

**[0912] Language Policy and Nationalism in the Republic of Macedonia**

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*Abstract*

*This study reviews the language policies and ideologies of the Republic of Macedonia in the course of four different periods: 1) the period of pluralistic language policies during the country's participation in the Yugoslav Federation (1944–1980), 2) the period of the shift towards centralistic language policies during the political and economic crises in the Yugoslav Federation (1981–1990), 3) the first decade of the country's independence when it exhibited further centralistic tendencies (1991–2001), and 4) the period of armed conflict in the country and its renewed focus on pluralistic language policies in the aftermath of conflict (2001 – today).*

*The study particularly examines the escalation of the language policy conflict between the largest ethnic groups in the country, Macedonians and Albanians. It traces the tendencies in the development of the language policies and the respective ideologies that fuelled the armed conflict between the state and the Albanian insurgents in 2001, as well as the policy choices the state opted for in order to move the conflict from the battlefield back to the political debate. In order to achieve its goal, the study analyses the constitutional and other legal provisions as regards language minorities and their language rights, as well as the ideologies the state had evolved to justify its choice of policy in the course of different periods. It examines the discourses of “equality” and “national unity” as a rationale for the inclusion or exclusion of the minority languages from the public domain, with illustrative examples of the impact the policies exhibited with regard to the access to mother tongue education for the linguistic minorities.*

*Introduction*

In multiethnic states such as Macedonia, language policy conflicts are signs of a deeper conflict among the ethnic groups trying to renegotiate their power positions in society. The policy approach the state chooses in order to address (or not) the surfacing language conflicts may contribute towards

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increasing or relaxing the interethnic tensions. In order to ensure public acceptance of the preferred policy, state authorities are faced with the challenge of developing ideologies to justify their choice (Tollefson 2002: 179).

This paper will examine the language policy conflict in the Republic of Macedonia. It will focus on the links between the language policies and the ideologies of the state response to the language conflicts between the largest ethno-linguistic groups of the country: Macedonians and Albanians. It will cover a period of about three decades, starting from the rise of nationalism in Yugoslavia in the 1980's up to the present day. More specifically, the article will examine the shift from pluralistic to centralistic language policies and back to pluralistic ones, as well as the respective emerging ideologies and their impact on the inter-ethnic relations in the above-mentioned period.

#### *Framework of Analysis*

In the examination, two assumptions will be considered as a framework of analysis:

- a) Language policy conflict is conditioned by powerful and widely accepted ideologies of equality and nationalism or national unity, but also other ideologies (for example the “melting pot” in America, “cultural pluralism”, etc.) (Tollefson 2002: 180).
- b) In resolving language policy conflicts, states can adopt some of the following approaches (Schmidt 1998: 38–9):
  - Centralist policies aimed at maintaining the power position of the dominant ethno-linguistic group by means of excluding the languages of the others from public domains.
  - Assimilation policies aimed at encouraging the subordinate ethno-linguistic groups to adopt the language of the dominant one as their own.
  - Pluralistic policies aimed at tolerance, promotion and wide public usage of languages of different ethno-linguistic groups.
  - Linguistic confederation policies aimed at legitimating several languages, but each of them exclusively in a separate geographical region.

It is important to observe that there is no exclusive relation between any of the above-mentioned policy choices and the ideologies of equality and/or nationalism. The political debate may aim to justify that, for example, even policies of exclusion of other languages from the public domain contribute

towards the “equality” of the citizens and the “national unity” of the state (Schmidt 1998: 39).

*Republic of Macedonia: A Country Profile*

Before we begin to examine the language policies and ideologies of the Republic of Macedonia, a presentation of its sociolinguistic profile and some historical data will prove useful.

