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CHANGE IN THE PARTY SYSTEM FROM LIBERAL – TO ETHNIC-BASED POLARISATION – THE CASE OF MACEDONIA

Abstract. *Although party systems (PSs) have been studied a lot, there is still insufficient research into the transition from a PS characterised by the predominance of liberal-based political parties into a PS in which ethnic- or religious-based parties dominate. The article helps rectify this deficiency by combining a quantitative approach using numerical measurements of PSs and a qualitative approach for determining the characteristics of PSs and how they change. This combination of approaches in the empirical study of the PS and the way it developed in Macedonia between 1990 and 2018 proved crucial for revealing the growing polarisation within the PS based on the stronger ethnic polarisation, an aspect uncapturable by the usual quantitative measurement of PS change.*
Keywords: *political party, party system, change, typology, ethnic polarisation, Macedonia*

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Introduction

Political parties and elections are some of the most researched phenomena in political science. Nevertheless, the comparative study of party systems (PSs) encounters several major challenges.

First, comparative PS research has so far chiefly focused on Western PSs. Moreover, many comparisons consider PSs with political parties positioned on the left–right ideological continuum while party systems in consociational democracies are typically included in empirical research using the same methodology for examining PSs in majoritarian democracies (e.g. McAllister and White, 2007; Siaroff, 2002; 2003; Mair, 2006; Wolinetz, 2006; Epstein, 1967). Indeed, mainstream political science considerations of the typology of PSs and theorising PS change often omit the distinction between ethnic-based political parties and parties organised on the liberal principle and the outcomes for PS characteristics of blocs of parties that are built on

different principles (left–right; ethnicity-based) and change and form coalitions.

Second, party systems in non-Western parts of the world such as those in post-socialist countries have not attracted much research. Further, such PSs are usually studied in relation to democratisation processes (Pridham, 2003; Jungerstam-Mulders, 2006) and separately from other PSs around the world. Another peculiar theme often seen in comparative analysis of party politics is the Europeanisation of post-socialist systems (Lewis and Markowski, 2011). Yet few studies comparatively analyse the development of PSs in post-socialist countries that entail a considerable share of ethnic-based parties in a setting of having experienced the impacts of war (esp. in countries emerging from former Yugoslavia).

Third, some problems have been established in the main methodological approach taken in current research into PSs. In fact, Pelizzo and Nwokora (2016) identity two research approaches that seem to have been developing parallel to each other. One is the quantitative approach, which primarily relies on quantitative measurements of PS characteristics and how they change (e.g. Kwak and Janda, 2010) and the other is the qualitative approach. Dalton (2008) notes that it is often the quality of party competition (that is, the degree of polarisation of political parties within a PS) that is more important than the quantitatively measured properties of such PSs.

In this article, we address the gap in the literature regarding ethnic-based parties while reviewing changes in PSs and related analyses, a crucial issue when seeking to explain how 'ethnicification' can be a key indicator of the diversion and polarisation of the PS in newly emerging democracies. We use Mojanoski's (2001) definition that ethnic-based political parties are parties typified by an emphasis on ethnic rights and policy issues related to ethnic traditions and culture. By ethnicification, we understand the process of the emergence of ethnic-based parties which can produce an ethnic cleavage in the PS and amend or even replace the left–right ideological dimension. We build on Dalton's thesis (Dalton, 2008: 900) that a PS can become polarised independent of how many parties are involved. We consider the polarisation of a party system by combining: 1) the distribution of liberal-based parties on the left–right continuum; and 2) ideological distinctions among parties in terms of the level of ethnic radicalisation.

We focus on the relation between a segment of ethnic-based political parties and a segment of parties organised on the liberal principle in a post-socialist context and how it has changed. Further, we join Pelizzo's and Nwokora's (2016) call to bridge the divide between quantitative and qualitative approaches. While taking account of the literature on PSs (see the overviews in e.g. Siaroff, 2003; McAllister and White, 2007; Wolinetz, 2006; Mair, 2006) as well as quantitative measures of PS characteristics and how

they change, we propose an additional indicator of variations in PSs – the relationship between the segment of ethnic-based parties and the segment of liberal-based parties within the system and the way it changes. The article thereby offers both a side-by-side testing of quantitative and qualitative analysis of PSs in a post-socialist context and a basis for further improving PS classifications.

The empirical analysis focuses on the dynamic changes in Macedonia (Marshall and Jagger, 2010) between 1990 and 2018. The PS in Macedonia has shifted from: 1) initially a mainly liberal-based party cluster with several moderate, ethnic-based parties, to 2) the current PS largely characterised by radicalised party blocs involved in ethnic-based polarisation and even violence.

