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# **Ethnonationality and Inter-Generational Dis-Continuities.**

**Political regimes, ideologies and masses in Bosnia  
Herzegovina and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,  
from their Yugoslav past until nowadays.**

Doctoral dissertation by  
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To those who believed in it.



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## List of Abbreviations

- AVNOJ** - *Antifašističko Vijeće Narodnog Oslobođenja Jugoslavije* - Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia
- BiH** - Bosnia Herzegovina
- DPA** - Dayton Peace Agreement
- DPA\*** - *Partia Demokratike Shqiptare* - Democratic Party of Albanians
- DUI** - *Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim* - Democratic Union for Integration
- EU** - European Union
- HDZ BiH** - Hrvatska demokratska zajednica Bosne i Hercegovine - Croatian Democratic Union for Bosnia Herzegovina
- HDZ 1990** - *Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica* - Croatian Democratic Union 1990
- NATO** – North Atlantic
- OFA** – Ohrid Framework Agreement
- SBB** - *Savez za bolju budućnost BiH* – Union for a Better Future BiH
- SDA** - *Stranka Demokratske Akcije* - Party of Democratic Action
- SDP** - *Socijaldemokratska Partija BiH* – Social Democratic Party of BiH
- SDS** - *Srpska Demokratska Stranka* - Serb Democratic Party
- SDSM** - *Socijaldemokratski sojuz na Makedonija* - Social Democratic Union of Macedonia
- SFRY** - Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
- SNSD** - *Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata* - Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, formerly *Stranka nezavisnih socijaldemokrata* - Party of Independent Social Democrats
- VMRO-DPMNE** - *Vnatrešna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija – Demokratska Partija za Makedonsko Narodno Edinstvo* - Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity





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## INTRODUCTION

This doctoral research is centred upon the concept of ‘ethnonationality’ and aims at investigating how its meanings and functions have possibly changed across political regimes, time periods and, particularly, generations. The research has been conducted in the ethnically plural, and divided, contexts of Bosnia Herzegovina<sup>1</sup> and FYRO Macedonia<sup>2</sup>; it covers a time period that goes from the ‘golden age’ of Socialist Yugoslavia (from the 1960s) until nowadays, and the fieldwork has been conducted in the cities of Skopje and Sarajevo from February 2016 until March 2017.

Members of two differently socialized generations, one of ‘Yugoslav parents’ and one of ‘post-Yugoslav children’, and living together in the same family, have been chosen as unit of analysis of this work in order to better grasp possible inter-generational discontinuities and dis-similarities entailing meanings and usages of ethnonationality.

### 0.1 Topic of the Research

Macedonia and Bosnia Herzegovina are ethnically plural and divided post-Yugoslav and post-conflict societies, grounded on consociative principles which have, among other factors, contributed to make ethnicity a pillar of the plural state itself, in turn producing particular dynamics of interaction between state and masses and between the groups themselves.

Retracing the steps of ethnonationality’s ‘evolutionary process’ is thus a key activity to better understand how its meanings and functions have changed over time, and how current post-Yugoslav societies such as BiH and Macedonia have come to be the way they are.

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter Bosnia or BiH;

<sup>2</sup> Hereafter Macedonia;

Starting from the idea that without a temporal perspective any research on the topic would be incomplete, this work doesn't consider the fall of Yugoslavia as a 'year zero' but, rather, as the outcome of pre-existing mechanisms and conditions: ethnonationality's importance, in fact, did not emerge all of a sudden in the 'infamous 1990s'. On the contrary, since Yugoslavia's birth in the 1940s, equality of all the nations (ethnic in their nature) was reflected in both the federation's institutional asset (Pearson 2015) and in its socio-political organization, representing a pillar of the SFRY itself.

Additionally, this work is grounded on the belief that any socio-political dynamic is the outcome of interactions and negotiations involving both the macro and the micro; thus, while studying the evolution of the meanings and functions of ethnonationality, both its political-institutional and social-subjective dimensions are considered, therefore performing a multi-dimensional and inter-generational analysis.

