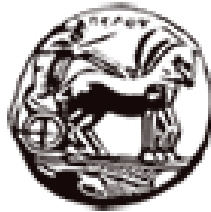


Democracy and State Building in Contemporary Politics: The cases of North Macedonia and Serbia



University of the Peloponnese

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Master Program in Mediterranean Studies

Democracy and State-Building in Contemporary International Politics:

The Cases of North Macedonia and Serbia

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Δημοκρατία και Κρατική Ανοικοδόμηση στην Σύγχρονη Πολιτική: Τα παραδείγματα της Βόρειας Μακεδονίας και της Σερβίας



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Κόρινθος, Μάρτιος 2019

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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's Degree in the Mediterranean Studies

Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	5
<i>Introduction</i>	7
<i>What is Democracy?</i>	8
<i>What is State Building?</i>	10
<i>N. Macedonia: A divided state?</i>	12
<i>Background</i>	12
<i>Democracy & State Building</i>	14
<i>Serbia: A unified state?</i>	20
<i>Background</i>	20
<i>Democracy & State Building</i>	21
<i>In Conclusion</i>	27
<i>Bibliography</i>	29

Abstract

The subject of state-building and democracy has gradually come into prevalence after the end of II World War. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia this two concepts gained much popularity. In the following essay we will first analyse (briefly) democracy and state building; and then examine the two case studies that were selected for this paper: North Macedonia and Serbia. They are neighboring states that have similar qualities and history; however, they diverge in some regards. North Macedonia multi-ethnic background caused divisions that affected its political and economic development to succeed; its state-building, democracy-making and peace-keeping were only partly met, having to focus simultaneously on the three, marking it a hybrid democracy. On the other hand, Serbia's autocratic and nationalistic tendencies favored it a strong state, which, however, negated any democratization efforts and weakening its democratic institutions leading it to be characterized as a flawed democracy. Nevertheless, each country is found striving to improve and overcome the faults of the past. Balkans are still a land full of opportunities eager to change; though without the support of the E.U. it would be difficult to succeed in this task.

Keywords: state, state-building, democracy, democratization, policies, politics, peace-keeping, democracy, state, Europe, Balkans, N. Macedonia, Serbia

Περίληψη

Το θέμα της κρατικής ανοικοδόμησης και δημοκρατίας έχει σταδιακά έρθει στο προσκήνιο μετά το τέλος του 2ου Παγκοσμίου Πολέμου. Ύστερα από τη διάλυση της Σοβιετικής Ένωσης και της Γιουγκοσλαβίας, οι δύο αυτές έννοιες κέρδισαν μεγάλη δημοτικότητα. Στο ακόλουθο δοκίμιο θα αναλύσουμε πρώτα (εν συντομία) τη δημοκρατία και την οικοδόμηση κρατών, και στη συνέχεια θα εξετάσουμε τις δύο περιπτωσιολογικές μελέτες που επιλέχθηκαν για το παρόν έγγραφο: Βόρεια Μακεδονία και Σερβία. Είναι γειτονικά κράτη που έχουν παρόμοια χαρακτηριστικά και ιστορία. Ωστόσο, αποκλίνουν από ορισμένες απόψεις. Το πολυεθνικό περιβάλλον της Βόρειας Μακεδονίας προκάλεσε περιθωριοποιήσεις που επηρέασαν την πολιτική και οικονομική της ανάπτυξη. Η οικοδόμηση του κράτους, η οικοδόμηση της δημοκρατίας και η διατήρηση της ειρήνης καλύφθηκαν μόνο εν μέρει, καθώς προσπάθησε να επιτελέσει ταυτόχρονα και τα τρία, χαρακτηρίζοντάς την ως μία υβριδική δημοκρατία. Από την άλλη, οι αυταρχικές και εθνικιστικές τάσεις της Σερβίας της πρόσφεραν ένα ισχυρό κράτος, το οποίο, ωστόσο, ακύρωνε τις προσπάθειες εκδημοκρατισμού και αποδυνάμωσε τους δημοκρατικούς της θεσμούς, γεγονός που την οδήγησε να χαρακτηριστεί ως ελαττωματική δημοκρατία. Παρ' όλα αυτά, κάθε χώρα συνεχίζει να προσπαθεί να βελτιώσει και να ξεπεράσει τα λάθη του παρελθόντος. Τα Βαλκάνια εξακολουθούν να είναι μια γη γεμάτη ευκαιρίες με διάθεση για αλλαγή. Αλλά χωρίς την υποστήριξη της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης, θα είναι δύσκολο να επιτύχουν σε αυτό το στόχο.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: κράτος, κρατική οικοδόμηση, δημοκρατία, εκδημοκρατισμός, πολιτική, διατήρηση της ειρήνης, Ευρώπη, Βαλκάνια, Βόρεια Μακεδονία, Σερβία

"But the art of the ceramist, like the metallurgist, is not only to know what he wants to make – he must know the properties of the material he is working on." (H. J. Mackinder, 1962, p. 157)

Introduction

In this paper we would examine the development of state building and democracy in Serbia and North Macedonia. We would first analyze the meaning of democracy and its different quotations and then the issue of state building. After that, we would use these two concepts to look deeper into the current state of the two case studies: Serbia and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

This dissertation will use qualitative method of analysis; most would be comprised of scientific articles and few interviews— which were semi-structure questions in a discussion format interview. The questions that were asked were: “What do you believe about the democracy in N. Macedonia?” “What is your opinion, what is the society’s opinion?” “What is the role of the state in N. Macedonia?”

The issue of democracy and state building has become popularized during the last decades in politics— due to a series of democratizations and state-building campaigns after the end of the Cold War— and as result in the academic literature. Though their interpretations have become even more difficult. Their meaning has become more complex and their qualities they offer more varied. More than ever before democracy and state-building have become attached to each other. Influences by liberalism and modernism have aligned state-building with democratization when they often have contradictory goals, leading to inconsistent results; as their goals aren’t always aligned to the each other. This analysis would not focus on if democratization and state-building should happen together. But it would suggest it as possible continuation of the subject.

The Balkans have often become the center of political attention; often called the powder keg of Europe. Exaggeration or not there is some truth in that statement as Balkans politics they are usually are a bit complex. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia —flavored by the wars between the previously member countries— followed a democratization and state-building period. Some states favored better than others, case being Slovenia, Montenegro and Croatia. On the other hand, Serbia, N. Macedonia and of course Bosnia & Herzegovina lagged behind. The case of BiH offers to be a very interesting “theater” for state-building analysis — but it won’t be examined here as it is outside the scope of this essay and has already done many times before — and, not surprisingly, the academic literature showed overwhelming emphasis on this country but neglecting others Balkans countries, who also present interesting state-building and democratization narratives. For instance, while Serbian politics were examined before, most of the academic literature only focused on the Milosevic period and only some briefly examined the separate story of the Serbian state outside the Milosevic shadow, and period.

This paper would like to bring some light to the democratization and state-building procedures in Serbia and N. Macedonia; and by doing that it hopes to open the way for further analysis in the area.

What is Democracy?