The Republic of Macedonia encompasses a territory of 25,713 km<sup>2</sup>, slightly larger than one half of the Netherlands. It is located in the south of Europe and has as its neighbors Albania in the west, Bulgaria in the east, Kosovo in the north-west, Serbia in the north, and Greece in the south. The republic was first established on August 2, 1944 as one of the six constitutive republics of the Yugoslav Federation. On the very same day, the Literary Macedonian language was proclaimed the official language of the country, and its standardization proceeded rapidly afterwards, building on similar efforts and the written tradition of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The country proclaimed its independence from Yugoslavia on September 8, 1991, following a referendum on independence the same day. The country has faced many challenges while searching for international recognition and pursuing integration in Europe and NATO due to the dispute with Greece over the country’s name. The country was admitted to the United Nations in 1993 under the provisional title of “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, abbreviated as FYROM. In 2001 the country was faced with armed conflict on its territory, between the Government and ethnic Albanian insurgents. The fighting took place in the north-west of the country between February and August of that year. The conflict was ended with NATO assistance and by the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

The population of the country has always been mixed historically. According to the last census conducted in 2002, about 2 million people live in the country, out of whom about 65% identify themselves as Macedonians, 25% as Albanians and about 4% as Turks (State Statistical Office 2002). The rest of the population, taking the total up to 100%, declares themselves as Romas, Vlachs, Serbs, Bosnians and some others. A wide range of languages are spoken in the country: Macedonian (a South Slavic language), Albanian, Turkish, Romany, Vlah (a Romance language), Serbian and Bosnian (two mutually intelligible South Slavic languages) (Friedman 2004). The official language of the country is Macedonian, but other languages (Albanian, Turkish, Vlah, Romany and Serbian) are also granted

limited official status (Janevski 2008; Deskoska-Treneska and Spasov 2012). The country is administratively divided into 85 municipalities. Additionally, the City of Skopje, comprising 10 municipalities, is a separate administrative unit (Deskoska-Treneska and Spasov 2012).

The largest minority is the Albanian minority which is concentrated in the west and north-west regions of the country, mainly in the municipalities bordering Albania and Kosovo. In 7 of them (Vrapchishte, Tearce, Arachinovo, Bogovinje, Lipkovo, Zhelino and Saraj within the City of Skopje), Albanians compose over 75 % of the population, and in another 8 (Kichevo, Struga, Debar, Brvenica, Gostivar, Studenichani, Tetovo and Chair within the City of Skopje) – between 50% and 75%. In 8 municipalities (Dolneni, Kumanovo, Zelenikovo, Sopishte, Chashka, Jegunovce and Shuto Orizari and Butel within the City of Skopje), Albanians are between 25% and 50%, and in 5 other municipalities (Krushevo, Petrovec, Chucher Sandevo, Gazi Baba and Mavrovo and Rostushe) between 15% and 25% (Makedonski centar za megjunarodna sorabotka 2010).

The Turkish minority represents a majority in two municipalities in western Macedonia, namely Centar Zhupa and Plasnica. They are between 10% and 20% of the population in 6 municipalities bordering each other in eastern Macedonia (Valandovo, Dojran, Radovish, Konche, Vasilevo, and Karbinci), as well as in 6 others in western Macedonia (Gostivar, Resen, Vrapchishte, Debar, Studenichani and Vraneshica). In the multiethnic Mavrovo and Rostushe, they constitute 31% of the total population (Makedonski centar za megjunarodna sorabotka 2010).

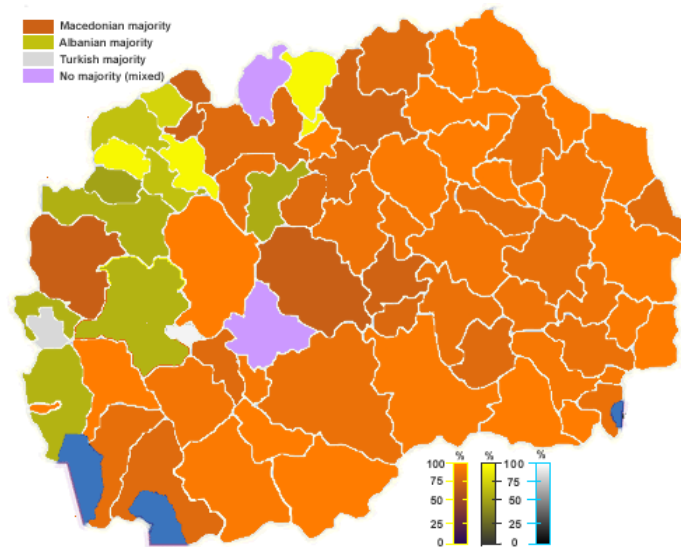
A greater concentration of Roma can be observed in Shuto Orizari, one of the municipalities of the City of Skopje, where they represent 61% of the population. As far as Vlachs are concerned, they are principally concentrated in the municipality of Krushevo, representing 10% of the total population (Makedonski centar za megjunarodna sorabotka 2010). Finally, a higher concentration of the Serbian minority can be observed in two municipalities, namely Chucher Sandevo bordering Kosovo, where Serbs represent 29% of the population, and Staro Nagorichane bordering Serbia, where they constitute 19% of the population (Makedonski centar za megjunarodna sorabotka 2010).