The apparent complexity of the present study is justified by certain lacks in the available literature on the topics tackled. For example, although there is an abundant amount of studies on the topics of ethnonationalism, politicization of ethnic identities, redefinition of groups' boundaries, and more generally on the changes occurred in the region with the fall of Yugoslavia, the available studies are macro-centred (Gordy 2014) and there is a lack of researches taking into account both people's role, and the kind of interactions and intersections existing between macro and micro – state and masses. Accordingly, on the one side, we know a lot about the role states and institutions, political elites and ideologies (during and after Yugoslavia) have had in transforming the society and giving a new meaning and importance to ethnonationality; but, on the other side, we know very little about the 'micro world', about how people understand/understood, cope/d and contribute/d to those changes, adapting or not to the surrounding environment. Moreover, we know very little about the intersections between macro and micro – which are interdependent and mutually influencing between each other. And finally, if we have a certain knowledge about the role played by the major socializing agents (political parties, religious institutions, media, schools) in socializing and re-socializing the population, we don't know much about the role played by the most important socializing agent - the family – in transmitting (or not) certain ideas, values and patterns of behaviour in contexts of regime changing.

Acknowledging these lacks in the available literature, as well as the impossibility to untie macro and micro while studying ethnonationality's changes across Yugoslavia and post-Yugoslavia, this dissertation tries to bridge those gaps by empirically focusing on the micro level, however first explaining and exploring the macro one, and then looking at the relation of interdependence between the two levels.

As said, the choice of adopting a relational and multi-dimensional approach comes from the belief that without a macro exploration any micro explanation would be superficial; and, conversely, without a micro analysis any macro change won't be properly understood. So, if on the one hand, the socio-political salience of ethnonational origins has largely depended on their political mobilization and institutional sustain, on the other hand, people were and are integrant part of macro structures and realities they also contribute/d to shape. Moreover, from a methodological point of view, these considerations allow to avoid individuals' ascription into collectivities, ethnocentrism and methodological nationalism (Wimmer, Schiller 2002), helping to distinguish between 'categories of practice and categories of analysis' (Brubaker, Cooper 2000: 4).

This, in turn, justifies the family/two-generations exploration performed in this work and explains the scientific curiosity to see what happened/happen inside the families. A generation of 'Yugoslav' parents together with a generation of 'post-Yugoslav' children compose the unit of analysis. The inclusion of two generations in the research serves to better understand and grasp the micro-generational impact of macro-changes entailing ethnonationality, as well as the role people have played/play in shaping the reality they live in.

### **0.1.1 Aims and Relevance of the Study**

Given the interests of this work are connected to ethnonationality's evolution over time, political systems and generations, individuals composing the family unit – rather than ethnonational groups - will be the protagonist of the story.

The inclusion of two generations in the unit of analysis serves to better reach the goal: meaning, to see not *how* but *which* ideas, rules, and patterns of behaviour related to ethnonationality have been transmitted, hence persisted or not, between two generations socialized in two different macro-environments.

This research, indeed, doesn't aim to generalize from individuals to (ethnonational) groups: on the contrary, it specifically avoids individuals' ascription into political categories and 'methodological nationalism', namely 'taking national discourses, agendas, loyalties and histories for granted, without problematizing them or making them an object of analysis in its own right' (Wimmer, Schiller 2002: 304). Issues concerning ethnonationality and origins of belonging are studied from an individual and generational perspective, not from the one of the ethnic groups.

The aims of this work are, thus, to understand in what extent past and present 'macro-environments' and connected family-personal experiences have penetrated and shaped the family micro-environment influencing ideas and behaviours of two generations; and how these two generations' ideas and behaviours coexist - influencing, meeting or clashing with each other - inside the family. The performance of a multi-dimensional and temporal exploration allows understanding how macro and micro - structures and individuals - interact together, and how their conjoined roles make the system functioning.

In a broader perspective, the multi-dimensional and inter-generational analysis performed in this research may tell us something new and interesting about role and reasons multinational states, political elites and masses may have in preventing/avoiding/causing conflicts, building democracy or maintaining ethnopolitics.

## **0.2 Research Questions and Hypothesis**

Acknowledging that anyone in the society is exposed to the same flux of influences, although perhaps in different extents, we can expect socializing agents like political parties, school systems, media and religious institutions to have a powerful role in shaping the way people understand, perceive and use their ethnonational backgrounds. However, if we put the attention also on the family (so to personal experiences and perceptions), the picture becomes more complete, allowing us to grasp *why* people are the way they are.