Democratic regimes are becoming more and more widespread in our world. Nevertheless, not all regimes that call themselves democratic are democracies. Though being a democracy increase the legitimacy power of a regime— inside or outside the country. That wide-spread expansion of democracy influenced the academic studies more than ever before to examine and analyze it; and possible reaching to deeper comprehension of the concept of democracy. After the end Cold War the number of (possible) democracies has significantly increased. This period, our period, is the era of democracy. But it is also the period where the concept of democracy has so many different quotations, meanings and interpenetrations (Dahl, 2001, pp. 15-17, p. 24).

What really means to be democratic? What is a democracy? The word democracy derives from the Greek word “δημοκρατία” which means the people (δῆμος) rules (κράτος). But then new questions arrive: Who can be characterized as people? How they participate? What is the scope of “rule”? How people should obey? Do democracies use coercion?

Dahl (2001, p.63) has mentioned five qualities that a democracy offers being:

1. Substantial participation (equal and fair opportunities of all citizens in decision making procedure)
2. Equality of vote
3. Equal and fair access to information of relevant politics in the decision-making; and of their relative consequences
4. Equal and fair access in the selections of the agenda
5. Political equality (among the adult population)

Ball & Peters (2000, pp. 104-5) have also suggested seven criteria that make up a democracy; being the below:

1. Party-pluralism
2. Political competition within free and fair accepted rules
3. Free opportunities in participation in positions of political authority of all citizens
4. Elections and regular intervals with universal suffrage of all citizens
5. Free activity of interest groups
6. Protection and assurance of human rights (and political freedoms)
7. Separation of power (judicial, executive, legislative)

All the above criteria bring us closer to what democracy might mean in our political world. However, it doesn't explain fully what democracy really mean. As Dahl many times mention in his book *"On democracy"* (2001) it really difficult to fully explain what democracy really means but some would agree that: "Democracy entails a political community in which there is some form of political equality among its people" (D. Held, 2006, p. introduction). Dahl also agrees that political equality exist as the base of democracy. Democracy, at the end, combines the elements of freedom, equality and control of political power (Matthijs Bogaards, 2009, p. 401)

For D. Held democracy isn't the perfect governance – at least the ones that exists in the present times – but as he states (Held, p. introduction) "it offers the most compelling principles for legitimacy".

Democracy has involved much during the centuries; from classical democracy, to republicanism, to liberal and pluralistic democracy. So, the question remains; is democracy still democratic? The answer is yes; democracy didn't remain the same it evolved. We should emphasize that each situation is different. Each country is different and each period is different. As we have developed as a society so does the concept of democracy that fits with our way of life (T. A. Koelble & E. Lipuma, 2008).

"A political system is democratic inasmuch as it embodies the values of political freedom and political equality" (G. L. Munck, 2016, p.2). The central concept of democracy still is present. Nothing is perfect; but we should understand that democratization is a process (Tato Kvamladze, 2012, p.10).

In this essay we would be examine deeper the democratization procedure in two case studies: N. Macedonia and Serbia. We will first analyse the quality of their democratic standards and then see interrelation between democracy and state-building. Democratization is often closely linked to state-building. Before the emergence of liberal ideas state-building didn't focus on building democratic institutions; however, after the spread of liberal democratic ideas, it is almost become attached to the concept of state-building. If that attachment is in the end something positive or negative it would not be discussed here as it would not be the focus of this essay. In this essay we would examine, though, the relation between state building and democracy in the case studies of N. Macedonia and Serbia.

What is State Building?

To construct a state is a difficult task. Many actors are involved; from the different state organs (judicial, executive, supervisory), the local community, to the international community.

After the end of Cold war state-building initiatives started to increase (M. Ignatieff, p. 85-110 & Dominik Balthasar, 2017). It became a very common practice. The “state-building caravan” – as M. Ignatieff (p. 94) very profoundly criticized – moved from one country to another organizing and building failed states. From the Middle-East, South-Asia to the Balkans; state-building became the new trend and a new economic heaven for fund raising (Ignatieff, p. 85-110).

But what exactly is state-building? Fukuyama has stated (cited in Dahal 2012, p.8) “State building is creation of new government institutions and strengthening of existing one”. Fukuyama definition focuses on the stabilization issues in post-conflict societies and capacity building, which aim in increasing self-sustaining political and economic institution that might build the right conditions for emergence of democracy and economic growth (Andrea Kathryn Talentino, 2009, pp. 378-9).

State-building goal is in drastic social changes and improvement of the quality of living of the people. More precisely it revolves around capacity building, conflict transformation of post-conflict societies, retaining peace, tackling violence, keeping in check the rise of nationalism, participation of people in politics, structural changes of the state, improvement of rule of law, anti-corruption policies, improvement of social services for people and economic development (A. Dahal, pp. 1-4). State-building encompasses, as we see, many different qualities and characteristics making it not a clearly defined concept, as it is emphasized by Dahal (pp. 1-2).

States building incorporate other concepts into its field. There is a need for some distinction between nation-building, peace-building and state-building (Dominik Balthasar, 2017, p. 475-480). Nation-building gained the most relevance prior the I W.W. and after the I W.W. That period was the time when most modern European-states, as we know now, were formed (G. L. Munck, 2016, p. 22). Nation building can't happen without state-building; they work together almost aiming at the same goal. Nation-building aims at creating a common nation while state-building at a functioning state. The literature is divided on how what is the best way to accomplish state-building; if we need a common nation, or they can exist other scenarios. We know that every case –every country– is different and it is very difficult and illogical or impractical to try to create theories and models for every separate case-study (Robert Egnell (2010).

For peace building and state-building some say that their relation is in a way contradictory (D. Balthasar, 2017 p.p. 475-483 & H. Marquette & D. Beswick, 2011) while other argue that they can work together (Stefan Wolff, 2011. p.p. 1780). With peace building the aim is to end or at least seize the conflict between the warring parties; and try to build some idea of peace. The goal is to maintain that peace; that might lead to a positive or a negative peace, depending the situation in each country. Peace building aims in de-centralizing the governance, spreading the

control and including more members in the power system. However, that diffusion of power and rule weakens the state institutions and might also block further development in the democratization of the country. That is contradictory. The power-sharing system is often one of the methods to maintain peace but might also lead to dead-ends in the democratic institutions as no consensus is able to be made between the different parties; case of example Bosnia & Herzegovina. State-building aims in centralized the power structure but that would possible threaten the peace in a post-conflict society (Nenad Zakošek, 2008, pp.589-590 & Tato Kvamladze, 2012, p. 8).

In our contemporary world these three concepts of state-building, peace-building and nation building are used in union to succeed in building sustainable and autonomous states (Stefan Wolff, 2011, p.1780). Their role might be contradictory but they complement each other. The aim is to find the right balance between each one of them so they don't decrease the effectiveness of the other procedures. In this essay we will use state-building as the over-arching concept of them all, for reasons of brevity.

North Macedonia: A divided state?

Background

North Macedonia was one of the few Yugoslav states— among Slovenia and Montenegro— that succeeded without an armed conflict. Its peaceful declaration of independence predicted a positive future ahead. However, it couldn't succeed fully in the democratization and state-building goals it set; only succeeding though on maintaining peace among the different ethnic parties – whatever the shape that peace might be (BCC, July 2018 & L. Danforth, June 2018).