#### *Macedonia in Yugoslavia 1945–1980: Pluralistic Language Policies*

Before we move to Macedonia in the period of its participation in the Yugoslav Federation, I would first like to give some more information about Yugoslavia itself.

*Table 1. Population of the Republic of Macedonia by ethnic affiliation (State Statistical Office 2002).*

	In numbers	In percentages
Macedonians	1.297.981	64.18%
Albanians	509.083	25.17%
Turks	77.959	3.85%
Romas	53.879	2.66%
Vlahs	9.695	0.48%
Serbs	35.939	1.78%
Bosnians	17.018	1.31%
Others	20.993	1.62%
Total	2.022.547	100%



*Figure 1. Territorial distribution of the ethnic groups.*

Yugoslavia was a multiethnic country since its creation as the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes immediately after World War I. The Kingdom was proclaimed by the Serbian Prince Regent Alexander Karadorđević on December 1, 1918, and it was many years later, in 1929, when the government of the time renamed it as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. At the beginning of World War II, the country disintegrated as a result of aggression from Germany, Italy and Bulgaria in 1941. It was reestablished in 1945, this time as a federal state, with the abolishment of the monarchy in the same year and following the earlier proclamation of the Second Session of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ), held on 29 November 1943 (Deskoska-Treneska and Spasov 2012).

In the first years of its creation, immediately after World War II, Yugoslavia followed the federal model of the Soviet Union. However, after the break up with Stalin in the late forties, the country gave up its centralistic policies and gradually started to move towards pluralism (Tollefson 2002). During this period, very complex relations were established between the aspects of ethnicity, nationality, language and the territory where the ethnic groups lived. For example, both the constitutions of 1963 and 1974 differentiate “nation” (narod) and “nationality” (narodnost) (Tollefson 2002; Deskoska-Treneska and Spasov 2012). Nations were the national groups associated with the six republics of the Federation, namely Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro and Slovenia. The nations constituted the majority in these republics and the republics were their homelands. On the other hand, nationalities were groups whose original homelands were outside Yugoslavia, but which often were majorities in particular communities. Albanians and Hungarians were the largest ones, and as they were in the majority in the Serbian provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina respectively, they were granted semi-autonomous status there. Thus, according to the data, the nations living in the Federation in 1988 were 38% Serbs, 21% Croats, 9% Moslem, 7% Slovene, 6% Macedonians and 3% Montenegrins (Tollefson 2002: 182). There were also 15 nationalities in the country, among which the larger ones were Albanian (8%) and Hungarian (2%), and the smaller ones were Romany, Turkish, Slovak, Italian and Romanian (Vlah) (Tollefson 2002: 182). The pluralistic language policies were primarily embedded in the federal constitution, and further details were elaborated in the constitutions and laws of the republics (Tollefson 2002; Deskoska-Treneska and Spasov 2012). They offered powerful legal protection in terms of maintenance and usage of a wide range of languages throughout the country, both those of the nations and the

nationalities, including Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, Macedonian, Albanian and Hungarian (Tollefson 2002; Deskoska-Treneska and Spasov 2012). For example, the main principle in education was that every individual had the right to education in his mother tongue. Consequently, the national groups had the whole range of primary, secondary and tertiary education with instruction in their mother tongue in their republics. Additionally, if they were residing in a republic other than their own, according to the constitutions of the federation and the republics, provisions for education in their mother tongue were supposed to be provided in their areas of residency. However, in practice, the latter was not always and fully implemented since it was expected that all people in Yugoslavia should learn Serbo-Croatian as the lingua franca of the federation and the working language of the army (Deskoska-Treneska and Spasov 2012: 32). These policies of pluralism encouraging linguistic diversity had as a central value tolerance for different languages and ethno-linguistic groups. It came from the ideology of the state “brotherhood and unity”, which meant that only through equality and mutual respect for the diverse ethno-linguistic identities, could the unity of the country be ensured (Deskoska-Treneska and Spasov 2012).