Given the complexity and subjectivity of the issue, the driving questions and possible hypothesis of this work do proceed by steps. In the light of a descriptive macro-structural analysis, the first step is to look at the macro-micro interdependences,

while, the second one is to investigate the family's complexity assessing possible inter-generational dis-continuities in the meanings and uses of ethnonationality.

Research questions and hypothesis are the followings:

- 1) How do members of two different generations, living in the same family but socialized in different macro-environment, interact with and within their plural societies? In what extent macro-factors and events have shaped people's/generations' modalities of interaction with-in their plural realities?
  - Does ethnonationality have acquired a different role/ability in channelling social/inter-group interactions?
  - Does ethnonationality have a role/ability in channelling interactions between state and masses?
  - Can we identify particularistic/contextual uses of ethnonational backgrounds?
  - Can we assess how, why and in what extent the surrounding environment influence and shape inter-group as well as state-masses dynamics?

I hypothesize four possible ideal-typical patterns of behaviour:

- a) utilitarian use of ethnonational belonging for individualistic aims and benefit;
  - b) contextual/regional/geographical use of ethnonational belonging;
  - c) ideological emphasis on ethnonational belonging;
  - d) no use of ethnonational belonging.
- 
- 2) What kind of ideas, meanings, rules and possible usages of ethnonationality have been transmitted by the Yugoslav generation to their offspring?
    - Is there some level of continuity and persistence between the two generations?
    - If any, what kind of inter-generational changes have occurred in understanding and using ethnonational belonging?
    - How and in what extent previous and current socializing agents influence/d the family micro-environment and the two generations?

- Does the offspring try to ‘shape’ their parents views and behaviours in relation to ethnonational backgrounds?

-

I hypothesize four main ideal-typical family scenarios:

- a) Linear Interruption: parents and children are respectively aligned with the system they have been socialized into, therefore there is a generational conflict; in this case, both parents and children may try to influence each other;
- b) Reverted Interruption: parents, which personally experienced the structural changes, are now aligned with the new system while their children are not; also in this case there is a generational conflict, however inverted, and again both parents and children may try to influence each other;
- c) Adjustment: both generations are now aligned with the new system and there is no generational conflict given their adjustment to the new conditions;
- d) Reverted Adjustment: both generations have remained aligned with the previous system, preserving/trying to preserve as much as possible generational continuity.

Although the research questions are interrelated between each other, I nevertheless do not expect high levels of coherence between meanings attributed to ethnonational backgrounds and their current practical usages. Indeed, having in mind there often is a difference between what people think and do, these hypothesis also open for further reflections and internal distinctions: even if a disruption has occurred – be that either generational or encompassing both generations, this does not automatically imply thoughts and behaviours correspond.

For example, Yugoslav parents still sticking with the ‘Yugoslav mind-set’ might have adapted their behaviours to the new environment’s conditions, however preserving and transmitting different ‘social rules’ to their offspring - hence determining the impact macro-factors may have on the micro-world.

This dissertation, therefore, attempts to make sense of how a Yugoslav generation of parents and a post-Yugoslav generation of children are framing/re-framing and using their ethnonational belongings, evaluating the ‘nature’ of the interactions occurring with-in the social and the politico-institutional spheres.



### 0.3 Research Design and Methodological Choices

The theoretical considerations of this research, and the kind of investigation this work aims at, structure the research design and partly pre-determine the methodology used. Thus, before proceeding with the methodological stages, reasons behind the selection of the case studies and the unit of analysis have to be provided.

#### 0.3.1 Time periods and political regimes: why Yugoslavia and post-Yugoslavia

Socialist Yugoslavia was a multinational state homeland for many nations, and its two major founding principles were the common Slavic origins of all the nations composing it, and their common struggle against the Fascist forces back in the 1940s. The Yugoslav system, comprehensive of many different groups with their own cultural, linguistic and religious specificities, was deeply committed in assuring equality – both social and national (Pearson 2015), avoiding the supremacy of one group over the others and, particularly, in suppressing nationalism. The state ideology played a fundamental role in keeping the groups tied together and *Bratstvo i Jedinstvo* (Brotherhood and Unity) represented the ideological pillar of the system itself. However, rather than a ‘brainwashing strategy’, the massive spread of values grounded on good relations and respect for the difference genuinely helped the communities to live together, sharing not only the same spaces but also personal lives. Tito’s politics never aimed to suppress ethnic identities; rather, it aimed to instigate a sense of solidarity among the groups, a ‘we feeling’ so to weaken ethnic sentiments. From a politico-institutional perspective, however, the decentralizing measures enacted in 1974 led towards the last chapter of the history of Socialist Yugoslavia. The federation assumed a ‘quasi-consociational’ shape, which contributed to increase the ‘negative potential’ of ethnonationality in the context of ethnic plurality, paving the way for nationalism to arise. With all the federal units, except BiH, becoming *de facto* ethnic nation-states, it did not take too long for the republican elites to frame economic and political tensions in ethnic terms, thus tailoring a new way to look at the federal republics and their peoples themselves.