N. Macedonia state building procedure and democratization after its independence were commenced slowly. It focused more on maintaining order in the newly formed, ethnically divided, state. Only after the 2001 armed-crisis a state building and democratization plan started to be implemented truly. Through the continual support and, at some points, pressure of international community (NATO and the EU) N. Macedonia slowly formed its contemporary state. Though corruption still affects the country and the share of the grey economy remains high. In addition the confidence in the governmental structures remains somewhat low but it has certainly increased, in the last period. Recent events in 2015 and 2016 and the political crisis that followed – the scandal with the governing party and its then president and then Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski – showed that still politics in N. Macedonia aren't fully stable and it is highly possible being that factor why the wider public doesn't trust its government so much. However, the recent change in leadership (the election of Zoran Zaev as the prime minister position in 2017) showed that N. Macedonia might begin to desire some change. But if it remains ethnically divided it would be difficult to accomplish its goals.

N. Macedonia was one the few countries that didn't want the Yugoslav Federation to be separated. Its size was small as it was its economic relevance. It was depended to the Federation. However, the wars in BiH, Croatia, and Kosovo pushed N. Macedonia to seek independence in 1991 (I. Αρμακόλας & Θ. Π. Ντόκος, 2013 & L. Danforth, June 2018).

Apart from its small size, N. Macedonia consists, also, of a diverse mixture of ethnicities –64,2% Macedonians 25,2% Albanians, 3,9% Turks, 2,9 Roma, 1,8 Serb and 2% various other– which often polarized a political scene (Thorsten Gromes, 2009, p. 4). That polarization is often the critic that is made against the efforts of democratization in countries which are significantly ethnically divided. N. Macedonia possible has a need for a different kind of democratic development; a different plan for democracy which doesn't reinforce the internal ethnical divisions.

The 2001 was the most critical point in N. Macedonia politics. During the Kosovo dispute some portion of the Albanian population (more specifically the members of the party National Liberation Army (NLA) which allegedly had close links with the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA)) were influenced to fight at first for independence and then for more rights for the Albanian community. That was the lowest point in the political scene in N. Macedonia, almost leading to

a full scaled war and as a result halted for a short period the development of the country for a period. However, it didn't impact the country as negatively as it was expected. Economic growth continues now to be high¹, though unemployment also remains high even with the continual growth. The grey-economy constitutes significant portions of the market, which, in a way, might make it more self-sufficient when in situations of economic imbalances in the international scene, but at the same time it creates much of the economic stagnation in the country, decreasing further the chances of development and integration in the economic sector towards, also, to the E.E. economic guidelines (Thorsten Gromes, 2009). EU can and needs to become the driving force of N. Macedonia; to guide it forward in implementing more changes. Without the "EU-dream" N. Macedonia would be left without something to strive for and would fall to its nationalistic politics – as it happened in most of the first and second decade of the 21st century.

Lastly, it is often argued that N. Macedonia main issue is the relation with Greece (Stephane Lefebvre, 1994). That is the critical factor that determines the future of the country. Due to their name-dispute N. Macedonia has been denied the entry of both the NATO and the E.U. It is a complex issue in which N. Macedonia seems trapped into. Many tries had been made to resolved it, but to no avail. Only recently in 2018 after almost three decades an agreement is close to be reached. If both countries legitimized their agreement it would signal a new era for N. Macedonia. Talks with the NATO and EU have already started. N. Macedonia needs the European future. In 30 September 2018 the citizens of N. Macedonia were called to the polls to decide for the future of their country. It was historic moment; and many were anxious about the results. (BCC, July, 2018). After the referendum we can now see that the situation still remains complicated. As many referendums have showed before –the Greek referendum, the Brexit referendum– results can't be guaranteed. The turn-out was low (37%), as it was reported, due to the efforts for boycott of the opposition. Many have deemed the result as define– due the low turnout– supporting the claim that the majority of citizens would have voted "no" if the turnout would have been higher (N. Fotakis, October 2018). However other argue that we should be more cautious examining the results. The turnout might have been low, but 91.5% of the voters voted in favor of the deal. Taking into account previous elections of 2016 and 2014 the total turnout were 67% and 65% accordingly. The boycotts have reduced the voter's participation by 28 to 30 percentages. It would have doubtful if the referendum results would have been any different. Most likely the yes vote would have prevailed by 51 to 52 percent (V. Sarafidis, October, 2018). Nevertheless, the complexity of the name dispute isn't over yet; it remains a few more months to finally come to definite results–if that would be possible. The certain thing is that opponents of the referendum, both in Greece and N. Macedonia, became more hopeful. It remains to be seen how Zoran Zaev and N. Macedonia would continue moving forward after the referendum (Neos Kosmos, 5 October 2018).

¹ World Bank, available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/macedonia/overview#3>

North Macedonia

Democracy & State Building

Indicators

NiT-N. Macedonia	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
National Democratic Governance	4	4	4	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.75	5	4.75
Electoral Process	3.5	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.5	3.75	4	4
Civil Society	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.5	3.25	3.25	3.25
Local Democratic Governance	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	4	4	4
Independent Media	4.25	4.25	4.5	4.75	4.75	5	5	5.25	5.25	5
Judicial Framework and Independence	4	4	4	4	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.5	4.75	4.75
Corruption	4.25	4	4	4	4	4	4.25	4.25	4.75	4.75
Democracy Scores	3.86	3.79	3.82	3.89	3.93	4	4.07	4.29	4.43	4.36