We apply qualitative and quantitative approaches while answering the following questions: which are the biggest cleavages in Macedonia's party system over time, and why has the PS changed in the direction of including ever more ethnic-based parties? The qualitative study is based on a review of existing research and official documents. Already several studies have looked at Macedonian political parties (e.g. Bozóki and Ishiyama, 2002; Mojanoski, 2001; Bieber, 2005; Stojarová and Emerson, 2009; Mirčev and Hristova, 2008), the transition to democracy (e.g. Ramet, 1992, 1995; Šiber, 1989; Georgievski and Škarić, 2000; Fink-Hafner and Hafner-Fink, 2009; Daskalovski, 1999), ethnic conflict (Balalovska et al., 2002), legislative electoral changes (Bernauer and Bochsler, 2011) and on altering the Constitution (Škarić, 2004; Hayden, 1992). We also looked at reports by international organisations (Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR, 2016), international indicators (BTI – Bertelsmann Stiftung Index, 2016; 2018; Economist Intelligence Unit, 2017, surveys (MCMS – Macedonian Center for International Cooperation, IDSCS – Institute for Democracy, Solidarity and Civil Society and Telma TV, 2016), items of legislation (the Constitution of SRM, 1974; the Constitution of RM 1991; the Constitutional amendments of 2001; the Law on Political Parties; the Law on Higher Education; the Law on the Establishment of a State University in Tetovo; the Law on Languages (still in the procedure); the Election Code; amendments to the Electoral Code); statistical data from the SEC (State Electoral Commission); data from the Macedonian Parliament (Sobranie); and data from the SSO (State Statistical Office). Nine semi-structured interviews were conducted in May 2018 in Macedonia, including university professors, members of the Government and Parliament, journalists as well as Macedonian and Albanian politicians (interviews are in researchers' archive). The interview data are first used to reveal the perceptions of the main actors in Macedonian politics that guide their political behaviour.

In this article, we first present the theoretical frame for typologising the

altered PS by taking the context of inter-ethnic conflict into account. After providing some contextualisation of Macedonian party politics, we analyse the PS characteristics and how they changed in the period 1990–2018 where we consider both existing quantitative measures and qualitative typologies of PSs as well as our qualitative analysis. In the conclusion, we discuss the empirical findings and potential value our qualitative typology brings to PSs based on distinguishing two segments (liberal- and ethnic-based) of parties.

Party systems and ethnic politics

By applying different ideological and social (class) criteria, political science literature has so far revealed various types of political parties and party families (e.g. Sartori, 1976; von Beyme, 1985; McAllister and White, 2007). Indeed, the left–right ideological divide among political parties has featured large in research on PSs. On the contrary, the focus on political parties that represent different ethnic and religious groups was initially part of the separate study of politics in segmented societies (e.g. Bernauer and Bochsler, 2011; Chandra and Metz, 2002).

As a rule, during transitions to democracy in post-socialist countries the cleavage between the old (reformed previously socialist parties) and new (oppositional) parties was critical as was indeed recognised while studying newly emerging PSs. However, as politics became more pluralised in post-socialist democracies that often also entailed new countries, aspects of nationalism, separatism, secessionism and ethno-nationalism, especially towards minorities (Giddens, 1994; Hayden, 1992), have proven to be important for both party politics and PSs. Nevertheless, the existing methodologies for studying PSs and their typologies seem to be lacking the capacity to fully capture the characteristics of PSs whose structure includes considerable ethnic-based cleavages (e.g. Chandra and Metz's, 2002:21 – study of parties and changes in such PSs).

Typologies of party systems

Many researchers concentrate on the number of parties while seeking to classify PSs (Epstein, 1967; Duverger, 1954; Mair, 1997). Here the counting of parties has been crucial and gone beyond simply counting all parties, e.g. the 'effective number of parties' (calculated based on the Tageperä and Shugart index) or 'relevant parties' (as determined by Sartori, 1976).

The conceptualisation of PS types that is most commonly used is Sartori's (1976). It is based on the *number* of relevant parties and the *degree of ideological* polarisation. His measure of ideological polarisation focuses on the ideological distance between parties and the ideological divergence (Sani

and Sartori, 1983). Using these two dimensions, Sartori's typology includes four types of democratic PSs (see Table 1).

Unlike the abovementioned authors who looked at western PSs, Mainwaring (1998: 3) stresses that the appropriate way of analysing "third-wave party systems" in "late democracies" is to distinguish between "weakly institutionalised party systems" and "well established party systems" (see Table 1).

Table 1: TYPOLOGIES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTY SYSTEMS (PSS)

The PS typologies of Sartori (1976) and Sani and Sartori (1983) are based on the number of relevant parties and the ideological relationships among them:	
Four types of democratic party systems:	
Two-party systems	Moderate pluralism (low ideological polarisation)
Polarised pluralism (considerable polarisation)	PSs with a dominant party (the same party consistently wins a majority of seats up to three times in a row – after then, it can be considered a one-party system)
While analysing the 'third wave' of democratisation, Mainwaring (1998) presents the polarisation of PSs between:	
Two types of PSs based on institutionalisation of the PS	
Well-institutionalised party systems Highly stability in patterns of interparty competition Parties are strongly rooted in society Higher level of legitimacy of parties and elections Organisation and party processes are well institutionalised	**Weakly institutionalised party systems** Quite volatile Parties are strongly rooted in society Lower level of legitimacy of parties and elections Intraparty processes are not well institutionalised
The authors' proposal for analysing post-socialist democratisation in ethnically segmented contexts	
Two types of party systems	
Largely liberal-based PSs Majority of parties are based on the liberal principle The main type of cleavage in the PS is the L-R continuum	**Largely ethnic-based PSs** Majority of parties are based on the ethnic principle The main type of cleavage in the PS is inter-ethnic

Source: Sartori 1976; Sani and Sartori 1983; Mainwaring 1998; the authors.