As Malešević (2006, Ch. 7) and Brubaker (1996) argued, the structure of the Yugoslav federal state in its last fifteen years of life, its complicated relation with ethnicity, nationality and nationalism, and the solutions adopted to manage those

issues, had a consistent responsibility in the collapse itself, as well as in shaping social dynamics and inter-groups relations, hence influencing future political and social developments. Institutionalized cultural differences became ‘the most obvious and most potent device of elite control’ (Malešević 2006: 183).

Nevertheless, although it’s true the system, until 1990, was still composed by one single party, masses played a determinant role in (and since) 1990, when the first multiparty elections took place at the level of the republics. ‘They acted – not entirely of their own free will, but also not entirely as marionettes. They ascertained and took advantage of opportunities for action, having also created them themselves’ (Galijaš 2014: 155).

The 1990s violently marked the dissolution of the SFRY and the transition towards new regimes. In a few years, an almost five-decades-old society crumbled on itself and new, but at the same time old, ideas about the nation featured the building processes of the independent states. The nation-state paradigm invested Yugoslavia and nationhood became matter of life. As the writer Slavenka Drakulić wrote (1993: 50-2)

I was educated to believe that the whole territory of ex-Yugoslavia was my homeland [...] I almost believed that borders, as well as nationalities, existed only in people’s heads. [...] being Croat has become my destiny. How can I explain to them that in this war I am defined by my nationality, and by it alone? [...]. That is what the war is doing to us, reducing us to one dimension: the Nation. [...] One doesn’t have to succumb voluntarily to this ideology of the nation – one is sucked into it.

The institutional fall of Yugoslavia was accompanied by a massive re-socialization from above – hence, it was featured also by an ideological fall, where socialism was largely substituted by ethnonationalism. In that chaos, political parties, media, educational systems and religious institutions played a key role in re-building national identities, producing the overlap between ethnicity, religion, and nationality - overlap then cemented by the wars accompanying the collapse.

The role of macro-factors and socializing agents in re-building identities and shaping meanings and usages of ethnonationality has persisted until today, and it will be in detail analysed throughout this work.

Nowadays, Bosnia and Macedonia are multiethnic/national and deeply divided societies – meaning, ‘ethnicity is a politically salient cleavage around which interests are organized for political purposes’ (Reilly 2004, 4). The macro changes occurred since late 1980s had a visible political and social impact, and in both BiH and Macedonia. BiH went through a war instigated by outside that, however, deeply damaged the inside; Macedonia, although left the SFRY without any conflict, followed the mainstream idea of the ethnic nation-state paving the way for its own short internal conflict, happened in 2001.

At the present day, in both the two former republics, ethnic-based social cleavages overlap with the political ones, mutually reinforcing each other and hampering social cohesion and political compromise. In both countries ethnonationality is institutionalized via ethnic power-sharing mechanisms, and politicized by ethnic representatives that find more incentives in building support upon ethnicity than working for its de-politicization. Additionally, the presence of ethnic mechanisms of institutional representation has allowed for the establishment of ethnic mechanism of redistribution of resources, creating ethnic clientelistic relations between state and masses in which, for both the two sides involved, ethnonationality represents a proxy to obtain advantages.

Any reference to ‘Brotherhood and Unity’, in a Yugoslav sense, has vanished – although appeals to brothers and sisters and the need for cohesion are often central in nationalist speeches. Divisions between the groups composing the plural states of BiH and Macedonia are mirrored in segregated education, monoethnic neighbours, cities, territories, media and political parties. In both BiH and Macedonia, a shared sense of belonging to the same state, as well as a sense of being equal citizens regardless ethno-cultural differences, is still struggling to prevail over exclusive ethnonational attachments.