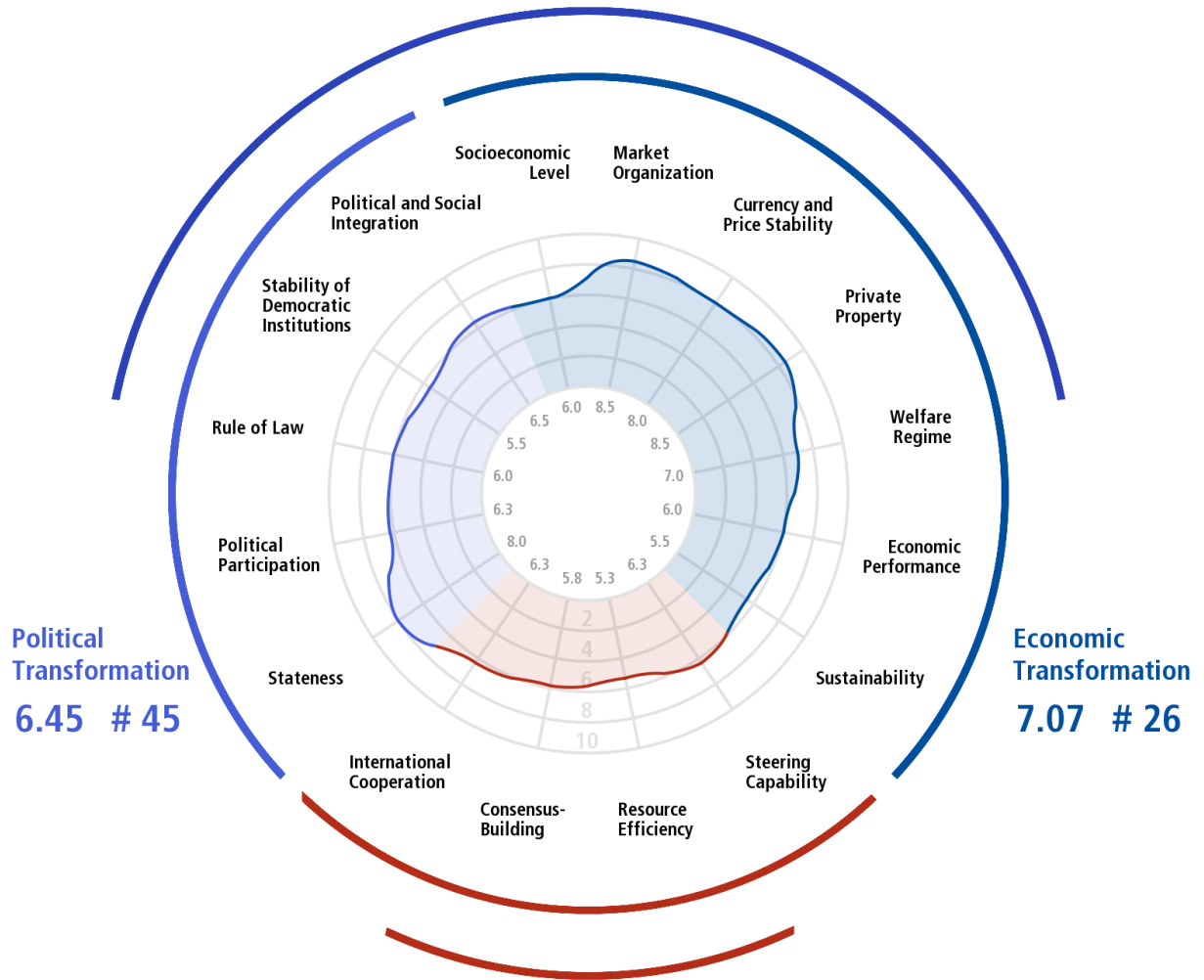
Country Profile: Serbia. Nation in Transit Report – <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2018/macedonia>

North Macedonia

Status Index

6.76 # 31

on 1-10 scale out of 129



Governance Index

5.24 # 53

on 1-10 scale out of 129

BTI 2018 Country Report: N. Macedonia – <https://www.bti-project.org/en/reports/country-reports/detail/itc/MKD/>

State building

N. Macedonia state-building procedure starts from the time of Yugoslav Federation. Tito organized and promoted the Macedonian identity as the underlying quality of the state-building effort. By state-building we mean nation-building which that was the goal of Tito; to unite N. Macedonia and create a common identity. This procedure can be characterized as antiquation and it was emphasized by the post-Yugoslav era (Anastas Vangeli, 2011); and revived during the period of P. Minister of N. Gruevski – from 2006 to 2014.

In the literature there is debate about the complementary character of state-building and nation-building –and if the one means the other. In large the scientific literature is affected by the European historiography which focuses much on the nation-state. However, there are could be other possible ways to construct a state without creating first a common nation. But there isn't a consensus on that subject. In the case of N. Macedonia, building a common nation-identity would have been a bit complex –at the least– coupling also with establishing a function state and trying to democratize the country. Adding to that, in the later years of independence N. Macedonia had to also the need to build and maintain the peace, between the different ethnic groups (mainly N. Macedonia's Macedonians and Albanians). That was, in effect, due to the crisis of the 2001 –with the Albanian community and the Ohrid Agreement that ensue after it– N. Macedonia had to follow as well a peace-building procedure (T. Gromes, 2009).

Having being influenced by the liberal ideology of its neighbor policies of the EU (and in a way pressured to do so) N. Macedonia tried to follow, as well, a democratization procedure parallel to the state-building one. Here we reach to another debate –about whether is possible to build a democracy having first a solid state or it is better to first build democratic institutions and a functional state will then emerge. It is a complex issue and we should note that every case is different. Democracy offers the ability to every side to participate in the politics and express their views and that can increase the acceptance of the state but also can lead to an increase in the divisions and the nationalistic tendencies (Nenad Zakošek, 2008).

N. Macedonia had too many tasks to work for; and each one of them was on critical period in their development. As a result it reached a hiatus – that caused political and economical stagnation. The state-building procedure having a multi-focus attitude wasn't able to successfully implement fully any of the state-building and the democratization goals. It was counter-productive from the start. The problem in N. Macedonia lies in is it's ethnically divisions. Whereas there is a relative absence of a systemic threat or defiance against the state the ethnic groups live separately. That division creates division and perpetuates the ethnic cleavages. In that environment possibilities for reconciliation and economic or political development are minimal. Stagnation, in the end, becomes the result and the reason for the problem. Nevertheless, it managed, at the same time, to create a somewhat stability, in the

form of negative peace –is possible on the same bases of the peace-building-structure in Bosnia & Herzegovina as one extreme example (H. Marquette & D. Beswick (2011).

In large N. Macedonia was a state for the better half of the 20s century—even if it didn't have full autonomy it was still a more or less function state. So, can we say that after so many years of existence N. Macedonia has completed its state-building procedure? Yes and No; here is where the complexity arises. State-building is not a linear procedure, the same with democratization as well. So, over the years N. Macedonia was evolving but that development never fully finalized due to the de-thrust of the governmental organs, the low political participation, the high levels of corruption and the high percentage of the grey economy. All were reason that kept N. Macedonia from establishing stronger state institutions.

In the period of 2015-2016 the wiretapping scandal emerged created a crisis in the political system of the country. The judicial system slowly started pursuit cases against these proceedings in 2015 and later gained more support in 2017 after the eventually change of power of the governing party. The Special Public Prosecutors Office (SJO) investigated the wiretapping scandal and assembled 24 cases against 165 individuals (many political and governmental figures as the previous P.M. Gruevski (S. J. Marusic, 2018, C & S. J. Marusic, 2018).

In a hybrid democracy, as N. Macedonia, the problems in the functioning of government, political culture and political participation are more prevalent. Corruption is more widespread, while rule of law, civil society, media freedom (Sinisa Jakov Marusic, Aug 2018B) and the judicial system all are weaker.

The crisis of 2001 was the major instance of violence that N. Macedonia have experienced in the 21st century. In general N. Macedonia was able to maintain the peace between the different ethnic lines, though the divisions remain. Politics are strongly view through the “ethnic-lines” creating often polarization between the different groups; which in return degrades the political function of the democratic institutions.