Nevertheless, the existing methodological approaches and typologies of party systems are still unable to capture the complexity of PSs where there are blocs of liberal-based and ethnic-based political parties that engage in conflicts within the PS. These are not predominantly left–right conflicts but conflicts between two ethnic party blocs (as in the case of Macedonia) over ethnic policies, that are only to a limited extent accompanied by left–right clashes. Sartori's two-dimensional typology is unable to capture peculiar coalitions of quite small number of (relevant) ethnic parties and a high level of polarisation (where there are two blocs, like in Macedonia).

Measuring change in the party system

As a rule, PS characteristics have so far been measured by focusing on the number of (relevant, effective[1] etc.) political parties and their ideological positioning on the left–right spectrum. Measures have been developed to describe fragmentation of a PS (e.g. Rae's index of fractionalisation[2], see Sartori, 1976: 307), aggregation of the PS (e.g. the index of aggregation calculated as the ratio between the proportion of parliamentary seats held by the biggest parliamentary party and the number of parliamentary parties) and electoral volatility (e.g. calculated based on Pedersen's (1990) index of volatility[3]). Using calculated indexes that look at the same (changing) PS over time, changes can be detected as the indexes go up or down.

Party system polarisation has so far been measured indirectly – by the number of political parties, vote shares for governing parties, and voters' perceptions of parties on the left–right continuum (public opinion surveys).

In our article, we employ a combination of the existing measures and add some fresh qualitative insights.

Framework for studying party systems containing a considerable share of ethnic-based parties

To study Macedonia's PS, we shall take into account the context (Mirčev and Hristova, 2008; Ramet, 1992), especially the type of transition to democracy (Marshall and Jagger, 2010; Huntington, 1991), and the logic of party proliferation in the setting of the transition to a democracy (Dahl, 2000).

Following Dalton's (2008) focus on PS polarisation, we examine the dynamics between: (1) liberal-based political parties and their left–right ideological matrix; and (2) ethnic-based political parties, characterised by an emphasis on ethnic rights and policy issues related to ethnic traditions

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[1] *The Tageperä and Shugart index ENP (Effective Number of Electoral Parties) (obtained from Lijphart, 1984, 120). The ENP is calculated using the following formula:*

$$N = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} p_i^2} \qquad p = \text{the \% of votes a party gains at elections}$$

where "n" is the total number of parties in the parliament and "si" is the number of seats (in percent) of party "i". The ENP is the number of hypothetical equally-sized parties that would have the same effect on the party system's fragmentation as the current parties of varying sizes.

2 *Rae's index of fractionalisation (FP), conducted according to the following formula (Sartori, 1976: 307):*

$$Fp = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^{N} p_i^2$$

where N is the number of parties, pi is the proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by i-party

[3] *Volatility $(V_t) = 1/2$ TNCt*

$$0 \le V_t \le 100$$

where V_t represents the cumulative gains of all parties in the party system or (if interpreted symmetrically) the cumulative value of the losses of parties/losers of votes (Pedersen, 1990).

and culture (Mozaffar et al., 2003; Mojanoski, 2001; Norwegian Helsinki Committee, 2001). We are particularly interested in the shift from a largely liberal-based PS to a largely ethnic-based PS.

In order to capture these dynamics, we employ both quantitative indicators of PS characteristics and more qualitative indicators that are sensitive to the ethnic political divide within the PS.

In order to capture the changes in the party system between 1990 and 2018, we use the following indicators:

- number of parliamentary parties (liberal, ethnic parties, total);
- share of liberal/ethnic parliamentary parties;
- number of parliamentary seats (for liberal, ethnic parties, total);
- share of parliamentary seats for liberal/ethnic parties (changes in percent of seats);
- fragmentation within blocs of the same kinds of parliamentary parties (number of parties);
- ideological distance within the same kinds of parliamentary parties where liberal-based parties are considered based on the left–right continuum and ethnic-based parties on their level of radicalisation (estimations based on a literature review and interviews); and
- polarisation between blocs of different kinds of parties (estimations based on interviews).

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The Macedonian context

Transition to a democracy

Like in other post-socialist countries (Bozóki and Ishiyama, 2002), the continuing involvement of the communist-party successor has significantly affected the development of democracy in Macedonia (Stojarová and Emerson, 2009). The Macedonian Communists SKM-PDP (League of Communists of Macedonia – Party of Democratic Transition) was one of the leagues in former Yugoslavia which up until 1989 believed the communist regime would continue to exist in Yugoslavia (Ramet, 1995). Indeed, members of SKM-PDP were among the most reluctant when asked about their attitudes to a multi-party system and the already emerging oppositional political organisations (Šiber, 1989: 29). This explains why the legalisation of political pluralism in Macedonia and holding of the first multi-party elections in 1990 followed more the examples of other Yugoslav republics than being the result of any home-grown changes. Similarly, Macedonia proclaimed its independence in a referendum held on 8 September 1991 but only after the declarations of independence made by other Yugoslav republics. When adopting the new Constitution, it opted for a parliamentary system.

