

THE IMPACT OF THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND FUNCTIONING OF THE MACEDONIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

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-abstract-

Giovanni Sartori in his famous book *Comparative Constitutional Engineering* pointed out that the electoral systems are not only the most manipulative instrument of politics but also they influence the shaping of the party system and the determination of representativeness. In that regard, the theory is always emphasizing the influence of the electoral system over the stability of the political system, the consolidation or fragmentation of the party system, the relationships between the elected and the voters, the voters' turnout, the corruption present in the electoral process, the conflict management process in one divided society, etc. In that perspective, the Macedonian story is a great possibility to analyze the influence of the electoral system over the political system taking into consideration that Macedonian political elites throughout the years often decided to change the rules of the electoral system when electing Macedonian MPs. The first and the second parliamentary elections were held using the Majoritarian electoral system. For the third parliamentary election, Macedonian political elites decided to introduce the parallel electoral system. In 2002, another change happened and the proportional electoral system with a closed list was introduced. Since then, all parliamentary elections have been organized by using this electoral system. In the last couple of years in the wider public, the need for electoral reforms and the introduction of a new electoral system were often raised. Having all this into consideration, the paper will aim to analyze the influence of different electoral systems over the development and functioning of the Macedonian political system, as well as, to analyze what kind of impact newly proposed electoral solutions could produce.

Keywords: politics, political system, elections, electoral system, democracy, transition.

I. INTRODUCTION

Within theory, one can often find the view that the electoral system is the main subsystem of any political system. That is why in the field of elections and electoral systems the dominant position is that electoral systems have a great role in the development and functioning of a political system. Huge number of theoreticians during the XX century have been exploring and have been writing that electoral systems are linked to various outcomes: among others, the number of parties

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in political competition (Neto and Cox 1997; Moser 1999; Mozaffar, Scarritt, and Galaich 2003; Van de Walle 2003); the coordination of voters on candidates with the potential to win elections (Cox 1990); the spread of parties' positions in the system (Cox 1990); the success of radical parties (Norris 2005); the proportionality of electoral outcomes (Lijphart 1994); the congruence of voters' preferences and policy outcomes (Powell 2000) or voters' preferences and party positions (Golder and Stramski 2010); public spending (Milesi-Ferretti, Perotti, and Rostagno 2002; Persson, Roland, and Tabellini 2007); corruption (Persson, Tabellini, and Trebbi 2003; Kunicova and Rose-Ackerman 2005); economic policy and performance in general (Persson and Tabellini 2005); frequency of divided government (Shugart 1995); legislators' defection from the party line (Hix 2004); the election of female candidates into public office (Jones 1998; Norris 2004; Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005); and turnout and voting behaviour in general (Norris 2004).¹ Taking that into consideration, Giovanni Sartori, in his famous book *Comparative Constitutional Engineering*, pointed out that the electoral systems are not only the most manipulative instrument of politics but also they influence the shaping of the party system and the determination of representativeness.² In that regard, electoral system design in one country must be undertaken very cautiously. Done well, electoral system design can add to the momentum of political change, encourage popular participation, and enable the emergence of legitimate representatives who are capable of handling a wide range of needs and expectations, immediately and in the future.³ Done badly, it can derail progress towards democracy or even political stability.⁴

All this leads to the conclusion that different electoral systems have different influences on the development and functioning of the political system. In theory, clear positions on the kind of influence the majority electoral models have, and what impact the proportional electoral models have on the political system can be noticed. Mixed electoral models, on the other hand, seek to take advantage of both majority and proportional electoral models, but this also means that these electoral models possess the risk of producing both the weaknesses of majority and proportional electoral models. In this regard, inside theory, a great number of descriptions of the effects of different electoral models on the political system can be seen.

However, we should keep in mind that election models sometimes produce different effects in practice than those envisaged in theory. That is the case because the electoral system design cannot be considered in isolation from the wider context of constitutional and institutional design.⁵ Such a context may eventually lead to completely different effects on election models from what science and theory predicts.

In that regard, the Macedonian story with different election models is a great way to examine whether the Macedonian experience follows them or deviates from the theoretical assumptions. The Macedonian story becomes interesting for the analysis of the impact of the electoral system on the political system, having in mind that Macedonia society for the parliamentary elections has had experience with the majority, the parallel and proportional electoral model. Thus, for the parliamentary elections in 1990 and 1994 in Macedonia, the two-round majority electoral model was used. Dissatisfaction with the functioning of the majority electoral model contributed to the

¹ Joshua A. Tucker and Dominik Duell, "Experimental Research Design in the Study of Electoral Systems," In *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*, ed. Erik S. Herron, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Matthew S. Shugart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 427.

² Giovanni Sartori, *Comparative Constitutional Engineering* (Skopje: Tabernakul, 2009), 14.

³ Andrew Reynolds, Ben Reilly and Andrew Ellis, *Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook* (Stockholm: Trydells Tryckeri AB, 2008), 1.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

change in Macedonia in the parliamentary elections in 1998 when a parallel electoral model was introduced. According to this model, 85 MPs were elected through a majority electoral model and the remaining 35 MPs through a proportional electoral model. However, even the parallel election model did not live up to the expectations of the Macedonian political elites. Therefore, since the parliamentary elections in 2002, Macedonia has started applying a proportional electoral model with closed lists, where the territory of the country is divided into six constituencies, and the Dhont method is used to calculate the mandates. This electoral model is still in use. Having in mind the above, we go step by step to analyze whether the Macedonian experience in terms of the impact of different election models on the political system follows it or deviates from the theoretical assumptions.