N. Macedonia was able to achieve in maintaining peace. Though, N. Macedonia is still is, in large aspects a divided society. Albanians live with Albanians and marry Albanians; and the same goes with N. Macedonia's Macedonians. Peace-building and state-building is often regarded as contradictory concepts. And that idea holds some truth in that. Peace-making, as it is also known, focuses on maintain the peace –albeit being positive or negative. It emphasized in decentralized the state and divide the communities in order for healing to come – and for reconciliation to be achieved; and also to protect against a possible re-emergence of the conflict. How in a society like N. Macedonia state-building or even nation-building be implemented? The main critic of most citizens, of either ethnicity – in larger numbers in the Albanian side – is that the state doesn't care for them; they have low thrust for the state institutions; which is often ironic, as all the different groups are giving the same ethnical reasons for their distrust in the governmental institutions. So, by having three different aspects of state-building, nation-building and peace-building, it became even more difficult to succeed in each process. The peace is maintained but still there is distrust between the communities; they don't live together they live in parallel. There is a state but it isn't a strong one but rather a weak one. There is one concept of nation but the different ethnicities still persist.

In way this division transfer in the economic sector as the economy still is not united. N. Macedonia has made progress in the preparation of developing a functioning market economy. Despite the political stalemate in 2016, noteworthy improvements took place, in particular in public finance management and transparency. However, key weaknesses in the economy remain. These include shortcomings in the business environment, such as weak contract enforcement and a large informal economy (or grey-economy). Structural problems of the labour market are reflected in low activity and high unemployment rates. The macroeconomic environment deteriorated in the first half of 2017, as the lengthy political crisis took a toll on investment. Fiscal policy is geared towards short-term measures and lacks a durable consolidation plan. N. Macedonia needs to develop a medium-term budget framework, pursue fiscal consolidation and assist in the labour market participation and employment; especially for women and the youth (Commission staff working document, 2018).

It remains to see to see how and if N. Macedonia can figure out what system or structure fits its special position. One that can help it move forward and improve the lives of its citizens, its state and its democratic institutions (Laza Kekic, 2001 p. 199).

It is certain that N. Macedonia needs the EU aspiration in order to move forward its democratization goals (Ritsa Panagiotou, 2008). Even before nothing is final the EU and NATO had approached N. Macedonia to talk about future possible membership agreements (Sinisa J. Marusic, Jul 2018). N. Macedonia looks into the future and hopes it can change (Balkan Insight, 30 Jul 2018).

Democracy

Accordingly, to the Economist Index [Democracy Index, 2017, pp. 28-32] N. Macedonia is a hybrid regime, which implies that N. Macedonia faces significant problems in maintaining some of the basic functions of a democratic regime. Problems in maintaining free elections and and the recurrence violence in elections –recent as the 2017 elections– are still troubling N. Macedonia. The sovereignty of the rule of law, the autonomy of judicial system and the media freedom are still not fully guaranteed; and corruption is significantly present (S. J. Marusic, 2018A & Thorsten Gromes, 2009, pp. 6-23).

In the years after 2014 N. Macedonia faced a political crisis that shook it's political system– how this turn of event will in the end stir the future of politics in the country remains to be seen (S. J. Marusic, 17 Aug 2018). However slowly N. Macedonia has started to move away of the nationalistic rhetorics and became more normalized. The current Prime Minister, Zoran Zaev, seems to be following a more moderate approach towards politics inside outside the country.

After the 2016 elections the N. Macedonia emerged in a political deadlock, fueled by the political obstacles the now opposition party VMRO-DPMNE. The VMRO-DPMNE boycotted the elections and obstructed the parliamentary meetings. In 2017 after one year of political uncertainty N. Macedonia had a new governing coalition leading with the center-left party Social Union of Macedonia (SDSM) and with Prime Minister, Zoran Zaev. The next year was the time to bring back normalization in the parliamentary work and begin new reforms in the political, judicial and the economic sector of the country.

In a country divided as N. Macedonia it is positive sight that Civil Society continues to play a constructive role in supporting democratic processes and ensuring greater checks and balances. Since the second half of the 2017, the environment in which civil society's organizations operate has improved and the government has shown commitment to diligence and inclusion (Commission Staff, Working Document, 2018).

From an interview taken by a member² of the judicial system he mentioned that the judicial system is stagnant. It doesn't seem to offer possibilities for change. "Better to move to other countries of Europe; there are the most opportunities; there" was the response of the interviewee.

The second group of interviewees however appeared more optimistic in for the possible future of their country. The situation in N. Macedonia is slowly improving; they can see that happening; it is better than the past. Needless to say there are problems but it is slowly changing. There are still many left to be done. The main critic that was mentioned was that the government needs to listen more the demands of its citizens and not be absent.

Media are often playing the role of critic of the governmental action; in order for the society to be informed as well. During the turbulence of the period of 2015-2016 media independence remained strong. After the regime change in 2017 the new government issued a stop in the government advertising, which was increase the state capture. Media freedom has significant improved as many indicators have showed (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018 & Jovan Bliznakovski, 2018). With the support of the government media independence would significant improve in the coming years.

However, the most important issue N. Macedonia still faces is the name dispute with Greece. The dispute with Greece has brought N. Macedonia into an impasse, as it has closed many times the NATO and the EU "doors". Even with bad relations Greece was one best economic partner of N. Macedonia –since the 2000s (Aristotle Tziampiris. 2012, p. 155-6); and due its geographical position N. Macedonia hugely is affected by Greece relations. The embargo in 1994 (implemented by Greece) during the political-crisis between the two countries, cause significant economic drawbacks for N. Macedonia – it was the same period the NATO embargo was enacted also against Serbia so N. Macedonia felt imprisoned in a sense. That was the worst period in the relation of the two countries; after which it was a period of rapprochement between Greece and N. Macedonia; which included periods of hiatus and of activity; of high and low points. In many instances Greece and N. Macedonia tried to resolve the dispute but with no positive results.

Only recently, in 2018, an agreement finally signed between Greece and N. Macedonia for a possible end of the dispute. N. Macedonia enacted a referendum that was marketed it as vote for EU. It is possible the agreement that could open the gateway towards the rest of Europe. (P. Chrysopoulos, August, 2018). It might be one of the best outcomes N. Macedonia would have hoped for, after 15 and more years of its independence. Of course not everyone were particular thrilled with the agreement. The end-results of the referendum – which its low participation 37%– showed that the Macedonian society still remains divided. However the majority (91.5%) those that voted were voted for the yes vote. Nothing is over yet until the agreement is

² A number of interviews were made in N. Macedonia during a period of a seminar (June, 2018). The questions asked were: "What do you believe about the democracy in N. Macedonia?" "What is your opinion, what is the society's opinion?" "What is the role of the state in N. Macedonia?"

officially signed. Maybe in couple months we would better be able to analyze what the outcome would be and see what the Macedonian population in the end would choose.

Serbia: A unified state?

Background

Serbia was one of the most affected countries after the Yugoslav wars. Having actively participated in almost all the conflicts during the dissolution of Yugoslavia; Serbia still carries the impact of the wars in its historic memory (BCC, March 2018).

