: Mar. 25. 2010.
3. VMRO-DPMNE reaction quoted in "Deset godini od protestite koi go izmenija politickiot ambient" [Ten years from the protests that changed the political ambiance], in Utrinski Vesnik, Feb. 17, 2007. http://www.utrinski.com.mk/?ItemID=3B91761ECFEA5B479DDBAFDC6C0A2782. Retrieved: Nov. 30, 2012.
4. SDSM reaction quoted in 'Deset godini od protestite koi go izmenija politickiot ambient' ['Ten years from the Protests that Changed the Political Ambiance'], in Utrinski Vesnik, Feb. 17, 2007. http://www.utrinski.com.mk/?ItemID=3B91761ECFEA5B479DDBAFDC6C0A2782. Retrieved: Nov. 30, 2012.
5. Constitutional Court of Republic of Macedonia. Decision. No. 23/1997-0-0. July 05,1997. http://www.ustavensud.mk/domino/WEBSUD.nsf/ffc0feee91d7bd9ac1256d280038c474/a26e2e0fee26c9e8c125716b0047c39f?OpenDocument. Retrieved: Oct. 26, 2012.
6. Amendments X, XVI, VI, Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia. *Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia*. Skopje, 2003.
7. Popov, Ž., member of the Executive Board of VMRO-DPMNE. 'Državotvoren univerzitet' [State University]. In *Utrinski Vesnik*. http://217.16.70.245/?pBroj=1361&stID=4404&pR=7. Retrieved: Feb. 12, 2012.
8. Constitutional Court of Republic of Macedonia. Case No. 37/2004. Decision available at http://www.ustavensud.mk/domino/WEBSUD.nsf/ffc0feee91d7bd9ac1256d280038c474/2d02275779d26170c125716b00480a42?OpenDocument [in Macedonian]. Retrieved: Oct. 26, 2012.
9. Damir Zika for A1 TV News; DPA: 'Legalizacija na Tetovskiot univezitet, parcijalno resenie' [DPA: 'Legalisation of Tetovo University, partial solution'] in A1 News. September 17, 2003. http://www.a1.com.mk/vesti/default.aspx?VestID=24151. Retrieved: Sep. 10, 2011.
10. Ramiz Merko cited in 'I direktorite sakaat cisti smeni' ['School Principals also Want Clean Shifts']. In *Vreme*. March 12, 2008. http://www.vreme.com.mk/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabindex=7&tabid=1&EditionID=1341&ArticleID=86647. Retrieved: Sep. 10, 2011.
11. 'Vladata popusti za paralelkite na albanski' ['The Government Gave in on Albanian Classes']. In *Utrinski Vesnik*, August 19, 2009. http://www.time.mk/read/f03260ea7a/829f5d0fbb/index.html. Retrieved: Nov. 30, 2012.
12. 'Veles: premalku ucenici za dve paralelki na albanski' ['Veles: Too Few Students for Two Albanian Classes']. In *Alsat News*. September 2, 2009. http://alsat.mk/vesti/zemja/16649.html. Retrieved: Feb. 23, 2011.

13. See section on Human Rights and Protection of Minorities in Annual Progress Reports 2009, 2008, 2006 and Analytical Report 2005. All available from the European Commission website at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/detailed-country-information/fyrom/index_en.htm. Retrieved: Nov. 30, 2012.

References

Aliti, R. DUI Vice President, and S. Rušiti, former DPA Minister of Education. Quoted in 'Rušiti: Odlukata za etnički smeni ne e pametno rešenie' ['Rušiti: Ethnic Shifts Are Not a Smart Solution']. *A1 News*. February 09, 2009. http://www.time.mk/read/0c0ead5533/e8c333342b/index.html. Retrieved: Sep. 24, 2012.

Amendments X, XVI, VI, Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia. *Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia*. Skopje, 2003.

Anastasakis, O., and D. Bechev. 'EU Conditionality in SEE: Bringing Commitment to the Process'. *European Balkans Obserber*, 2003. http://www.emins.org/sr/aktivnosti/konferencije/solun/pdf/ostala/conditio.pdf. Retrieved: Sep. 14, 2012.

Barry, B. 'The Consociational Model and its Dangers'. *European Journal of Political Research* 3(4) (1975): 393–412.

Bieber, F. 'Power Sharing after Yugoslavia: Functionality and Dysfunctionality of Power-Sharing Institutions'. In *From Power-Sharing to Democracy*, ed. S. Noel. Montreal, London: McGuill-Queen's University Press: 2005.

_____ 'The Challenge of Institutionalizing Ethnicity in the Western Balkans: Managing Change in Deeply Divided Societies'. *European Yearbook of Minority Issues* 3 (2003-2004): 89–108.

Burton, M.G. and J. Higley. 'Elite Settlements'. *American Sociological Review* 52 (1987): 295–307.

Chandra, K. 'Ethnic Parties and Democratic Stability'. *Perspectives on Politics* 3(2) (2005): 235–252.