II. THE IMPACT OF DIFFERENT ELECTION MODELS THROUGH THE PRISM OF DUVERGER'S LAW

When analyzing the impact of electoral systems on the development and functioning of the political system, usually scholars are starting from the well-known Duverger's Law. Namely, Maurice Duverger has created the famous Duverger's Law, according to which the Proportional electoral system creates conditions for forming a multiparty system, the Majoritarian electoral system creates not many political parties that are allied with each other and often are in coalition with each other and First-Past-The-Post system creates a two-party system.⁶ If we take a look at the political systems all over the world, it can be noticed that in most cases the Plurality / Majority electoral system contributes to the reduction of the number of political parties and for stabilization of the party systems, while, on the other hand, the Proportional electoral systems contribute to an increase in the number of political parties and establishment of a multiparty system. Duverger's Law is explained by Mechanical and Psychological Effects.⁷ Considering that the Plurality/Majority electoral systems in the constituency most often elect only one candidate, the voters who want to vote for smaller parties usually face the dilemma of whether to vote for the candidate of the smaller party, so their vote will be lost or, to vote for a candidate who has a big chance to be elected. Such a dilemma is in favor of the big parties whose candidates have a greater chance to win in the single-member constituencies. On the other hand, taking into account that the calculation of the mandates in the Proportional electoral systems is taking place proportionally according to the votes gained, the voters have the feeling that their vote will not be lost and will be represented in the Parliament even if they vote for smaller parties. Such fact encourages the voters to vote for smaller parties and thus contribute to a greater number of parties to enter the parliament.

Unlike such views in theory, as well as most of the experiences in the world, the Macedonian experience is quite the opposite. In the Macedonian case, the application of Majority electoral model with two rounds contributed to the fragmentation of the party system and a large number of political parties in the Macedonian Parliament, while the application of the Proportional electoral model contributed to the stabilization of the party system and a small number of political parties in parliament. That can be pictorially noticed through the following table where it can be seen that there are a large number of political parties in the parliament when implementing the Majority electoral model (in 1990 and 1994), while, the implementation of the Proportional electoral model

⁶ Саво Климовски, Тања Каракамишева, *Политички партии и интересни групи* (Скопје: Правен факултет Јустинијан Први, 2006), 190.

⁷ Reynolds, Reilly and Ellis, *Electoral System Design*, 6.

shows rationalization and reduction of the number of political parties /political coalitions within the Macedonian parliament.

| Number of Political Parties/Political Coalitions in the Parliament | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1990 | 1994 | 1998 | 2002 | 2006 | 2008 | 2011 | 2014 | 2016 | 2020 |
| 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 |

Therefore, one can often find in theory the position that the Majority electoral model in the Macedonian story instead of the expected stabilization of the party scene actually contributed to an extreme number of political parties, i.e., an extremely polarized party system.⁸ There are several reasons for such a reality.

Primarily, we should keep in mind that the elections organized according to the Majority electoral model were also the first plural elections organized according to democratic rules in Macedonia. Additionally, in the second elections, Macedonian citizens had the opportunity to vote for the first time in democratic elections within an independent and sovereign country. These two data explain the pluralistic boom on the Macedonian political scene. The creation of a plural society and an independent state contributed to the motivation and desire of Macedonian citizens to get involved and participate in the political processes in Macedonia during the 90s of the XX century. That is why in the period from 1990 to 1998 we can notice the registration of as many as 88 political parties and associations in Macedonia.⁹

Second, the pronounced divisions in the Macedonian society (national, ethnic, social, cultural, ideological, religious, linguistic, etc.) came to the fore in the determination, i.e the division of the electoral body that resulted in an appropriate structure of the Macedonian Parliament.¹⁰ Without any dilemma, the division of the Macedonian society was reflected in the structure of the party system. Such data, supplemented by the fact that in the first half of the 1990s political parties were weak and without party discipline contributed to the Majority electoral model failing to consolidate the party system and contributed to its polarization and fragmentation. The Macedonian experience has shown that in a state of great divisions, the majority electoral system aggravate the centrifugal relations and have a disintegrating force.¹¹

Third, in the 90s of the XX century, it was not possible to talk about a clear social profile of the parties in the system, but all political parties addressed all citizens, which created chaos in concretizing the political orientations and programmatic determinations of the parties.¹² Such a reality has contributed to a large number of political parties attracting voters from the same target groups. This, quite expected, led to the electoral success of a great number of political parties in the parliamentary elections in the 90s of the XX century.

Practically, the specific conditions in which the Macedonian political system developed itself during the 1990s led to a condition in which the Majority electoral model contributed to fragmentation instead of stabilization of the Macedonian party system.

⁸ Климовски и Каракамишева, *Политички партии и интересни групи*, 108.

⁹ Климовски и Каракамишева, *Политички партии и интересни групи*, 105.

¹⁰ Анета Јовевска, *Изборните концепти во теориите на демократијата* (Скопје: Институт за социолошки и политичко – правни истражувања, 1999), 215-216.

¹¹ Јовевска, *Изборните концепти во теориите на демократијата*, 236.