Nevertheless, the Macedonian path to democracy has not only faced the transformation and adaptation of the old political elite within the process of political pluralisation, but also the growing prominence of nation-building and ethnic minority issues, along with problems like the negative economic effect of indirect involvement in the Yugoslav war (1991–1995) and the conflict with Greece over the name of Macedonia (long preventing EU integration) (Fink-Hafner and Hafner-Fink, 2009).

Building a nation-state and the inter-ethnic conflict

Like the elites of ethnic majorities in certain other (former) Yugoslav republics, the party elite in Macedonia stressed nation-building and strengthened the legal position of the titular nationality in Macedonia: ethnic Macedonians (Daskalovski, 1999). At the referendum on the sovereignty and independence of Macedonia held in 1991, 95.09% (72.16% of all citizens with a voting right) chose independence (Macedonian Parliament, 1991). The ethnic Albanian population[4] boycotted the referendum. Instead, Albanians were pushing for a bi-ethnic state system (BTI, 2016).

Despite this, on 17 November 1991 the Constitution was adopted by 96 of the 120 MPs (Members of Parliament). Macedonia was defined as a state of the "Macedonian people" (Constitution of RM 1991, OG, 52/91) contrary to the previous definition in the preamble of the 1974 Constitution as "a state of the Macedonian people and of Albanian and Turkish nationalities" within the Socialistic Republic of Macedonia (Constitution of SRM, 1974, OG – Official Gazette 7/25). The Albanians perceived this as a loss in the normative basis for equal treatment by the state of Macedonia. At first, the new Macedonian state also did not re-establish a Pedagogical Academy (founded in 1961 and abolished in 1987) which had allowed for education in Albanian. In January 1992, an unofficial referendum (named Ilirida) was conducted among the ethnic Albanian population (but declared illegal by the Macedonian authorities) reportedly resulted in 99.9% of votes being cast in favour of territorial and political autonomy for the ethnic Albanian population (Babuna, 2000). The Pedagogical Faculty for Albanian teachers was reactivated based on a St. Cyril and Methodius University Rectorate decision in 1995 with reference to Article 48 of the Constitution that allows education in minority languages at primary and secondary schools (Azizi, 2011). This step provoked anti-Albanian demonstrations.

All in all, political classes of both Macedonians and Albanians have instrumentalised education policy (and particularly language policy in this sense) in their political battles (Kavaja, 2017). Albanians perceive adoption

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[4] *Ethnic Albanians in Macedonia make up almost 25% of the population (SSO RM, 2005).*

of the 1991 Constitution as the "generator of crises" (Abdurahman Aliti in an interview with Xhezairi, 2018) since they believe that certain rights they held under the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution, such as the ability to use the Albanian language, had been abolished. The growing grievances (especially because Albanians interpreted that they were not allowed to have education in their mother tongue) in conjunction with deteriorating security after the Kosovo crisis in 1999 led to the conflict in Macedonia in 2001 (interview with DUI – Democratic Union for Integration, alb. *Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim, BDI,* MPs, 2018). Over 300,000 Albanians from Kosovo came to Macedonia and the Kosovo Liberation Army (UČK, alb. *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*) gave the initiative for the formation of the National Liberation Army (NLA, alb. *Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare*) in Macedonia for, as it said, the "liberation of the territory occupied by the Slavs in Macedonia" (interview with Spasov, 2018).

The EU-US (European Union and United States) mediated agreement in August 2001 quickly brought an end to the armed conflict. The OFA (Ohrid Framework Agreement) signed on 31 July 2001 with the EU's help envisioned a series of political and constitutional reforms, fulfilling many of the demands of Macedonian Albanians (Balalovska et al., 2002). The OFA introduced some features of power-sharing, transforming the country into a consociational democracy with the Albanian community gaining from the introduction of a double majority[5] in voting on bills sensitive for minorities and ensuring the equitable representation of Albanians in all government institutions (interview with Spasov, 2018). Also introduced were the concepts of 'majority population in Macedonia' for ethnic Macedonians and of 'community' for other ethnicities (Škarić, 2004: 176). In addition, other new elements were that: the Albanian language gained the status of an official language in those municipalities[6] where Albanians comprise more than 20% of the total population (Law on Territorial Organisation and Local Self-Administration, OG 55/2004); the right to have identity and travel papers in the Albanian language (Constitutional Amendments X and XVI, OG 91/2001); the use of Albanian language at all levels of education; and formation of a state university in the Albanian language funded by the state budget (according to the Amendments of the Law on Higher Education, OG, 64/2000, 49/2003 and the Law on Establishment of a State University in Tetovo OG, 8/2004). According to the Rules and Procedure of the Macedonian Assembly from 2002, MPs from the Albanian community are also entitled to speak in Albanian at plenary sessions and the sessions of

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[5] *The 'Badinter majority' means a majority from all MPs, including the majority of ethnic communities. Robert Badinter is a French Constitutional Court judge who was involved in negotiations in 2001.*

[6] *Out of 84 municipalities, Albanian is the official language in 30.*

working bodies of the Assembly, except for the Assembly Spokesman while presiding (OG, 60/2002).