In the period before 1980, Macedonia, as one of the republics of Yugoslavia, followed the ideology of “brotherhood and unity” and opted for pluralistic policies. The republic’s constitution of 1974 states that the country was constituted by “the Macedonian nation (people) together with the nationalities of Macedonia” as “a national state of Macedonian nation and a state of Albanian and Turkish nationalities” (Deskoska-Treneska and Spasov 2012; Petrushevska 2014: 94–115). This is the first time that the Albanian and Turkish nationalities were explicitly mentioned as constituent peoples sharing the “ownership” of the state with the Macedonians. Furthermore, the constitution explicitly guaranteed the equality of the languages in education and all other public spheres. In the spirit of the constitution, legal provisions ensured the participation of the members of different ethno-linguistic groups in shaping the educational institutions, curricula and processes in their communities. For example, there were laws ensuring that the teaching staff in the schools and classes using languages other than Macedonian was competent in these languages (Sluzhben vesnik na SRM 1976). The school registers in these schools were kept in the language of the nationalities, and student reports were issued in both the Macedonian language and the language of the nationalities (Sluzhben vesnik na SRM 1976).

*Macedonia in Yugoslavia 1981–1991: Shift towards centralistic language policies and nationalism*

In the following decade, the trend towards a pluralistic policy in the republic shifted towards a centralistic one as several factors led to the failing of the “brotherhood and unity” ideology and pluralism in the Federation. These were the country’s deep economic crises, the weakening of the federal leadership in the years before and after Tito’s death, and the rise of Serbian nationalism (Tollefson 2002). All these factors together led the Federation towards the federal constitutional crises in the late eighties, the bloody wars in the decade to follow and Yugoslavia’s dissolution.

Steadily building up from the beginning of the decade, Serbian nationalism aggressively invaded the political and the public debate in the mid-eighties, particularly with “The Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts” that was leaked to the press in 1986 (Tollefson 2002; Deskoska-Treneska and Spasov 2012). The Memorandum offered an analysis of the political and economic crisis in the Federation and blamed it on the pluralistic policies embedded in the 1974 constitution as well as on the ideology of ethnic and territorial considerations. In order to solve the problem, it proposed a firm centralization of the Federation, with restrictions on the autonomy of the republics and the provinces. In 1989 a set of Serbian-imposed constitutional amendments restricted the cultural and language rights of the Albanians in Kosovo and the Hungarians in Vojvodina, and the Serbian language was introduced as a language of instruction in the Kosovo schools. As a result, a large number of Albanian speaking teachers were purged from the schools in the province (Vickers 1998; Tollefson 2002).

Serbian nationalism, stepping over the ideology of equality and mutual respect of cultural identities among nations and nationalities, widely opened the doors for other forms of nationalism to flourish.

Although to a lesser extent, Serbian nationalism directed against the Albanians spilled over into Macedonia (Penev et al. 2008; Deskoska-Treneska and Spasov 2012). The republic, with Albanians constituting 20% of its population, had had no history of major conflicts between the ethno-linguistic groups beforehand. The republic was, however, constantly challenged with Albanian demands for greater cultural and language rights, as well as political autonomy for the regions where they were in a majority (Ortakovski 1998; Penev et al. 2008). Macedonia’s response in the eighties was a shift towards centralistic policies. The “necessity” of the shift was



justified as to halt the Albanian “nationalism and separatism” and to ensure the territorial unity of the state (Ortakovski 1998: 350–2). In 1988, for example, the Republic’s Assembly confirmed such measures to be justified as a ban on selling properties in the western part of the republic in order to prevent a further concentration of the Albanians in the region, or a resolution on the demographic policy aimed at controlling the demography of the Albanian population in the same region (Ortakovski 1998: 350–2).