Therefore, reconstructing ethnonationality’s meanings and functions since its Yugoslav past, looking at the changes it went through from both an institutional and ideological perspective, is crucial in order to understand the generational impact those changes have had on the population and, in turn, possible generational dis-continuities and dis-similarities. So it’s the (apparent) macro-discontinuity between ethnonationality’s current politicization and divisive function and the non-divisive space Yugoslavia sought to create that justifies and makes scientifically relevant an investigation encompassing two political eras, systems and respective generations.

### 0.3.2 Context: why Macedonia and Bosnia Herzegovina

Given the aims, the research sought to identify two suitable ethnically plural contexts showcasing interesting dynamics of ethnonationality's articulation and management, from both a macro and micro perspective. Bosnia Herzegovina and Macedonia displayed the features looked-for, and also presented some degree of identity-based conflictuality, which made them the most appropriated cases for this research.

The case studies' choice has been driven by two general considerations. The first one is purely pragmatic, based on an extensive previous knowledge of the author on the contexts studied, as well as the scientific curiosity triggered by a previous fieldwork performed in Sarajevo (2013/2014). The second consideration is, instead, methodological and connected to the common elements both states share - although also their differences play a role in making the cases' selection reasonable and the comparison interesting. Although two features were indispensable while selecting the cases – namely, ethnonational plurality and an institutional state structure based on ethnic power-sharing mechanisms, other main common elements have contributed to increase the relevance of the case studies' choice:

1) *Social divisions*: in both Bosnia and Macedonia more groups coexist in the same state and, in both cases, the groups differ in their ethnic, religious and linguistic origins. In Bosnia there are three main ethnic groups - Serbs, Croats and Bošnjaks - whose religious legacies are respectively Christian Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Islamic. Although the language spoken by the three groups is basically the same, since the 1990s nationalist entrepreneurs have stressed linguistic differences suggesting the recognition of three national idioms, respectively called Serbian, Croatian and Bošnjak/ Bosnian.

In Macedonia, instead, the main groups are two – ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians – respectively Christian Orthodox and Muslims. In this case, not religion but the language spoken is the crucial ethnic-marker. Additionally, in both the two states other smaller groups – each one with its own ethno-cultural specificities, exist and coexist as well.

The major groups composing the two societies are often involved in more or less conscious processes of boundaries-making aimed to preserve their groups' identities;

however, the politicization of collective cultural features influences the real or constructed importance of the same, shaping people's perspectives and behaviours.

2) *Consociationalism and institutionalized ethnicity*: the consociational model of democracy has been implemented in both states, and in both cases as a post-conflict measure. Power sharing mechanisms and decentralization were meant to calm down inter-group tensions and promote good and democratic practices. However, explicitly or not<sup>3</sup>, ethnonationality's institutionalization regulates representation mechanisms in the institutions, voting procedures in the decision making processes, as well as job positions in the public institutions – therefore making one's own background relevant from several point of view. A state asset emphasizing the importance of ethnonationality is, in turn, reflected in a political scenario composed almost exclusively by ethnonational political parties seeking to represent and protect *their own* ethnonational groups. Thus, Bosnia and Macedonia are both ethnically divided societies featured by ethnic politics – that is the overlap between ethnic-based social and political cleavages.

3) *Poor economic performances and ethnic clientelism*: already back in Yugoslavia Bosnia and Macedonia were, together with Kosovo, the least economically developed federal units. Their respective economic situations got considerably worse with the transition, and economic deficiencies together with high rates of unemployment still persist<sup>4</sup>. In both countries is, therefore, not infrequent for people to establish particularistic relations with 'powerful individuals' – usually members of the

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<sup>3</sup> In the case of BiH, the constitution explicitly mentions three constituent nations. In the case of Macedonia, the amended constitution (after the OFA in 2001) avoids the explicit naming of the groups/nation although both the OFA and most of the constitutional amendments were implemented to favour ethnic Albanians and, *de-facto*, the state has become bi-national;

<sup>4</sup> See: Freedom House, 2017, *Nations in Transit* <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/nations-transit>; Bosnia and Herzegovina 2016 Report [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhoodenlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key\\_documents/2016/20161109\\_report\\_bosnia\\_and\\_herzegovina.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhoodenlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_bosnia_and_herzegovina.pdf); The FYRO Macedonia 2016 Report [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhoodenlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key\\_documents/2016/20161109\\_report\\_the\\_former\\_yugoslav\\_republic\\_of\\_macedonia.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhoodenlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia.pdf)

major/ruling political parties, which either control sectors of the public administration/public companies via their political parties or own their own private companies. In this kind of particularistic interactions between state and masses, thus, ethnonationality may become/be used as a proxy to get benefits.