Nevertheless, the new Law on Languages[7] and its implementation, including the issue of Albanian being used as an official language across the whole country, remains a point of conflict. The post-2001 period is still characterised by the segregation of education along ethnic lines (Kavaja, 2017). Ethnic groups' parallel living alongside each other, ethnic prejudice among teachers, pupils/students and their parents, ethnic bias in textbooks and the bringing in of new generations of teachers without any real-life inter-ethnic experiences into the education system add to the conflicting narratives and inter-ethnic animosity (Muhic, 2017). A particularly controversial issue concerning the Albanians' claim that they are in practice excluded from university studies has only to some extent been met by a single programme that is run in Albanian and offered by the Faculty of Pedagogy. On the contrary, Macedonians point to the post-2001 Ohrid policies focused on improving equity in education which (as noted international organisations' reports) have in fact faced significant implementation problems (Muhic, 2017; Kavaja, 2017). Today, Macedonia is considered to be a hybrid regime (Economist Intelligence Unit – Index, 2017) with significant and in recent times even deteriorating political and socio-economic problems (BTI, 2018).

The electoral system as a factor in party system characteristics

Between 1990 and 2014 three different electoral systems were tried out: majoritarian with 120 single-member units (1990 and 1994), mixed[8] (1998), proportional[9] with 6 multi-member units and 120 MPs (2002, 2004 and 2008), proportional with 9 units and 123 MPs (2011 and 2014) (SEC, 1990–2016) and, at the last elections held in 2016, proportional 120 MPs in 6 within-country electoral units and up to 3 MPs from a single out-of-country electoral unit (Art. 1, OG 196).

The measures available in Macedonia to ensure the protection of minorities are laudable (Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR, 2016). Albanian political parties have favoured the creation of a "single constituency and strict proportional representation, which was thought to enhance the number of Albanian deputies" (Bieber, 2005: 5). Such demands were not

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[7] *As this was not clearly defined in the OFA, the Macedonian President has still not signed this law.*

[8] *A mixed electoral system – 35 MPs were allocated via the proportional system while 85 were via the majoritarian electoral system (Article 2, Election Law, OG 24/98).*

[9] *120 members of Parliament were elected in a closed party proportional system in six constituencies according to the d'Hondt formula and 3 MPs in one constituency elected from the Macedonian diaspora (Europe and Africa, North and South America, Australia and Asia) (Electoral Code Amendments OG 196, 10. 11. 2015).*

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accepted because that would endanger the position of the bigger governing parties (interview with Georgievski, 2018).

In general, majoritarian electoral rules (in 1990 and 1994) helped the reformed communists snare substantial shares of electoral votes (Ivanov, 2001). Later, the mixed electoral rules have pushed towards systemic concentration (Casal Bértoa and Taleski, 2016) and the proportional system since 2002 has added to the PS's fragmentation. The measures to counter this PS fragmentation have been unsuccessful in stopping the multiplication of ethnic parties.

Nevertheless, the two biggest parties from the Macedonian bloc SDSM (Social-Democratic Union of Macedonia) from the left and VMRO DPMNE (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity) from the right) have led coalitions since the proportional electoral system was introduced. The two largest Albanian ethnic parties – DUI; DPA (Democratic Party of Albanians, alb. *Partia Demokratike Shqiptare*) and lately also the BESA (BESA Movement, alb. *Lëvizja Besa*) and Alliance for Albanians usually compete independently.

The development of political parties in Macedonia since 1990

A controlled transition from a one-party system to party pluralism

Due to the old ruling elite in Macedonia (the reformed SKM-PDP, later SDSM) maintaining control over the transition from a socialist system to party pluralism (Stojarová and Emerson, 2009), the remains of a one-party system political culture persisted (Mirčev and Hristova, 2008: 297). At the first multi-party elections, the main opponent of the reformed SKM-PDP was VMRO-DPMNE (a Christian-democratic party with an ethnic Macedonian nationalist orientation), constituting the second largest political party in Macedonia (Ramet, 1992). Even though VMRO-DPMNE won the first multiparty elections in November 1990 by obtaining 38 (31.7%) (SEC, 1990) of MPs, President Kiro Gligorov insisted on creating a 'government composed of experts'. In 1992, SDSM was able to make that a political reality and thus led the first government in 1992–1994, then the second in 1994–1998, the fourth in 2002–2006 and, since the 2016 elections, has been leading the current government.

The proliferation of political parties

The early transitional expansion in the number of parties included several unstable parties with an unclear ideological orientation, including a few moderate ethnic-based parties, economically-oriented parties (e.g. URF

– Union of Reform Forces of Macedonia), political organisations represent-
ing particular social groups (e.g. pensioners' parties), small parties emerg-
ing from the transformed old political organisations – such as the centre-left
SPM (Socialist Party of Macedonia) and LP (Liberal Party – a splinter of URF).
Instead, what emerged were 'catch all' parties and parties built on social net-
works without ambitions to identify, support or express the interests of spe-
cific social groups (Mirčev and Hristova, 2008: 299).