¹² Климовски и Каракамишева, *Политички партии и интересни групи*, 109.

On the other hand, the use of the Proportional electoral model in the Macedonian case, contrary to the theoretical assumptions, contributed to the stabilization of the party system. Such a reality is a consequence of two things.

Primarily, the number of constituencies plays a big role, i.e., the fact that the territory of the country is divided into six constituencies. The Macedonian experience with the application of the Proportional electoral model has shown in fact how important the issue of the size of the constituencies is. The division of the state into six constituencies creates a disproportion between the number of votes won and the number of seats won in parliament.¹³ Such a disproportion is in favor of the big political parties and contributes to the small political parties staying out of the parliament if they participate in the elections alone. Practically, the votes of small political parties split across the six constituencies cause small political parties to fail to win enough votes in any of the constituencies in order to enter parliament. Thus, the number of constituencies actually contributes to the rationalization of the number of parties in the Macedonian Parliament. A situation that will not be a reality if the number of constituencies is smaller or the entire territory of the country is one constituency.

Second, the D'Hondt method is used to calculate the votes in parliamentary election mandates in the Macedonian electoral model. It is a method that is in favor of the major political parties and encourages and rewards party coalitions, but not independent party performances.¹⁴ Such a fact, in addition to reducing the chances of success of small political parties, also contributes to the formation of pre-election coalitions of a large number of political parties. All of this contributes to the reduction of the number of political parties in the parliament and the stabilization of the party and political system.

III. THE IMPACT OF THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM ON THE STABILITY OF GOVERNMENT

Theoretical debates about the impact of electoral systems on the stability of political institutions have always been linked to the rules set by Maurice Duverger. Namely, since the majority electoral model produces a two-party system, then the conclusion that the majority electoral model contributes to stable and efficient political institutions is quite expected. For the Majoritarian electoral models “the coalition governments” are virtually unknown.¹⁵ This state of affairs is praised for providing cabinets that are not shackled by the restraints of having to bargain with a minority coalition partner.¹⁶ All that leads to the easy formation and existence of a stable and homogeneous government that enables the representatives of the majority to have the authority and to manage the system, which complies with the principles of democracy.¹⁷

On the other hand, the Proportional electoral model usually results in many political parties becoming a part of the representative bodies, thereby contributing to creating a coalition government. That may lead to a situation where minority parties hold larger parties to ransom in coalition negotiations¹⁸ that will produce difficult formation and survival of the governments.

¹³ Климовски и Каракамишева, *Политички партии и интересни групи*, 130.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ David M. Farrel, *Electoral Systems: A comparative Introduction* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 20.

¹⁶ Reynolds, Reilly and Ellis, *Electoral System Design*, 36.

¹⁷ Саво Климовски, Рената Дескоска и Тања Каракамишева, *Политички систем* (Скопје: Просветно дело, 2009), 385.

¹⁸ Reynolds, Reilly and Ellis, *Electoral System Design*, 59.

Furthermore, such a model can lead to the formation of unprincipled governments, composed of political parties that have completely different views as to how the country should develop. The mixture of oil and water in coalition government can lead to legislative gridlock and consequent inability to carry out coherent policies.¹⁹

The Macedonian story also deviates from these theoretical assumptions. Namely, regardless of the application of different election models, the Macedonian governments have always been coalition governments, i.e., governments composed of several political options. Additionally, problems in forming a government, as well as a vote of no confidence in the government by parliament, but also generally weak and unstable governments can be seen during parliaments formed according to the rules of the majority electoral model.

In this regard, we should keep in mind that the first parliamentary elections in 1990 conducted with a majority electoral model led to a fragmented parliament in which no party had a dominant position to decide independently but the parties were forced to provide multi-party support or consensus.²⁰ Practically, none of the political parties was able to secure the needed parliamentary majority for the creation of political government, thus temporarily the solution was sought in the formation of a non-party government i.e., an expert government. It is a government that was formed four months after the parliamentary elections and was supported by the four major political parties in parliament. This means that the Macedonian society had to wait for four months to form a government after the parliamentary elections in 1990, and yet in the end it had to be satisfied with an expert, but not a political government. The problems with forming a government have also led to problems with the stability of the first government. Namely, defined as anyone's and no one's, the expert government was held on the parliamentary stage for only 16 months, i.e., on July 7, 1992, a vote of no confidence was passed.²¹ The fall of the expert government again led to problems in forming a new government. And, the formation of the second government was not easy and without conflicts. Thus, the second government was formed after two unsuccessful attempts to form it. Primarily, the mandate for forming the second government was entrusted to Ljubcho Georgievski, and after him to Petar Goshev. Neither of them managed to secure a parliamentary majority. Finally, three months later, SDSM's leader Branko Crvenkovski succeeded in securing a parliamentary majority and forming a second government in Macedonia. Macedonia finally got a political government (almost two years after the elections), but Macedonian society in the years that followed was faced with the phenomenon of so-called weak governments that can not command a parliamentary majority.²² Thus, quite contrary to the theoretical remarks, in the Macedonian story, the Majority electoral model contributed to unstable political institutions, i.e., to the difficult formation of a stable government. Unstable coalitions and an unstable government were also a feature of the government formed after the 1998 parliamentary elections, using the parallel electoral model. One can often find in theory the position that the government from 1998 to 2002 was the most unstable in Macedonian political history.²³

On the other hand, the use of the Proportional electoral model led to the formation of coalition governments, but their formation passed smoothly and quickly after the parliamentary elections. Problems with forming a government after 2002 can be noticed only after the elections in 2016,

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Јовевска, Изборните концепти во теориите на демократијата, 216.