A shift towards centralistic policies can also be clearly observed with regard to education and language. For example, the law on secondary education restricted the forming of Albanian-medium classes in cases where it was not possible to obtain a minimum of 30 students and adequately trained staff. As a result, while in the school year 1980/1981 around 10.000 students were enrolled in Albanian-medium classes in 39 schools, in the year 1990/1991 these numbers had dropped to only 2.500 students in 5 schools with instruction in the Albanian language (Ortakovski 1998: 351). Provisions were also introduced with respect to the language competence of the teaching staff, but not in favor of the Albanian teachers. The example is that, as of 1983, teachers not competent in the Albanian language could teach the Macedonian language as a subject in the Albanian-medium primary schools and classes (Sluzhben vesnik na SRM 1983). The law of 1989 (Sluzhben vesnik na SRM 1989) then allowed all subjects in the higher grades of primary education to be taught by teachers not competent in Albanian, despite the fact that they were teaching in Albanian-medium schools or classes. Additionally, all teachers, regardless of the language of instruction in their schools or classes, were obliged to be competent in the Macedonian language. Similarly, all school registers in Albanian-medium schools were supposed to be kept only in Macedonian, and not in Albanian as had previously been the case, and student reports could not be issued bilingually, but only in Macedonian.

*Independent Macedonia 1991–2001: Further Steps Towards Centralistic Policies and Conflict*

Serbian imposed domination, nationalism and centralism first provoked Slovenia and Croatia, and later the other republics of the Federation to consider the confederation and/or independence as a solution to the political crises in the late eighties (Tollefson 2002). Slovenians proclaimed the sovereignty of their republic in July 1990 and voted in favor of independence in December of the same year. After the failure of negotiations,

Slovenia proclaimed independence in June 1991, at the same time as Croatia (Caplan 2005). A month earlier, in May of the same year, the Croatians had proclaimed their sovereignty on the basis of a plebiscite. Serbia also proclaimed its sovereignty in 1990, but – unlike Slovenia and Croatia – as a means of strengthening its position within Yugoslavia and not as a step towards leaving the Federation.

Macedonia joined the trend at a slower pace (Penev et al. 2008). Multi-party elections took place in the country in December 1990. The new parliament, dominated by the right-wing VMRO-DPMNE, passed the Declaration of Independence in January 1991 and elected a provisional government later the same year. The referendum on the country's independence was held as late as September 1991, and the constitution of the country as an independent state was passed by parliament in December of the same year.

It is important to note that the Albanians boycotted the referendum and did not vote on the constitution (Deskoska-Treneska and Spasov 2012: 36). The reasons were the political disagreement between the Albanian and Macedonian parties about the “ownership” of the country. Macedonians perceived the political circumstances as an historical opportunity to fulfill their aspirations and to constitute an independent national state for the first time in their history. The Albanians, on the other hand, claimed their full participation in the constitution of the state throughout history, and envisioned the country as a partnership of nations, as initially embedded in the constitution of 1974 (Penev et al. 2008; Deskoska-Treneska and Spasov 2012; Bliznakovski 2013). Nevertheless, the new constitution of the independent state clearly defined Macedonia as a nation state and identified the ethnic Macedonians as its main constitutive element (Penev et al. 2008; Deskoska-Treneska and Spasov 2012; Bliznakovski 2013). However, it also assured “full equality” and “peaceful coexistence” for the “nationalities”, the term used for the national minorities, which are explicitly declared in the constitutional preamble: the Albanians, the Turks, the Vlachs, the Romanians, and others. Although this explicit declaration of the national minorities could be seen as a recognition of the existing ethnic and cultural plurality of the country, as well as a justification for the existence of multiethnic policies in the country (Bliznakovski 2013: 31), the further articles of the constitution guarantee the educational, cultural and linguistic rights of all citizens and national minorities living in the country, as individual rights. The Macedonian language was proclaimed the only official language of the country, and the languages of the national minorities were granted a lower

status, legally defined as being in official use in the areas where the minorities were in a majority. The official use of the minority languages was further regulated by other laws of the country. Cultural and identity rights were also protected as in any other national state. The Albanians perceived the new constitution as being restrictive to their political, educational, cultural and language rights as compared to the ones of 1974 (Deskoska-Treneska and Spasov 2012).