The trend of an increasing number of political parties continues today,
involving both the growing emergence of completely new parties as well as
splinters from existing parties (Figure 1).

Figure 1: NUMBER OF REGISTERED PARTIES OVER TIME (1990–2017)
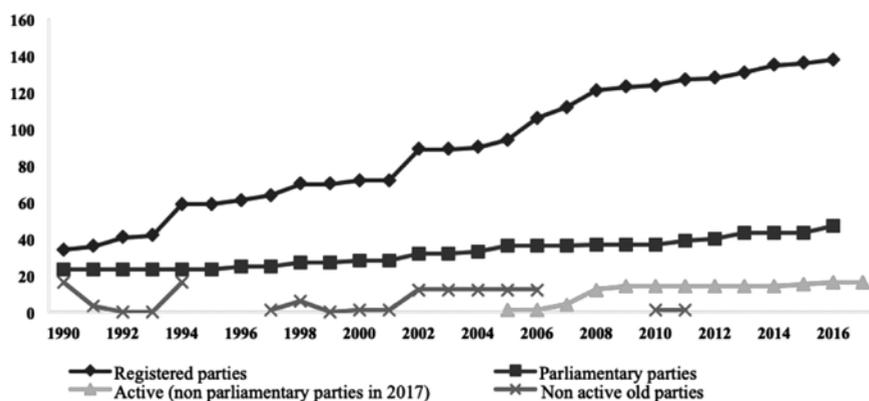
Source: Macedonian Parliament, 1990–2018b; SEC, 1990–2016; Andreeva and Markovska,
2013.

A few ethnic-based parties emerged during Macedonia's transition to a
democracy, but they have been proliferating particularly since 2001. They
are primarily Albanian parties as well as some parties of other ethnic minori-
ties (representing Turks, Roma, Serbs, Bosniaks living in Macedonia). A
party bloc made up of multiple parties is thus a post-2001 phenomenon.

Party system change in Macedonia since 1990

Taking the dynamic changes between the liberal-based and ethnic-based
party blocs into account, four periods in the PS can be identified:

Table 2: STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARTY SYSTEM

	Characteristics	Liberal-based parties	Emerging ethnic-based parties
First (1990–Sept. 1994)	Legalisation of political pluralism First multi-party elections (November 1990). Adoption of the first Law on Political Parties in 1994.	Conflict between the pro-Yugoslav reformed communists (SKM-PDP) and the anti-communist and pro-independence VMRO-DPMNE (with a platform for uniting all Macedonians) and MAAK striving to unite all Macedonians.	The first ethnic Albanian party emerged – PDP. NDP as its fraction. DP of Turks and the PCERM.
Second (August 1994–1998)	Rise of nationalism in both Macedonian and Albanian ethnic parties, but also in other smaller ethnic parties, in addition to protecting minority rights.	Within the Macedonian bloc, additional small parties with a centre-left orientation were established (LDP, DP, DA).	The Law on Political Parties (OG, 41/94) intended to prevent the formation of ethnic parties (Casal Bértoa and Taleski, 2016: 7) by requiring parties to organise and act across the whole country, not just in certain municipalities.
Third (1999–2001)	– Corruption scandals related to the shock-therapy privatisation. – Suspicions of the government being involved in organised crime. – Replacement of the Social Democrat government. – Ethnic armed conflict. – The OFA was signed by a coalition of the two major parties in the Macedonian bloc (VMRO DPMNE and SDSM) and two major ethnic Albanian parties (DPA and PDP) emerged.	Additional political pluralisation due to splits of liberal-based parties' (mostly due to the stronger nationalistic currents in these parties).	Increasing radicalisation of Albanian parties, even leading to armed conflict in 2001 between Albanians and government forces.
Fourth (2002–)	Implementation of the OFA.	A new wave of new ethnic-based parties representing and additional party splits within the Macedonian political party bloc.	Radicalisation of the Albanian segment of parties Founding of a new Albanian party after the 2001 conflict – DUI, mainly composed of NLA military.

Source: The authors' own model.

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Qualitative analysis of changes in the party system

Polarisation of the two blocs containing different kinds of parties

In 2000, Georgievski and Škarić (2000) estimated that Macedonia's multiparty system is a symmetrical polarised multiparty system based on two blocs: Macedonian and Albanian. While Petre Georgievski corroborated this characterisation when interviewed in May 2018, he also described additional aspects of the current PS, which are included in Table 3.

Table 3: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MACEDONIAN PARTY SYSTEM

Ethnic-based polarisation of the Macedonian party system:	
The Macedonian bloc of political parties	The Albanian bloc of political parties
Closed to the representation of Macedonians' interests	Closed to the representation of Albanians' interests
Ideological polarisation	
Ideological positioning on the left–right ideological scale	No left–right ideological positioning
	Polarisation in terms of the level of radicalism in realising ethnic political goals

Source: The authors' own model; Georgievski and Škarić, 2000; Interview with Georgievski, 2018; Interview with Billali, 2018; Interview with DUI MPs, 2018.