_____ 'What is an Ethnic Party'. *Party Politics* 17(2) (2011): 151–169.

Coakley, J. 'Ethnic Competition and the Logic of Party System Transformation' *European Journal of Political Research* 47 (2008): 766–793.

'Deset godini od protestite koi go izmenija politickiot ambient' [Ten years from the protests that changed the political ambiance]. In *Utrinski Vesnik*, February 17, 2007. http://www.utrinski.com.mk/?ItemID=3B91761ECFEA5B479DDBAFDC6C0A2782. Retrieved: Nov. 30, 2012.

European Commission. Annual Progress Reports 2009, 2008, 2006 and Analytical Report 2005. All available at: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/detailed-country-information/fyrom/index_en.htm. Retrieved: Nov. 30, 2012.

Frčkovski, L., Presidential candidate from SDSM. Quoted in 'I vozrasnite izbegaa od časovi' ['Adult Skip Classes Too']. In *Dnevnik*, February 13, 2009. http://www.time.mk/read/0c0ead5533/6f630a8a11/index.html. Retrieved: Mar. 12, 2011.

Ganev, V. 'The Dorian Gray Effect: Winners as State Breakers in Postcommunism'. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 34 (2001): 1–25.

Horowitz, D. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: University of California, 1985.

King, R.R. *Minorities under Communism: Nationalities as a Source of Tension among Balkan Communist States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973.

Law on the Languages of Instruction at the Pedagogical Faculty. *Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia* (No. 05/97), February 06, 1997. www.pravo.org.mk. Retrieved: Feb. 9, 2011.

Lijphart, A. *Democracy in Plural Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.

Merko, R. 'I direktorite sakaat cisti smeni' ['School Principals Also Want Clean Shifts']. In *Vreme*, March 12, 2008. http://www.vreme.com.mk/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabindex=7&tabid=1&Edition ID=1341&ArticleID=86647. Retrieved: Mar. 17, 2011.

Mitchell, P., G. Evans and B. O'Leary. 'Extremist Outbidding in Ethnic Party Systems in not Inevitable: Tribune Parties in Northern Ireland. *Political Studies* 57(2) (2009): 397–421.

Popov, Z., Member of the Executive Board of VMRO-DPMNE. 'Drzavotvoren Univerzitet' ['State University'] for *Untrinski Vesnik*. December 2003. http://217.16.70.245/?pBroj=1361&stID=4404&pR=7. Retrieved: Feb.12, 2011.

Rabushka, A. and K. Shepsle. *Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Instability*. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 1972.

Redzepi, Z. 'Osnovanje na univerzitetot na albanski jazik vo R. Makedonija'. In *Opstesteno-politickite nastani kaj Albancite vo Makedonija 1990-2001. [Socio-Political events among Albanians in Macedonia]*. Skopje: Ars 33, 2007.

Roeder, P. *Where Nation States Come from: Institutional Change in the Age of Nationalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Roeder, P. and D. Rothchild. *Dilemmas of State-Building in Divided Societies*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005.

Stojanovski, P. 'Etničkite smeni se opasna igra na politikata' ['Ethnic Shifts Are Dangerous Political Games']. In *Utrinski Vesnik*, February 11, 2009. http://www.time.mk/read/0c0ead5533/21cb6a96d3/index.html. Retrieved: Nov. 12, 2012.

Todorov, N. 'Todorov: Sluzben jazik vo Makedonija e makedonskiot' ['Todorov: Official Language in Macedonia is Macedonian']. In *Alsat News*, January 13, 2010. http://www.time.mk/story_7eb13aa2ed_article_1cf704afc8.html. Retrieved: Aug. 18, 2011.

Tsebelis, G. 'Elite Interaction and Institution Building in Consociational Democracies'. *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 2 (1990) 5–29.

Ustaven Sud na Republika Makedonija [Constitutional Court of Republic of Macedonia]. Decision. No. 23/1997-0-0. July 05, 1997. http://www.ustavensud.mk/domino/WEBSUD.nsf/ffc0feee91d7bd9ac1256d28 0038c474/a26e2e0fee26c9e8c125716b0047c39f?OpenDocument. Retrieved: Oct. 26, 2012.

'Vladata popusti za paralelkite na albanski' ['The Government Gave In On Albanian Classes']. In *Utrinski Vesnik*, August 19, 2009. http://www.time.mk/read/f03260ea7a/829f5d0fbb/index.html. Retrieved: Feb. 16, 2010.

'Veles: premalsku ucenici za dve paralelki na albanski' ['Veles: Too Few Students for Two Albanian Classes']. In *Alsat News*, September 02, 2009. http://alsat.mk/vesti/zemja/16649.html. Retrieved: Mar. 14,2010.

Zika, D. 'DPA: "Legalizacija na Tetovskiot univezitet, parcijalno resenie"' ['DPA:'Legalisation of Tetovo University, Partial Solution']. In A1 News, September 17, 2003. http://www.a1.com.mk/vesti/default.aspx?VestID=24151. Retrieved: Mar, 10. 2010.