The politics of Milosevic will forever “haunt” the politics of Serbia. The crucial question is if Serbia can escape the “Milosevic-ghost” RFE/RL's Balkan Service Serbian, 10, 2018). That seems a much-demanded task; as memory of the conflicts still remains. The Kosovo dispute —as the only unresolved dispute of Serbia— is still prominent and ever present in the Serbia politics. Nationalism and populism are still present in the society; increasing the tension rather than decreasing it. Almost one decade since its announcement of independence the Kosovo-question is still remaining a “question”. As Serbia tries to create closer ties with the EU; it tries also to solve the Kosovo dispute. Rapprochement agreements have been made but the implementation process is founding obstacles in both countries. Old nationalistic tendencies “die-hard” and lengthens the problem (H. Marquette & D. Beswick, 2011, p. 382).

Serbia for long time tried to play the role an independent state a bridge between two sides the West and the East. Through geopolitical narratives it increased its relative importance, but it still remained a small state (Bojan Savić, 2014). Serbia needs the EU; and recently Serbian politicians slowly understand the importance of the partnership with the E.U. —as it was in the case of N. Macedonia – offers an alternative road to follow that could improve their Serbian lifestyle. However, changes have to be made firstly before EU would agree for more integration. Though the EU should also understand that without necessary initiatives —it should offer more immediate gains to future member to strive for more change rather than waiting to congratulate them after making the hard work.

In the case of Serbia, it should focus on the liberation of media and the political and structural corruption, to the democratization of the political system and reorganization of state-institutions. Economy wise Serbia has faced many setbacks but slowly is getting back on track with many future projects aiming at implemented changes on adjust to the European level (World Bank, Oct. 2017).

The year of 2018 Serbia is getting closer and closer in integration towards the E.U (Fisk, 2018). It is an interesting period after many years of deciding which part it should play (the East, the West, the bridge (Straussman, 2007). Serbia seems to choose the West, but remains to be seen if it can follow its plan and succeeding in becoming a new member of the EU.

Democracy & State Building

Indicators

SERBIA	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
National Democratic Governance	4	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	4	4.25	4.50
Electoral Process	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.5	3.5
Civil Society	2.75	2.5	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.5
Local Democratic Governance	3.75	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.75
Independent Media	3.75	3.75	4	4	4	4	4.25	4.5	4.5	4.75
Judicial Framework and Independence	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5
Corruption	4.5	4.5	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25
Democracy Scores	3.79	3.71	3.64	3.64	3.64	3.64	3.68	3.75	3.82	3.96

The ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest.

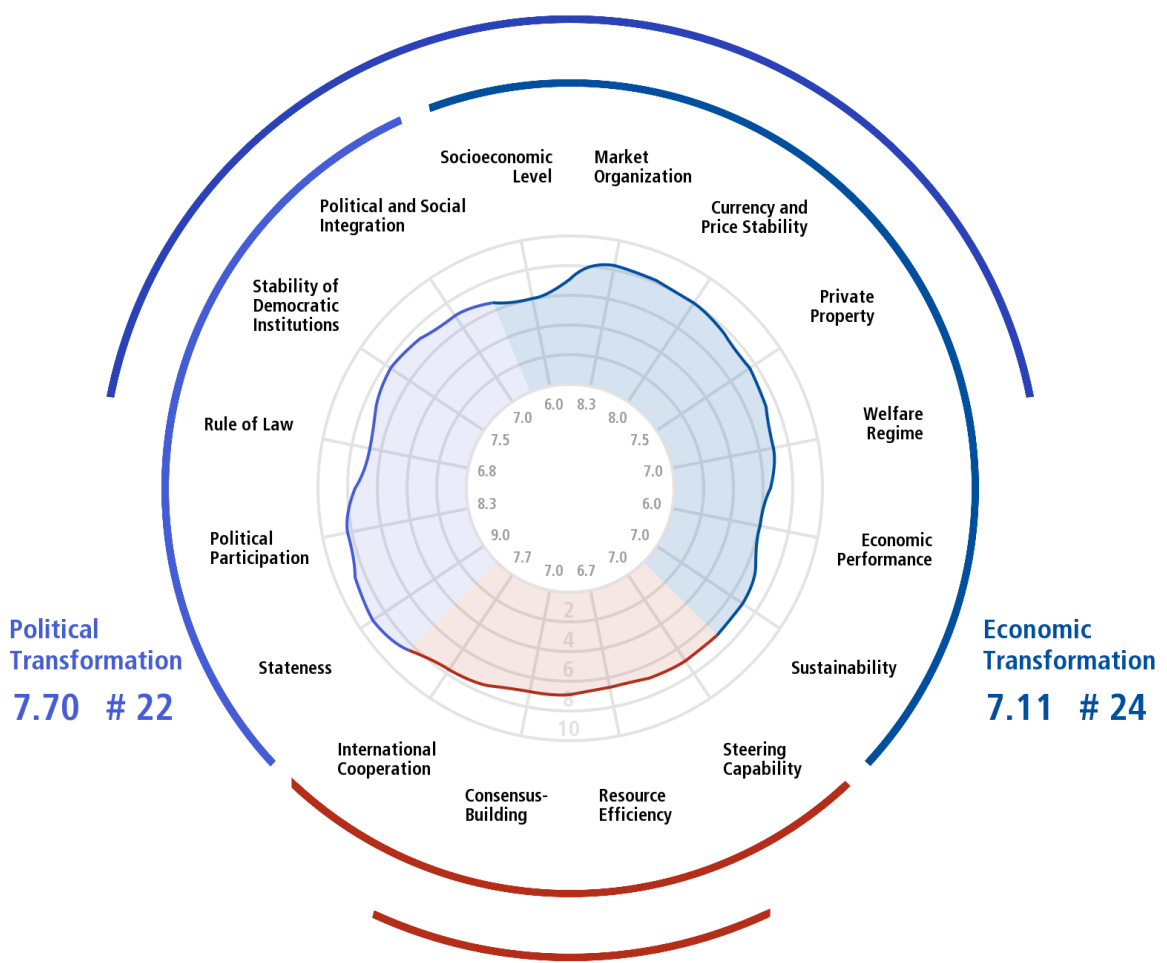
Country Profile: Serbia, Nation in Transit – <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2018/Serbia>

N. Macedonia	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
National Democratic Governance	4	4	4	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.75	5	4.75
Electoral Process	3.5	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.5	3.75	4	4
Civil Society	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.5	3.25	3.25	3.25
Local Democratic Governance	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	4	4	4
Independent Media	4.25	4.25	4.5	4.75	4.75	5	5	5.25	5.25	5
Judicial Framework and Independence	4	4	4	4	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.5	4.75	4.75
Corruption	4.25	4	4	4	4	4	4.25	4.25	4.75	4.75
Democracy Scores	3.86	3.79	3.82	3.89	3.93	4	4.07	4.29	4.43	4.36

Country Profile: N. Macedonia, Nation in Transit Report – <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2018/macedonia>