The disagreement between the Macedonian and the Albanian parties about the “ownership” of the country shaped the language policies and the ideologies in the following decade. Albanian parties advocated greater political and cultural rights, language equality and Albanian-medium higher education to ensure the peaceful coexistence of the peoples in the country (Poulton 1998; Penev et al. 2008; Bliznakovski 2013). Macedonian parties, on the other hand, perceived these claims as segregation and not integration of the Albanian community into society, as an attempt to establish Albanian institutions parallel to the Macedonian ones, as steps towards the federalization of the country and as threats for its cultural identity and territorial integrity (Penev et al. 2008; Deskoska-Treneska and Spasov 2012). The state responded to this ideological conflict with language policies seriously lacking consideration of the Albanians’ claims. As an example, I shall briefly discuss the issue of tertiary education in Albanian. During the Yugoslavian period, most of the Macedonian Albanians obtained their university degrees in the Albanian language in the universities in Kosovo. The new political situation in the region denied them such access. The number of Albanian students in the Macedonian universities was as low as 3.4% of the total number of students in the academic year of 1992/93, with a steady increase up to 7.7% in 1996/1997 (Ortakovski 1998: 365). The Albanian political parties claimed that the enrolment numbers were too low if one considered the percentage of Albanians in the total population of Macedonia, and advocated a state university with the Albanian language as a medium of instruction to address the issue. As a response, the state introduced positive discrimination measures by means of special quota for the national minorities in the existing universities, starting from the academic year 1992/1993, without addressing the language issue per se. The lack of an adequate consideration of the Albanian claims led to three municipalities establishing an illegal university using the Albanian language in Mala Rechica, Tetovo. The state intervened with police action in which one Albanian citizen was killed. In the following years, in 1997, a law was passed permitting instruction in the Albanian language at the Pedagogical

Faculty within the State University of Skopje, preparing future teachers for schools teaching through the medium of Albanian. In the heightened nationalistic atmosphere of the country, the law provoked massive demonstrations of students against it (Ortakovski 2001; Bliznakovski 2013: 72–4). The language in the demonstrations was highly nationalistic, with statements like “gas chambers for the Shiptars (Albanians)” and many other similar ones.

*Independent Macedonia 2001 – today: the Conflict and a Renewed Focus on Pluralistic Policies*

The heightened nationalistic sentiments, the political disagreement between the Macedonian and the Albanian parties, the failure of the state to seriously consider and address the Albanian claims, as well as the wider regional political context – all were factors that led to the armed conflict in the country in the year 2001, between the Albanian insurgents on the one hand and the state on the other. The conflict lasted only for a few months, with casualties of no more than a few hundred. It was resolved as a result of high pressure from the international community, with the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement by the most relevant Macedonian and Albanian political parties (Ortakovski 2001; Bliznakovski 2013). It envisioned constitutional changes for the devolution of power from central to local level, mechanisms to ensure the full participation of the national minorities on issues concerning their cultural, educational and language rights, and provisions for their education and for the official use of their languages (Ortakovski 2001; Penev et al. 2008, Bliznakovski 2013).

One of the most important constitutional changes is the new preamble. Unlike the old one, it clearly recognizes the contribution of the citizens belonging to other nations and living within the borders of the country in the constitution of the state, alongside the Macedonian people. The other nations explicitly mentioned in the preamble are Albanian, Turkish, Vlah, Serbian, Romany and Bosnian nations. The term “nationality” is replaced with the term “community”. In this way, the preamble represents a certain abolishment of the nation state since it defines the citizens belonging to different nations or ethnic communities as its constitutive elements alongside the Macedonian people, unlike the one from 1991 in which the “Macedonian people” guaranteed equality and peaceful coexistence for the named minorities. However, the new preamble retains to a certain degree

the national character of the state since ethnicity remains as important as it was in the pre-2001 period (Bliznakovski 2013: 37).