²¹ Светомир Шкарик, *Споредбено и македонско уставно право* (Скопје: Матица, 2004), 672.

²² Климовски и Каракамишева, Политички партии и интересни групи, 108-109.

²³ Gordana Siljanovska – Davkova and Renata Deskoska, "Makedonska (ne)demokratska saga: David (Skupstina) protiv Golijata (Vlada)?," In *Iskusenja Parlamentarizma*, ed. Slavisa Orlovic (Beograd: FES, 2013), 81.

but still, the reason for the problems in forming a government after these elections was related to the authoritarian rule of Nikola Gruevski and the refusal to transfer power, not because of the electoral model and the possible fragmentation of parliament. Additionally, in the era of the use of the proportional electoral model, we can not see a successful vote of no confidence in government by parliament. On the contrary, the period of using the proportional electoral model in Macedonian politics is often described as a period of stable governments. The large party discipline, as well as government coalitions based on ethno-party (Macedonian-Albanian) consociational compromises, contribute to a dominant government and a marginalized parliament.²⁴ However, we should keep in mind that such a marginalized parliament, as well as the dominant position of the political parties in power, contributed to political crises in Macedonian society after 2006. That is why, although the Macedonian governments in the period after 2002 were described as stable, we should still keep in mind that after 2006 no government will complete its entire term but will be exposed to early parliamentary elections. Macedonian society had experience with such elections in 2008, 2011, 2014, 2016, and 2020, i.e., the last regular parliamentary elections were held in 2006, just 4 years after the introduction of the Proportional electoral model. This data tells us that in Macedonian society too much stability of governments causes other political pain (corruption, nepotism, clientelism, kidnapped institutions) which eventually leads to political crises and instability. Crises and instability ultimately contributed to the early parliamentary elections, which in turn had an impact on the mandate of political institutions.

IV. THE IMPACT OF THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM ON THE MP'S ACTIVITY

In addition to the stability of political institutions, there are a number of clearly established positions within science regarding the impact of the electoral model on the conduct and activity of MPs. Where voters exercise relatively more control over legislators' electoral prospects and party leaders fewer legislators may face demands from their electoral principals that compete with those of party leaders.²⁵ In that direction, the biggest degree of closeness between the elected and the voters and the accountability of the elected is realized in the First-Past-The-Post system, while the lowest degree is in the Proportional electoral systems with closed lists."²⁶ This is so because the Plurality/Majority electoral systems are usually conducted in single-member constituencies in which the voting is for a candidate, and not for a political party.²⁷ The quality of the candidate, and not the belonging and his loyalty to a certain political party, play a major role in the success and the choice of the candidate. Single-member constituencies presuppose the existence of a great number of small constituencies,²⁸ and the small constituencies enable to make direct and bigger contact between the candidates and the voters. Allowing direct and bigger contact, the combination of single-member and small constituencies will give the voters some space to better get to know the candidate and according to that decide whether the candidate deserves or does not deserve their vote. The Plurality/Majority electoral systems do not allow the shortcomings of a certain candidate to be hidden in a closed party list composed of a larger number of candidates. Due to all this, in

²⁴ Siljanovska – Davkova Deskoska, "Makedonska (ne)demokratska saga," 81.

²⁵ John M. Carey, "Competing Principals, Political Institutions, and Party Unity in Legislative Voting," *American Journal of Political Science* Vol. 51, No. 1 (2007): 94.

²⁶ Slavisa Orlovic, "Izborni sistem I Institucionalni dizajn," 7. Available at <http://izbornareforma.rs/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/zbornik/Slavisa%20Orlovic%20-%20Izborni%20sistem%20i%20institucionalni%20dizajn.pdf>

²⁷ Reynolds, Reilly and Ellis, *Electoral System Design*, 37.

²⁸ Светомир Шкарик, Гордана Сиљановска - Давкова, *Уставно право* (Скопје: Култура, 2009), 475.

these constituencies, the elected representative is feeling more accountable to the electoral body and less accountable to the political party behind his candidacy.²⁹ Since only one representative is elected from each constituency, the candidates elected in the parliament act as representatives of their constituency, who represent the interests of their constituencies. Each voter has a constituency MP who can be approached.³⁰

On the other hand, the proportional electoral model, especially with a closed list, is characterized by establishing a weak link between voters and MPs. In these electoral systems, the list is drawn up by the parties and all the voters can do is select one list for one party,³¹ which means that voters have no influence over the decision about who shall represent the party of their choice.³² Therefore, the proportional electoral systems with closed electoral lists prevent voters from holding individual politicians to account for their actions.³³ Thus, the proportional electoral systems with closed lists, in particular, enable parties to control their politicians, because under these systems parties control which position each candidate is placed on the list.³⁴ In these systems, whether the candidates will be put on the list and in which position they will be placed on the electoral list depends on the party leadership. Such electoral systems reinforce the position of the party leaders and affect the establishment of strong party discipline within the political parties.