SERBIA

Status Index
7.40 # 19
on 1-10 scale out of 129

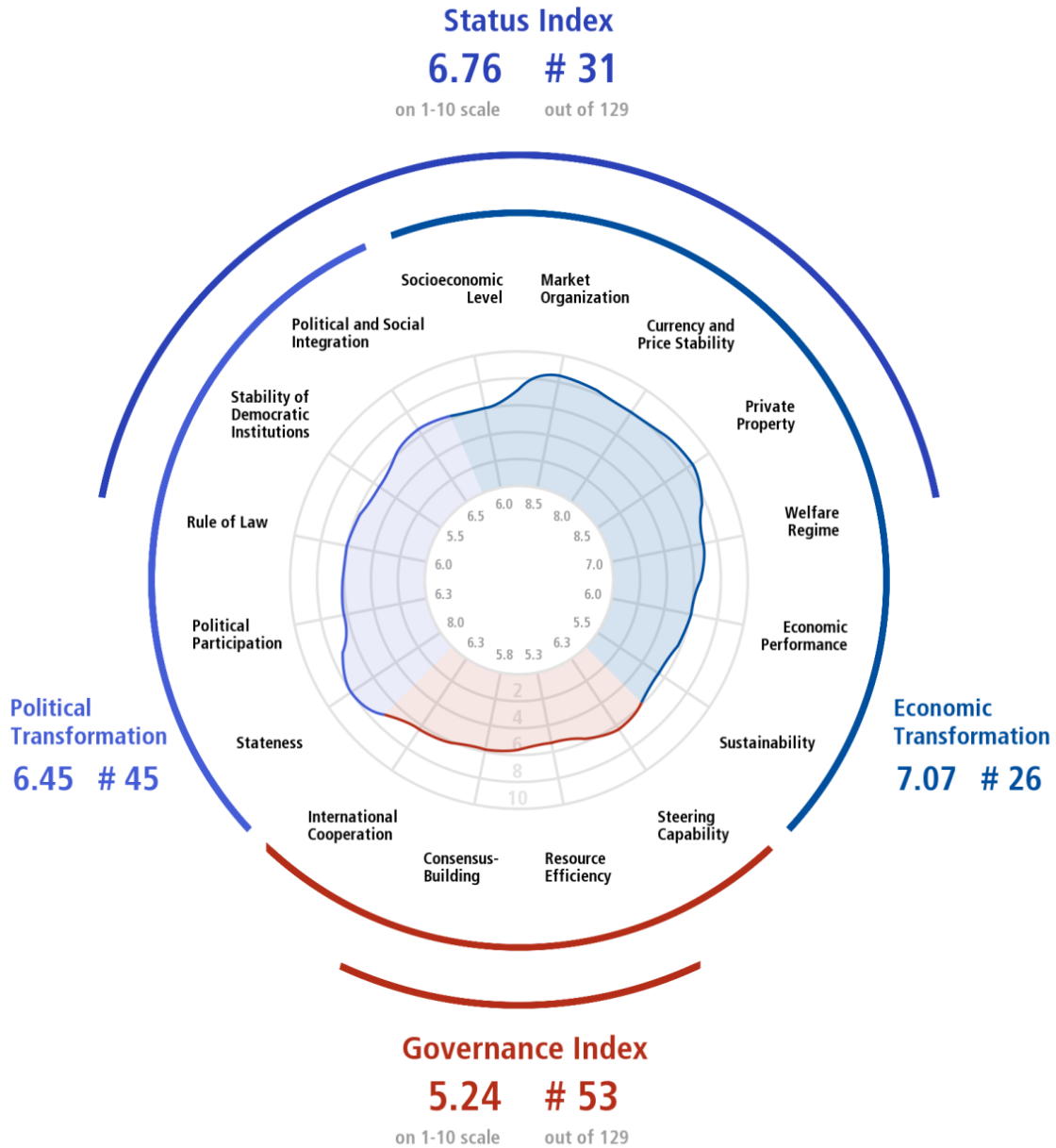


Political Transformation
7.70 # 22

Economic Transformation
7.11 # 24

Governance Index
6.06 # 22
on 1-10 scale out of 129

BTI 2018 Country Report: Serbia – <https://www.bti-project.org/en/reports/country-reports/detail/itc/srb/ity/2018/itr/ecse/>



BTI 2018 Country Report: N. Macedonia – <https://www.bti-project.org/en/reports/country-reports/detail/itc/MKD/>

State-Building

Serbia is a functioning state. The extent of being democratic is another issue. But it fulfills the minimum necessities of being a democracy. Which are: regular elections, rule of law, media freedom, legislative independence and political participation of the civil society.

Serbia state-building has succeeded its goal in creating a huge (patron-like) state but its democracy still faces inefficiencies. That doesn't mean that it can't become more democratic; but it might mean that it needs some other initiatives that could influence more its democratization. State-building in Serbia was implementing just like in N. Macedonia from the Yugoslav era. The state-building process passed to the modern Serbian state.

State-building focuses on strengthening the role of the state; it centralizes the power (D. Balthasar 2017 pp. 475-77). In the case of Serbia that centralization is core of the political system; it suppresses even democratization tendencies. The tradition of political culture in Serbia has so much influenced its development in way that it can't escape its path (path-determined?) and leads it in more centralization of power. However, we should note that during the period of 2002-6, in which Serbia was in its most democratic time, some initiatives were implemented with the support of EU – case-example the “Serbia—Local Government Reform Program” (SLGRP) (Jeffrey D. Straussman, 2007, pp. 1118). The aim SLGRP was to disperse the responsibilities to the local communities and in way decentralized the state. With an increase of the authority of the local government would have increase at the same time the transparency and accountability of the state-institutions. Decentralization and increase in community control is where the main ideas of democracy lies (D. Straussman, 2007, pp. 1117). But in country like Serbia without international support that democratization procedure is difficult to be made. Serbia needs the EU in order to change; something the EU slowly beginning to understand. At the moment the EU doesn't seem too eager to venture deeper in the Serbian politic.

Though, corruption is ever-present in the political system of Serbia. And even with the EU pressure still remains back in the political agenda of the political elite. The influence of corruption significantly affects the development of the country, but with the very superficial international pressure it would not come to the top of the political agenda.

Even if corruption pledged Serbia it hasn't obstructed it from maintaining the peace between its citizens but instances of violence have been reported. Nationalism is still present and fuels the divisions between the different ethnic groups; especially about the Kosovo issue. Recently discussion have been made to reach in a new agreement between the two parties (recently as September of 2018), but still remains to be seen if some resolution would be reached.

In order for a country to develop its economic development is extremely important. Even with existence of corruption the economic sector Serbia has made good progress and is moderately prepared in developing a functioning market economy. Some of the policy weaknesses, in particular with regard to the budget deficit, were addressed. Growth rate is slowly guaranteed

and macroeconomic stability is being preserved. Price pressures are subdued and monetary policy support growth. The restructuring and privatization of state-owned enterprises partially is being advanced. The stability and performance of the financial sector is strengthened and labour market conditions have improved further. However, government debt is still high and budgetary framework and governance need to be strengthened; while external imbalances have, also, increased. In addition, major structural reforms of public administration, the tax authority, and state-owned enterprises (SOEs) remain incomplete, and unemployment and economic inactivity are high, particularly among women and youth. The private sector is underdeveloped and hampered by weaknesses in the rule of law and the enforcement of fair competition. Serbia in order to improve its economic performance needs to: sustain its good fiscal results, continue the privatization of state-owned enterprises and the public administration reforms, while also assist in the labour market participation and employment; especially for women and the youth (Commission staff working document, Serbia 2018 Report).