Another constitutional amendment coming from the Ohrid Framework Agreement concerns the official languages of the country. The amendment proclaims that, alongside the Macedonian language, any other language that is spoken by an ethno-linguistic community comprising more than 20% of the country's population is also an official language of the country. The only language that fulfills this criterion today is the Albanian language. However, the official use of this language is limited by the same amendment. It is used alongside Macedonian in the following instances: 1) personal documents of the citizens, 2) communications with the state authorities in the communities where the speakers of the language comprise more than 20%, 3) the state organs as will be further elaborated by laws, and 4) in the municipalities where the speakers of the language comprise more than 20% of the population. Furthermore, on the local level, other languages spoken by citizens belonging to ethno-linguistic communities comprising at least 20% of the total population of the municipality are also official alongside the Macedonian (and Albanian) language (Janevski 2008; Deskoska-Treneska and Spasov 2012; Bliznakovski 2013). Additionally, municipalities are granted authority to decide about the official status of the other languages spoken by citizens belonging to ethno-linguistic communities smaller than 20%. As a result, today, the Albanian language is used as an official language alongside Macedonian in about 30 municipalities, Turkish is used in 4 and Romany and Vlah in 1. Following the constitutional amendment, Parliament passed by-laws in 2008 which allow speakers of the other official languages to address Parliament and its bodies as well as to receive working materials in that language. The law on the languages passed in 2008 proscribes in detail the use of the other official languages in all public spheres and in the municipalities (Bliznakovski 2013). Language provisions stemming from the constitutional changes and the 2008 law on the languages are incorporated into many other of the country's laws, including the laws on primary, secondary and tertiary education (Atanasovski 2008: 252; Bliznakovski 2013). The issue of Albanian-medium tertiary education was addressed by legal recognition of the so far unofficial University of Tetovo in 2004, and by provisions of state funding for its functioning (Ortakovski 2001; Deskoska-Treneska and Spasov 2012; Bliznakovski 2013).

The changes in the constitution and laws in regard to the official use of languages, particularly in the domain of education, had a significant positive

impact on access to education in the mother tongue for all citizens belonging to national minorities in the country. As an example, I will provide some statistical data on the enrolment numbers of students in primary, secondary and tertiary education in Albanian-medium educational institutions. Thus, while the number of students enrolled in Albanian-medium classes dropped down to only 2.500 in 5 secondary schools in the school year 1990/1991, these numbers increased to 19.352 students (or 20,58% of the total number of students) enrolled in the school year 2004/2005 in 609 classes in 27 Albanian-medium schools (State Statistical Office 2006: 10). The growing trend is even more observable if one compares these numbers with the ones in the subsequent school years. In the school year of 2012/2013, 10 more Albanian-medium secondary schools accommodated 25.953 students in 927 classes, or 29,30% of the total number of students enrolled in secondary education in that school year (State Statistical Office 2014: 6).

This significant increase in the numbers of students enrolled in Albanian-medium schools throughout the years is due to several factors. One of them will no doubt be the language policies in education which resulted from the Ohrid Framework Agreement as well as from the subsequent changes in the constitution and laws on education in favor of the linguistic minorities in the aftermath of the conflict. But another one is the growing trend in the demography of the Albanian minority, which increases at a much faster pace than that of the Macedonian majority (Atanasovski 2008: 26). This is particularly observable if one compares the relative number of students enrolled in Albanian-medium primary education in the last couple of decades (Ortakovski 1998: 361). For example, while in the school year of 1992/1993 this number represented 26,8% of the total number of students enrolled in primary education that year (Ortakovski 1998: 361), it steadily grew, with minor fluctuations, to approximately 33% in the school year of 2012/2013 (State Statistical Office 2014).

The changes in the language policies in regard to the language of instruction may possibly have had the most direct and strong influence on access to tertiary education for Albanian students. The opening of the higher education institutions with Albanian-medium instruction (the private trilingual University of South East Europe in 2000 and the State University of Tetovo in 2004) provided the students from an Albanian ethnic background, who had previously obtained their degrees in Albanian-medium universities in Kosovo, with the same opportunity in Macedonia. Thus, while the number of Albanian students in Macedonia represented only

3.4% of the total number of students in the academic year of 1992/93, with a steady increase up to 7.7% in 1996/1997, this number went up to 15,5% in the academic year of 2004/2005 (Atanasovski 2008: 258).