While the Macedonian party bloc is composed of parties which can be located on the left–right continuum, parties in the ethnic party bloc can be distinguished by their level of radicalisation. In the interethnic conflict of 2001, the ethnic cleavage prevailed which primarily involved the liberal-based Macedonian party bloc and the Albanian bloc of ethnic parties. Further, the polarisation seen among the ethnic-based parties in terms of the level of radicalism in solving ethnic political issues has been increasing.

Ideological distance within the liberal-based party bloc

Since the 1990s, the main conflict has persisted between two parties in the Macedonian party bloc– SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE. There are several reasons for such polarisation of the Macedonian political-party bloc: a) the polarisation is an expression of traditional ideological differences since VMRO DPMNE believes it originates from the VMRO founded in 1893 (whose purpose was liberation from five centuries of occupation by the Ottomans), but has had a 'magnet' influence by attracting a considerable number of members and supporters through its ethnic Macedonian nationalistic appeal; and b) SDSM declared itself a successor to SKM-PDP, which also consisted of its former members and their sympathisers.

Since 2002, the Macedonian political bloc has become more fragmented as small parties have emerged, such as the centre-right oriented VMRO-NP (VMRO People's Party) as a fraction of VMRO-DPMNE (founded by the former leader of VMRO-DPMNE) and the centre-left NSDP (New Social-Democratic Party) as an offshoot of SDSM. Some new parties, such as the Greens – DOM (Democratic Renewal of Macedonia), grew from new social movements.

While the analysis of party and electoral programmes (Mirčev and Hristova, 2008: 298–299) shows there is no a huge ideological difference among the political parties since most stress general development, the transformation of society, a 'European' future, voters of the two largest parties (SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE) appear to have some differences reflecting specific aspects of their voters (MCMS, IDSCS and Telma, 2016).

Ideological cleavage within the ethnic-based party bloc

According to the interviews, the Albanian parties' reason for existence is to solve ethnic problems and left–right ideological differences have not played any major role in the inter-ethnic cleavages. Nevertheless, the interviews highlighted important differences in the level of radicalisation among Albanian parties when it comes to selecting the means for achieving political reforms to improve the status of Albanians in Macedonia.

As the first ethnic party in parliament, PDP (Party for Democratic Prosperity, alb. *Partia për prosperitet demokratik*) participated in government coalitions with SDSM and was initially created as a liberal party that installed an ethnic Macedonian as vice-president (interview with Billali, 2018). However, internal differences in the level of radicalisation among its members in 1998 saw it split with PDPA (Party for Democratic Prosperity of Albanians in Macedonia, alb. *Partia për prosperitet demokratik Shqiptar*) being founded (a fraction of PDP) that sought the federalisation of Macedonia and aimed for Albanian to be at recognises as the second (other) state nationality (Wojnicki, 2016). PDPA and NDP (Party for Democratic Prosperity of Albanians in Macedonia and People's Democratic Party, alb. *Partia për prosperitet demokratik Shqiptar dhe Partia Demokratike e Popullit*) (another offshoot of PDP) merged and in 2002 formed the DPA party that attracted sympathy among the Albanian population due to its more radical demands. PDP then slowly disappeared from the political scene.

The cleavages within the parties based on ethnic grounds became more visible after the 2001 conflict, dividing them according to how radical the demands made were regarding ethnic issues.

Since 2002, new parties have appeared with the goal of realising the

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requirements for making constitutional and legal changes. One critical policy issue has been the new Law on Languages. The most influential is DUI (a successor to NLA). Since DUI entered the political scene by winning 16 seats at the September 2002 parliamentary elections (taking third place after SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE), the other Albanian parties have faded. After 2014, a new Albanian ethnic party known as the 'BESA Movement' has emerged. In addition, in 2016 a coalition of splinter parties from DUI and DPA formed the Alliance for Albanians (DR-ADP – Movement for Reform, Democratic Party of Albanians, alb. *Levizja per Reforma PDSH*; UNITETI – Unity; RDK – National Democratic Revival, alb. *Rilindja Demokratike Kombëtare*).

Quantitative measures of the party system

Quantitative measures (Table 4) show the increasing number of political parties has not radically altered the fractionalisation of the parliamentary PS (which since 2011 has stabilised with the index of fractionalisation being a little over 0.7).

However, the number of ethnic parties rose from 4 to 5 (from 33% to 56% of all parties) in the period before 2002 to 7–12 ethnic parties in the parliament since 2002 (44%–60%). While, in the period before 2002, the percentage of MPs from ethnic parties ranged between 18% and 21%, since 2002 that share has been between 23% and 29%.

Nevertheless, the growing number of political parties (of these, most are only represented by 1, 2 or 3 MPs) has not led to the more balanced political representation of various ethnic groups. Conversely, the effective number of parliamentary parties has even decreased since 2008 from 5.434 to a slightly more than 3 parties.