In this regard, the Macedonian experience fully follows the theory assumptions. Without any dilemma, the parliaments in the 1990s, created through a majority electoral model, were full of active MPs and heated debates. Such a statement is especially true for the first parliament (1990-1994). During those years of the Parliament's "glory" (1991-1994), the MPs held that the position in the Parliament is fundamentally about debate – "rhetoric" in the classical Greek sense.³⁵ It is a period in which the parliamentarians had an opportunity, if they had "personal" reasons, not to follow party decision.³⁶ Such an arrangement allowed MPs to feel responsible to their voters and to demonstrate such responsibility through activity within parliament. This, in turn, led to active MPs and heated discussions within the Macedonian Parliament.

The second parliament is a difficult parliament to analyze because it is in fact a crippled parliament. Namely, the largest opposition party decided to boycott the parliamentary elections in 1994 and as a consequence the Macedonian Parliament in the period from 1994 to 1998 was without opposition MPs. This inevitably contributed to the marginalization of parliament in the political system, thereby reducing the MP's activities.

The third parliament was created according to the rules of the parallel election model and it is a parliament marked with quite active MPs. It is a parliament in which the opposition participated in its work, and on several occasions, it was seriously close to a vote of no confidence in the government then. Although in this period the Macedonian democracy for the first time noticed

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Farrel, *Electoral Systems: A comparative Introduction*, 20.

³¹ Farrel, *Electoral Systems: A comparative Introduction*, 83.

³² Renata Deskoska, "Proportional Electoral Model and Types of Candidate Lists," *Iustinianus Primus Law Review* Vol. 2 No. 1 (2011): 4.

³³ Simon Hix, Ron Johnson and Iain McLean, *Choosing an Electoral System*, (London: British Academy (Policy Centre), 2010, 23.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Renata Deskoska, "The Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia – "House" or "Cemetery" of Democracy?!", *Iustinianus Primus Law Review* Vol. 4 No. 1 (2013): 6.

³⁶ Deskoska, "The Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia – "House" or "Cemetery" of Democracy?!", 7.

dubious party transfers of MPs in order to preserve the government, it is still a parliament with strong opposition, which led to “substantial” debates in the Parliament.³⁷

Since 2002, the Macedonian political system started to use the proportional electoral model with closed lists. Without any dilemma, this election model over the years has contributed to the passivation of the Macedonian MPs and the marginalization of the parliament. In this period, Macedonian parliamentarians represented less the citizens and their interests, and more the parties that nominated them.³⁸ This is so because the MPs are elected through a proportional electoral model with closed lists and the final decision on the candidate and their position is left to the parties and party leaders, and not to the citizens. This solution contributes to putting candidates on the party lists because of their proximity and loyalty to the party leader, and not because of their quality. This, in turn, contributes to the elected candidates being fully disciplined and loyal to their political party and the political party leader when they become MPs. That is the reason why MPs act like obedient party soldiers.³⁹ Obedient party soldiers who vote in the Macedonian Parliament with their eyes closed so that they would not see the faces of their voters.⁴⁰ At the same time, Macedonian MPs, in addition to voting with their eyes closed, also use the fast fingers method. It is during this period that we can often see that the laws were adopted in the “fast fingers” style: from reading of the name of the law until its adoption, only 35 to 40 seconds passed.⁴¹ Additionally, after 2002 we can see an increase in the number of laws adopted under a shortened procedure. Thus, the opportunity for discussion and debate within the Macedonian Parliament is formally curtailed, and the Macedonian MPs are seen only as a voting machine. A fact that the MPs are only a voting machine is the fact that after 2002 the Macedonian political system often uses leadership meetings. It is an informal mechanism that substitutes formal institutions in the country⁴² because party leaders and leadership at a meeting outside parliament agree on solutions which then only formally go through the procedure and are voted in the Macedonian parliament. Practically, the leadership meetings are a vivid example of the discipline, loyalty, and subordination of the Macedonian MPs towards their party leaders. A situation that is largely caused by the use of the proportional electoral model with closed lists.

V. THE IMPACT OF THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM ON THE INDEPENDENT MPS

The quality and extent of the MPs’ activity can also be viewed through the prism of the number of independent MPs within the parliament. It should be immediately noted here that the majority election model gives a chance for popular independent candidates to be elected.⁴³ This is so because majority election models are implemented in single-mandate constituencies in which individual candidates run. Unlike these, proportional election models are implemented in multi-mandate election constituencies and involve the use of lists. That is why proportional electoral models are not in favor of independent candidates because they mean running through lists and not individually.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Gordana Siljanovska Davkova, “The Contemporary “Models” of Government: Dilemmas and Challenges,” *Iustinianus Primus Law Review* Vol. 2 No. 1 (2011): 18.

³⁹ Siljanovska – Davkova and Deskoska, “Makedonska (ne)demokratska saga,” 79.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Deskoska, “The Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia – “House” or “Cemetery” of Democracy?!,” 11.

⁴² Nenad Markovikj and Zoran Nechev, “Reinvigorating political dialogue in light of Macedonia’s EU accession negotiations,” *IDSCS Policy Brief* No.17 (2018):10.

⁴³ Reynolds, Reilly and Ellis, *Electoral System Design*, 37.