Democracy

Serbia is characterized by the Economist Democracy Index as a flawed democracy (Democracy Index, 2017). Flawed democracies represent those democracies where there are free and fair elections (even with problems) but the main weaknesses are in governance, undeveloped political culture in addition to low political participation.

If we compare Serbia with N. Macedonia we can take a short glimpse on the differences of the two cases. By examining Serbia closer we can see that –like many other prior-Yugoslav countries– it has hugely been shaped by its past. S. Milosevic significantly impacted the development of Serbia. Its authoritarian (and “Tito-like”) tendencies in the end negatively affected Serbia. The centralization of power under one person (Milosevic) has, almost, become part of the Serbian political consciousness.

Recent president elections (in 2017) have enacted as winner A. Vucic which raised some concerns from the EU about his political agenda (Bosko Jaksic, 31 March 2017 & BBC, 1 March 2018). Vucic seems to steadily expand further his area of influence (A. Eror, March 2018). However, it isn’t back to a “Milosevic-era” again and the interesting thing is that he promotes further integration with EU. Even if A. Vucic is keen for authoritarian practices, he even can’t deny the possibilities in the EU path.

The problems in the Serbia case is in the centralized character of power –consolidation of power in face of president A. Vucic– the weak political opposition, poorly functioning parliament, low level of political participation and deterioration of media freedom. As very accurately is described in the Economist’s Index Report (p. 30) Serbia has an “unsatisfactory system of check and balances”.

Especially during the recent presidential elections governance took a backseat during the electoral period. Whereas instances of violence didn’t occur, voting pressure was present even if in the end it didn’t significantly changed the end results (Miloš Damjanović, 2018).

After the new change of political leadership Serbia new path is ambiguous. The judicial system of Serbia needs significant new reforms as it often express by the EU. But the reforms are coming very slowly. It doesn't appear that there is a political will to change something in the near future. In addition to also tackling corruption; these two issues still remain in the low end of the political agenda of Serbian politics.

Nationalism is also, indeed, still relevant in the political scene of Serbia (I. Roberts, 5 April 2018). Democracy has that negative aspect of it that instead of decreasing the differences it creates the perfect environment for fostering those (I. Roberts, 5 April 2018). As E. Xela (2013, p.99) has emphasized it is really difficult to resolve old hatred, when it had passed to the historic memory. Many times the politicians only help to promote and maintain the continuation of the —through populist narratives— the nationalistic ideologies. If Serbia wants a better democracy its leaders need to be become better politicians and advocates of human and political rights.

Though, media independence is more and more strained in contemporary Serbia. Even if it the indicators show that media freedom is better in Serbia it is rapidly becomes a lot harder for journalist to express a different opinion that contradicts the will of the government.

Democratization in Serbia is slow process. After being part in almost all three wars during the dissolution of Yugoslavia; Serbia at last is trying to look forward for a better future even if it struggle on the way. Only in 2006 it became an independent state and finally threw away the last remnants of the Yugoslav past; though not all. Kosovo still remains ever-present; an ongoing dispute that never seems to quite down. The war in Kosovo lasted from 1998 to 1999 but only in 2008 Kosovo unilateral declared its independence before slowly become recognized in the international scene. It is that dispute with Kosovo, which continues to residue and becomes harder and harder to resolve; the dispute that still perpetuates the political polarization and nationalistic tendencies that exists in Serbia.

In Conclusion

State building has become popularized the last part of the 20th century and the better half of 21st century. Especially talks for state building emerged after the dissolution of Soviet Union and of Yugoslavia. Europe became again a “playground” for state-building subjects; in addition to the Middle East and South-Asia regions in the later years.

Due to its nature, state-building is often linked to democratization. The dissemination of the liberal democracy has in effect conjoined the process of building a state with establishing, also, democratic institutions. There is an on-going debate whenever democracy or state-building can work together. There are doubts due to the contradictory set of characteristics of democracy and state building—the first aiming in diffusing the power of the central state and the later focusing more on centralizing the state authority. In the case of N. Macedonia and Serbia we could see how this interplay between state-building and democratization is implemented in reality. It presented that by focusing on too many goals it minimized the effect of each one of them; making it very difficult to fully implement any plan for either state-building or democratization. In the end N. Macedonia and Serbia found themselves in an endless loop; from which they seem want to escape and face their inefficiencies along the way.

In the first case, N. Macedonia was a multiethnic society suffering of an internal conflict and trying to reconcile in order to build a function democratic state together. In the years following its independence the state-building and democracy-building goals (democratization) have made process. However, the rate of reform remains slow and there is still perpetuating issues that obstruct further change. The society remains divided and the emphasis is given more on maintaining peace rather than building positive peace and developing further. The state-building procedure is obstructed by simultaneously focusing on democratizing the country and maintaining peace; the peace is disturbed by trying to democratize the country; and democracy is negated by trying to keep the peace and create a strong state. N. Macedonia is developing country that has reach stagnation but it needs to find new opportunities to overcome it.

In the case of Serbia the situation is a bit different. In first sight Serbia seems as a homogeneous society, but ethnic divisions can be still be found in the South Serbia, the region of Sandzak and in North Serbia in the region of Vojvodina, and the region of Kosovo; which independence-dispute isnt resolved yet. Serbia is on the most affected West-Balkan country of the Yugoslav war—except of course BiH. The past of the war still affects the contemporary politics of the country. Serbia strong autocratic past and nationalistic tendencies had built a strong state, but also neglected in building stronger democratic institutions and a dominant democratic culture that permeate into the consciousness of the society. Its autocratic past leads Serbia’s strong state to become, often, the subject of control of an oligarchy or a “monarchy”. The nation building procedure in Serbia has been total—Serbian society considers itself Serbian, with some exceptions that were mention above— but in effect paused the establishment of a strong democracy. Serbian issue was that it over-emphasized in only one goal that overshadowed the second—that being democratization. However, Serbia is still

considered a democracy and improvements have been made; even though there weren't linear in order.

These qualities might over-emphasize on the difference between the two states. However, they still have a common characteristic; a common background. They are post-Yugoslav countries trying to form new states and democracies. After of almost half of century of common rule in communist Yugoslavia they need to create new institutions and rules; while also implementing, in addition, to the political social and economic changes. It is not an easy process and the literature can only offer the knowledge and the examples of the past; which doesn't usually apply to every situation.

Both countries didn't fully accomplish their democratization and state-building goals. N. Macedonia with aiming in creating both a function state, a function democracy and maintaining peace only succeeded in partly completing its goals and not succeeding fully in anyone. Serbia on the other hand by over-emphasis in nation-building and state-building it created a strong state which in result neglected the democratization of the country.

N. Macedonia and Serbia need to find their own way to better succeeded in the state-build and democratic goals; in order to bypass their innate structural deficiencies and historical tendencies. However, the EU ought to assist that process. If it neglects the Balkans; the Balkan would neglect themselves and find more and more difficult to follow the alterative path that the European Union offers; and in the end that would have ambivalent effects in what consists the close proximity neighborhood of the E.U. (F. Bieber, 2011).

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