The Ohrid Framework Agreement promoted the multiethnic and multicultural character of the country as a means to ensure equality among different ethno-linguistic groups as well as the territorial unity of the country. For the first time, it provided a mechanism for a dialogue on institutional policy among them on issues of importance for the promotion and maintenance of their cultural identity (Atanasovski 2008: 254). The language policies stemming from the Agreement and incorporated in the constitution and in the relevant laws, promote cultural and language pluralism at a considerably higher and profoundly deeper level than those in the period between 1991 and 2001. However, although the Agreement and the consequent constitutional and legal provisions successfully managed to move the conflict from the battlefield back to the arena of political debate, its implementation brought new challenges for the country. By its nature, the Agreement encompasses solutions that may be used for accomplishing two opposing goals: integration of society and its disintegration along ethnic lines if it is misused (Atanasovski 2008: 252). The Macedonians perceive it as a threat to the Macedonian cultural identity and language since it promotes collective political, cultural and educational rights for other ethnic communities living in the country, and particularly for the Albanians. The Macedonians fear that it may be misused for a further division of society along ethnic lines, which would eventually lead to the federalization of “their” country, its dissolution, and consequently – to the dissipation of the Macedonian cultural identity. The Albanians, on the other hand, perceive the Agreement and its implementation as a realization of their legitimate rights to fully participate in the political, economic and cultural life of the country on an equal footing with their Macedonian fellow citizens (Deskoska-Treneska and Spasov 2012; Petrushevska 2014: 116–201). In practice, the Agreement has largely failed to contribute towards building interethnic trust and to prevent the further ethnic fragmentation of all aspects of society (Mladenovski 2011). Furthermore, the interethnic relations still remain a powerful means in the hands of Macedonian and Albanian politicians to mobilize voters (Mladenovski 2011: 26), as has been the case in almost all elections since 2001. The main challenge for the state is to strengthen the common institutions of society where the different ethnic communities will have the opportunity to meet and develop a

constructive dialogue on a common vision and goals regardless of the ethnic affiliation (Atanasovski 2008: 254).

### *Conclusions*

In order to gain public support for particular language policies, states are faced with the challenge of developing and managing complex ideologies as the rationale for the chosen policy options. On the other hand, the wider political ideologies have considerable influence on the latter. In this article we demonstrated that in Macedonia during Tito's Yugoslavia, the ideology of pluralism shaped (or vice versa) the pluralistic language policies, guaranteeing language rights for the diverse ethno-linguistic groups in the country. The rise of the ideology of Serbian nationalism and the subsequent centralistic policies pushed Macedonia (and the other republics) out of the Federation in 1991. In addition, Macedonia exhibited its own form of nationalism, directed against the Albanians in the decade before its independence, followed by restrictive language policies with little or no consideration of the Albanians' claim for extended language and education rights. These centralistic tendencies continued in the first decade of the country's independence and additionally fuelled the political conflict between Macedonians and Albanians, which moved out of the institutions to the battlefield in the year 2001. The renegotiation of language policies with pluralistic tendencies in favor of the Albanian language, as well as the languages of other ethno-linguistic communities inhabiting the country, brought the conflict back from the battlefield to the political debate. The state made an effort to justify new language policy choices with the ideology of multiculturalism as its rationale.

The case of Macedonia after 2001 is an example of managing ethno-linguistic diversity with language policies with pluralistic tendencies, considering to a particular degree the collective language rights of different ethno-linguistic groups. These language policies represent an effort to overcome the opposition between the individual rights of the citizens and their collective rights as members of an ethno-linguistic group. The policy choice represents a new challenge for the country in the aftermath of the conflict. Although it brought peace to its citizens, by its nature, it has the potential to integrate but also to disintegrate the country along ethnic lines. So far, in practice, it has failed to promote mutual trust between Macedonians and Albanians. The main challenge for the state remains the strengthening of common institutions in society as a platform for a



constructive dialogue among different ethno-linguistic groups to build a common vision for a common future.

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