In order to analyze the impact of election models on the number of elected independent MPs in the Macedonian Parliament, it is primarily necessary to make a tabular presentation of the number of independent MPs in the Macedonian Parliament through the various election cycles.

| Independent MP's Elect | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1990 | 1994 | 1998 | 2002 | 2006 | 2008 | 2011 | 2014 | 2016 | 2020 |
| 3 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The general overview of the table goes in the direction of scientific conclusions regarding the relationship between independent MP's and election models. Namely, in the Macedonian story, independent MPs can be noticed only in the elections organized with majoritarian models (1990 and 1994). Here we should mention the fact that in these elections the organizational structures of the parties in Macedonia are still being formed, therefore there is room for the candidacy of independent candidates.

On the other hand, the introduction of the proportional election model, as well as the clear establishment of the Macedonian party system contributed to the complete elimination of the independent candidacy of candidates for parliamentary elections. Practically, after 2002, the possibility for independent candidates is very difficult, considering that the MPs are elected in multi-mandate constituencies with 20 MPs each. Such a reality contributes to the elimination of the possibility of success of independent and non-party candidates in the Macedonian Parliament. An opportunity that the majority election model left open in the Macedonian political system and an opportunity that, although in small numbers, was used in the first and second parliamentary elections.

Herewith it should be mentioned that within the Macedonian Parliament there are often examples of individuals who are not formally members of a political party and declare themselves as independent but still provide entry into the Macedonian Parliament through a party list of well-established parties in Macedonia. Entering the parliament through a list of a certain party further contributes to such candidates, who are not formal members of the party, to still act within and in line with the parliamentary group of the party that nominated them. That is why in this paper such MPs are not defined as independent candidates. This paper defines the independent MPs as the ones who succeeded to enter the Macedonian Parliament through independent candidacy, and not through a list of a political party. A situation that is visible in the Macedonian reality when using the majority, but not when using the proportional election model.

VI. THE IMPACT OF THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM ON THE FEMALE PARTICIPATION

When analyzing the literature dedicated to electoral systems, the weakness of the majority electoral systems can often be seen in the fact that the majority electoral models reduce the number of women in political institutions. When it comes to the Plurality/Majority systems it should be taken into consideration that the 'most broadly acceptable candidate' syndrome also affects the ability of women to be elected to legislative office because they are often less likely to be selected as candidates by male-dominated party structures.⁴⁴ Indeed, if we look at the percentage of women

⁴⁴ Ibid.

in parliaments in countries that use the majority election model, then it is easy to conclude that the number of women MPs is really small in these countries.

On the other hand, an extensive literature has long suggested that PR electoral systems with large district magnitudes usually offer more opportunities for the nomination and election of female candidates, and thereby generate more inclusive parliaments.⁴⁵ The theory has no dilemma that the proportional electoral systems are almost always more friendly to the election of women than Plurality/Majority systems.⁴⁶ Such an attitude relies on the arguments that the proportional electoral model offers greater representativeness, and in addition, this model is implemented in multi-mandate constituencies, which, in turn, increases the possibility of electing female MPs. Additionally, It has also been established that parties are more likely to adopt quotas of gender representation in PR systems.⁴⁷ Proportional electoral model especially with closed electoral lists allows the use of electoral quotas in order to increase the presence of women in the parliament. By inserting the mandatory places for women, thus having no opportunity to influence the ballots, the proportional electoral model with closed electoral lists guarantees that a certain number of women will be present in the parliament. In theory and practice, there are examples where each second or third candidate from the electoral list has to be a woman. Such societies can boast about their high percentage of women in the parliament.

When it comes to the Macedonian experience, in order to be able to more easily see the big picture of the impact of the election model on female MPs in the Macedonian Parliament, we go primarily to look at the number of elected female MPs in the Macedonian Parliament through different election cycles.

| Female MP's Elect | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1990 | 1994 | 1998 | 2002 | 2006 | 2008 | 2011 | 2014 | 2016 | 2020 |
| 5 | 4 | 8 | 22 | 35 | 34 | 38 | 40 | 38 | 43 |

The general review of the table immediately reveals that the Macedonian experience fully follows the views of the theory on the influence of electoral systems on the choice of Female MPs. If we look at the figures from 1990 and 1994, i.e., from the parliamentary elections organized according to the rules of the majority election model, then it can be easily concluded that the majority election model had brutal effects on Female MP in the Macedonian Parliament. In the 1990 elections, only 5 women (4.1%) were elected out of 120 MPs, while in the 1994 elections that number dropped to 4 (3.3%). The parallel election model in 1998 also had brutal effects on the election of Female MP's in the Macedonian election model. Although the number of women in the Macedonian Parliament increased in these elections (8 Female MPs), again the number of female MPs remains very low (6.66% 8 out of 120 MPs). Such an effect of the parallel election model in the Macedonian story can be explained by the fact that the number of MPs elected through a majority electoral model (85 out of 120 MPs) was far higher compared to the number of MPs elected through a proportional electoral model (35 out of 120 MPs). We should also take into account the fact that

⁴⁵ Pippa Norris, "Electoral Systems and Electoral Integrity," In *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*, ed. Erik S. Herron, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Matthew S. Shugart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 499.

⁴⁶ Reynolds, Reilly and Ellis, *Electoral System Design*, 61.

⁴⁷ Matthew Soberg Shugart, "Comparative Electoral Systems Research: The Maturation of a Field and New Challenges Ahead," In *The Politics of Electoral Systems* ed. Michael Gallagher and Paul Mitchell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 45.

the use of the parallel election model will not be followed by applying gender quotas for MPs elected through a proportional election model.