Table 4: MACEDONIAN PARTY SYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS IN 1990–2018
ACCORDING TO QUANTITATIVE AND SOME QUALITATIVE MEASURES

Elections Party system characteristics	1990	1994[10]	1998	2002	2006	2008	2011	2014	2016
No. of all parliamentary parties after each election	12	9	12	19	20	18	20	15	20
MPs from **ethnic** parties	24	21	26	33	33	32	36	32	28
MPs from **liberal**-based parties	96	99	94	87	87	88	87	91	92
No. of ethnic-based **parliamentary** parties	4 (33.3%)	5 (55.5%)	3 (25%)	10 (52.6%)	9 (45%)	8 (44.4%)	12 (60%)	7 (46.6%)	12 (60%)
No. of liberal-based **parliamentary** parties	8 (66.7%)	4 (44.5%)	9 (75%)	9 (47.4%)	11 (55%)	10 (55.6%)	8 (40%)	8 (53.4%)	8 (40%)
% share of votes for ethnic-based **governing** parties	(SMC) 1st round: 15,4% 2nd round: 7,3%	(SMC) 1st round: 8,8% 2nd round: 15,2%	(SMC) 1st round: 4,78% 2nd round: 3,64% (Party List) 19,27%	12,18%	7,5%	12,82%	10,24%	13,71%	15,09%
% share of votes for liberal-based **governing** parties	1st round: 42.3% 2nd round: 48.7%	1st round: 29.5% 2nd round: 53.5%	(SMC) 1st round: 33.05% 2nd round: 47.87% (Party List) 38.83%	41.59%	38.54%	48.78%	38.98%	42.97%	36.66%
Index of fractionalisation (Fp)	0.770[11]	0.692[12]	0.803	0.745	0.816	0.686	0.729	0.731	0.714
Effective no. of parliamentary parties (ENPP)	5.102	1.865	5.076	3.932	5.434	3.184	3.690	3.717	3.496
Electoral volatility	_	35.4	34.1	23.2	20.2	10.9	14.8	12	23

Source: the authors' own calculations based on Macedonian Parliament data for 1990–2018 and SEC data for 1990–2016.

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[10] *At the 1990 and 1994 elections, the majoritarian election system was used whereby a candidate needed a majority of the votes, but no less than 1/3 of the votes of all voters. If no candidate won a majority, a second round was held after 14 days among candidates who had received at least 7% of votes in the first round (Article 54, Law on the Election of MPs, OG 28/90).*

[11] *Among the pp are calculate also 5 independent candidates (as one party).*

[12] *Plus 7 independent candidates calculate as one party.*

A synthesis of qualitative and quantitative analysis

Macedonia's PS has seen dynamic changes in the period from 1990 to 2018 moving from the initial largely liberal-based PS featuring several ethnic-based parties to the current PS containing a significant bloc of ethnic-based parties and a predominant inter-ethnic cleavage.

While quantitative measures of the PS indicate the Macedonian PS seems to be stabilising (e.g. a quite stable index of fractionalisation and a narrowing of the number of relevant parties to just over three), the qualitative analysis based on the interviews suggests Macedonia is in fact challenged by political destabilisation.

Research stemming from the methodology applied suggests the transformation which is overlooked by quantitative measurements of PS change entails shifts: 1) in the shares of parliamentary seats of both liberal- and ethnic-based parties; and 2) increasing radicalisation of ethnic-based parties together with the 'ethnification' of liberal-based ones. However, there are exactly these measures that matter considerably when seeking to describe the PS and the changes in the PS! It also matters whether a particular ethnic group is represented by its own party or not, which is relevant in the Sartorian sense. As shown in Macedonia, only the biggest ethnic minority has succeeded to achieve such a position in the country's PS.

Conclusion

In this article, we have shown the deficiencies of the dominant approach used to measure party system characteristics and their dynamic changes in a setting of liberal-based and ethnic-based party blocs. Given that for cases like this the already known PS typologies are unable to capture the true character of the PSs, we propose an additional typology for use when describing such PSs.

While studying the party system in Macedonia, we applied both the usual approach of quantitatively measuring PSs and the qualitative approach based on distinguishing the liberal-based and ethnic-based party blocs. This showed how the PS has evolved from 1990 to 2018 from liberal characteristics (largely liberal-based parties and left–right cleavages) to ethnic characteristics (largely ethnic-based parties and dominant ethnic cleavages). Nevertheless, more research based on further academic considerations including other methods (such as content analysis of party manifestos and normative acts in the centre of political dispute) is needed to both facilitate an even deeper understanding of the party and party system dynamics in Macedonia and to refine conceptual issues.

Overall, we believe that, without combining the quantitative and qualitative approaches to measure and analyse the main structure and cleavages in such PSs, it is impossible to reveal the structures and processes that are crucial for detecting (de)stabilisation of the PS and the prospects for democracy. This agrees with the thesis (Powell, 2009; Dalton, 2008) that stability of political systems is more a function of the polarisation of PSs than their fragmentation as well as Dalton's thesis that when studying PSs quality should count more than quantity (Dalton, 2008: 917).

We hope our research encourages: 1) comparative research into party systems which include ethnic- and/or religion-based parties; 2) changes in such party systems; and 3) further methodological/analytical developments to determine the characteristics of those systems and how they change.

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