On the other hand, the introduction of a proportional electoral model in Macedonia immediately contributed to the growth of female MPs. This can be seen in the first elections organized with a proportional electoral model in 2002. In these elections, the proportional election model contributed to the election of 22 female MPs from 120 MPs (18.3%). In the 2002 elections, the introduction of a proportional electoral model was also followed by the introduction of gender quotas, given that the Electoral Law provided for each gender to be represented in the lists by at least 30%.⁴⁸ Unlike the 2002 elections, since the 2006 parliamentary elections until today, in the Macedonian political system, the use of gender quotas has been supplemented with rules for the rank order of female candidates. Such an approach of the Macedonian political elites has contributed to the increase in the number of female MPs over the years. In the 2006 elections 36 female MPs were elected (30 % of the MPs), in 2008 34 female MPs (28,3 % of the MPs), in 2011 (30,8% of the MPs), in 2014 40 female MPs (32,5 % of the MPs), in 2016 38 female MPs (31,6 % of the MPs) and in 2020 43 female MPs (35,8% of the MPs). All this tells us that the impact of the proportional election model and gender quotas in increasing the number of female MPs within the Macedonian parliaments is visible. It is also evident that throughout the years the legislation has undergone changes in order to increase the gender quotas, as well as the introduction of rules regarding the rank order of female candidates. Such changes speak of maturing the consciousness of the Macedonian political elites, but we should still keep in mind that all those changes were made possible due to the use of the proportional election model. Therefore, it can be concluded without any dilemma that the Macedonian experience confirms the connection between the proportional electoral model and the growth of female MPs in parliaments.

VII. THE IMPACT OF THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM ON VOTER TURNOUT

The declining voter turnout is a major pain for modern democracies. In the last few decades, voter turnout has been declining in almost all democracies. However, we should keep in mind that the use of different election models also has a different impact on voter turnout. Thus, turnout is usually higher at elections in countries with a Proportional electoral system than in countries without.⁴⁹ In addition, higher turnout has been noticed in Proportional electoral systems where preferential voting is allowed and where open electoral lists are being used rather than in Proportional electoral systems in which the electoral lists are closed.⁵⁰ The explanation is very simple. In Proportional electoral systems, the voters have the feeling that their vote at the end of the electoral process will not be wasted and that it will be represented in the parliament. Moreover, where there is a possibility for preferential voting, the voter has the feeling that they directly influence and decide who will be elected through the possibility of ranking the nominated candidates. All this makes the ordinary voter feel that their vote has weight and that it truly has a meaning and makes changes in the system. Followed by such a feeling, the voters will be more interested in the electoral system and more motivated to give their vote on the day of the elections.

⁴⁸ Член 37, став 3 од Закон за избор на пратеници во Собранието на Република Македонија (Службен весник 42/2002)

⁴⁹ Hix , Johnson and McLean, *Choosing an Electoral System*, 16.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

The Macedonian story bounces off this theoretical narrative. Namely, the highest turnout was observed by the Macedonian democracy exactly in the parliamentary elections organized with a majority election model.

Parliamentary turnout⁵¹

| Parliamentary | | | | | | | |
|---------------|---------------|------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------------|------------|---------------|
| Year | Voter Turnout | Total vote | Registration | VAP Turnout | Voting age population | Population | Invalid votes |
| 2020 | 52.02 % | 943,750 | 1,814,263 | 55.09 % | 1,713,004 | 2,125,971 | 3.34 % |
| 2016 | 66.79 % | 1,191,851 | 1,784,416 | 71.99 % | 1,655,370 | 2,100,025 | 3.18 % |
| 2014 | 62.98 % | 1,120,744 | 1,779,572 | 68.96 % | 1,625,315 | 2,091,719 | |
| 2011 | 63.48 % | 1,156,049 | 1,821,122 | 69.37 % | 1,779,572 | 2,114,550 | 2.77 % |
| 2008 | 57.99 % | 1,031,632 | 1,779,116 | 67.08 % | 1,538,020 | 2,061,315 | 3.00 % |
| 2006 | 55.98 % | 974,891 | 1,741,449 | 64.50 % | 1,511,450 | 2,050,554 | 3.90 % |
| 2002 | 74.60 % | 1,241,605 | 1,664,297 | 85.35 % | 1,454,681 | 2,031,112 | 1.80 % |
| 1998 | 72.88 % | 1,146,457 | 1,572,976 | 70.70 % | 1,621,599 | 2,008,850 | |
| 1994 | 77.29 % | 1,051,665 | 1,360,729 | 71.16 % | 1,477,980 | 2,142,000 | 3.90 % |
| 1990 | 81.18 % | 1,135,728 | 1,399,021 | | | | 5.90 % |

Thus, in the 1990 elections, the turnout was 81.1% while in the 1994 elections the turnout was 77.2%. In the 1998 elections, Macedonia registered a turnout of 72.8%, and in the first elections organized according to the rules of the proportional electoral model in 2002, the turnout was 74.6%. After these elections, in all subsequent elections organized according to the proportional election model after 2002, the turnout was much lower compared to the elections until 2002. Such turnout ranged from 52% (2020) to 66.7% (2016). This shows that the Macedonian story, quite the opposite of theory, produced a lower turnout by using a proportional election model, and a higher one by using a majority election model. Such a reality can be explained by the following arguments.

First, a higher turnout in the elections organized by the majority electoral model (1990 and 1994) is logical because these are, in fact, the first two election cycles in Macedonian democratic history. The high turnout in these elections is due, among other things, to the fact that the plural elections in 1990 and 1994 were a novelty for Macedonian citizens (the first opportunity to vote in plural elections). Additionally, the optimism of the Macedonian citizens that through elections changes can be achieved was at a high level during the 90s of the XX century. It is quite expected that the Macedonian citizens felt excitement for these elections.

Second, such optimism, and thus motivation to vote, has declined over the years. The longevity and shocks of the democratic transition, as well as the disappointment of the political elites, have contributed to the Macedonian citizens losing faith that the elections have a purpose and that they can lead to a change in the Macedonian society.

Third, in the last decade, our country has seen a large number of citizens who have decided to emigrate and leave the country. This become a reality at a time when elections are conducted through a proportional election model. In that regard, it is to be expected that the turnout will decrease in a period when a large number of people leave the country and no longer lives in it, and yet remain part of the voter register.

⁵¹ <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/country-view/207/40>

Fourth, but probably most important, is the fact that turnout figures should be taken with caution. Namely, the inadequate updating of the voter register is often emphasized in the Macedonian society. In fact, many political actors point out that the voter register has not been purified, that it has a large number of deceased citizens, and that it is therefore irrelevant. The fact that in 1990 the voter list numbered 1,399,021 voters, and already in 2002 it numbered 1,664,297 so that in 2020 it reached a number of 1,814,263 shows that the country really has a problem with the relevance of the voter register. Such relevance is even more visible if it is noticed that the number of the voter register increases in a period when the number of inhabitants remains the same or decreases. In such a situation, when there is doubt about the relevance of the voter register, the question of the actual turnout of the elections is raised, and thus the relevance of the conclusions drawn about the election models and the turnout in the Macedonian story. If we look at the number of people who voted then we can see that often more people voted in the elections organized by the proportional electoral model (2002, 2011, and 2016) than in the elections organized by the majority electoral model (1990 and 1994). However, when analyzing this conclusion, it should be taken into account that the elections in 2002, 2011, and 2016 were organized after or during a military conflict (2002) or major political crises (2011 and 2016). We need to keep in mind that turnout is usually higher in periods when there is high voter expectation of elections as a solution to existing or past political turmoil.⁵²

VIII. CONCLUSION

The Macedonian story with the election models is a great opportunity to see how the application of different models affects the development and functioning of the political system. The application of the majority, parallel and proportional electoral model for the election of MPs opens the possibility for analysis of whether the Macedonian experience is in line with the theoretical assumptions or if there are certain deviations. What can be immediately noticed is the fact that the Macedonian experience completely deviates from the theoretical assumptions of Duverger's Law and the stability of political institutions. Namely, in the Macedonian case, the use of the majority electoral model contributed to the fragmentation of the party system, while the use of the proportional electoral model contributed to the stabilization and rationalization of the party system. The time period of the elections, the plurality of the Macedonian society, as well as the number of constituencies, and the D'Hondt method in using the proportional electoral model contribute to such an outcome that deviates from the theoretical assumptions about the impact of the electoral system on the party system.

Therefore, quite logically, the use of the majority electoral model was followed by difficult government formation and rather unstable governments, which depended on the will of a large number of small political parties. On the other hand, the use of the proportional electoral model is followed by easy government formation. At the same time, the use of the proportional electoral model has contributed to the development of great party discipline, which at times results in even too stable governments. Such stable governments contribute to the development of authoritarian tendencies, which lead to political crises, which, in turn, often lead to early parliamentary elections.

Deviation from the theoretical assumptions in the Macedonian story can also be seen in terms of turnout. The Macedonian experience gives the impression that the use of the majority electoral model contributed to a higher turnout than the use of the proportional electoral model.

⁵² Rafael López Pintor and Maria Gratschew, *Voter Turnout Since 1945: A Global Report* (Halmstad: Bulls Tryckeri, 2002), 48.

However, in drawing such a conclusion one should be careful, not only from the aspect that the majority electoral model organized the first plural elections in Macedonia after 1990, but also from the aspect that the period in which the proportional electoral model is used is followed by dilemmas about the relevance of the voters register. Such a reality makes it difficult to draw a conclusion.

In terms of the activity of MPs, the number of independent MPs, and the number of women MPs, the Macedonian experience is in line with the theoretical assumptions. Active MPs without much party discipline were a reality during the use of the majority electoral model. In addition, the majority electoral model left far greater chances for independent candidates to succeed in the elections. On the other hand, the application of the proportional electoral model with closed lists caused passivization and marginalization of the parliament, as well as the elimination of non-independent candidates. However, the use of the proportional electoral model with closed lists opened the possibility of using gender quotas, which in turn caused an increase in female MPs in parliament. Contrary to the previous, the majority electoral model had brutally negative effects on the number of female MPs in parliament.

Having in mind all the above, it can be easily concluded that the Macedonian experience is really interesting for analysis. In certain matters, the Macedonian experience follows the theoretical assumptions, but in certain matters it is unique. This is especially true of Duverger's law and the impact of electoral models on the stability of political institutions. It seems that Macedonian circumstances often produce a specific and unique situation contrary to theoretical assumptions. That is why the Macedonian story is always interesting to study and analyze.

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