4) *Historical past and heritage*: among the elements Bosnia and Macedonia share, it has to be mentioned also their historical past. Both were part of the Ottoman Empire, which not only contributed to the spread of Islam but also raised the importance of religion as a groups' distinguishing feature (due to the society's administration according to the *millet* system). After that, Bosnia's and Macedonia's paths divided, however both remained under others' domains. Their destinies united again with the establishment of the SFRY and, only in the 1990s, Bosnia and Macedonia became, for the first time in their history, independent and sovereign states.

Alongside with these important commonalities, also the differences between the two case studies have contributed to make the comparison scientifically relevant. Two of these dissimilarities are:

1) *Size of the groups*: the main identifiable difference between Bosnia and Macedonia is the clear presence of an ethnic majority in the Macedonian case and the absence of an absolute ethnic majority in the case of Bosnia Herzegovina.

Despite a sizeable presence of ethnic Albanians (and other minority groups), ethnic Macedonians have always been in net majority, till the point that during Yugoslavia Macedonia was seen as 'the federal unit of Macedonians' (Koneska 2014: 61). Bosnia, on the contrary, has always been a '*Jugoslavija u malom*' (Yugoslavia in miniature), with no ethnic group numerically prevailing over the others.

2) *Intensity of the conflict*: the presence of a clear ethnic majority in the Macedonian case allowed, in 1991, for the creation of an ethnic Macedonian nation-state. However, given its indisputable plural character, the constitutional recognition of the new state as a Macedonian nation-state provoked the ethnic Albanians' discomfort – eventually leading towards a short conflict in 2001. The conflict was, although a dramatic event, territorially circumscribed to some areas of the country, considerably shorter (about 9 months) and less violent compared to the one experienced by Bosnia.

Despite these differences, in both cases violence contributed to amplify ethnicity's importance and deepen the distance between the groups, finally producing negative consequences especially in the context of an almost total absence of common and supra-ethnic forms of identification.

### ***0.3.2.1 Skopje and Sarajevo***

Skopje and Sarajevo, respectively capital cities of Bosnia Herzegovina and Macedonia, have been chosen as ideal contexts where to perform the research fieldwork.

The two cities are the biggest urban centres of their countries; the political power and the major institutions of the state are there located, in turn allowing the political elite to easily organize political debates, demonstrations, protests and rallies, directly and indirectly influencing/involving the masses in political issues.

Skopje and Sarajevo are also the biggest cultural and working centres of their respective countries: many students and workers indeed move from the countryside to the city, in turn favouring people's mobility, groups' interconnections and exchanges. It is, thus, in these two cities, more than in others, that people belonging to different ethnic groups and backgrounds effectively have the opportunity to interact together rather than simply share the same – often divided, space. On this purpose, it is worth to remind that Sarajevo is a divided city or, as Bassi (2014, doctoral dissertation) pointed out, a 'redoubled' one: the boundary line dividing BiH into two entities, the Federation of Bosnia Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, also divides Sarajevo. On the other side of the border, Istočno Sarajevo (East Sarajevo), once a suburban area of Sarajevo proper, has become a city of its own and part of the RS.

### **0.3.3 Unit of analysis: why two generations**

The two generational cohorts enclosed in this study have been chosen according to the years in which their members' secondary socialization (see Ricucci, Torrioni 2004) was completed.

The older generation considered in this work is composed by parents born between 1952 and 1965, thus entirely socialized during Yugoslavia; this generation has lived

both the ‘golden era’ of Yugoslavia (1960s and 1970s) and its disintegration - featured by ethnonational rhetoric and messages aimed to ‘ethnicize’ and homogenize the population.

The younger generation considered, instead, represents the ‘in-between’ generation and is composed by young adults born between 1985 and 1990. Although too young for being socialized during the Yugoslav era, they might have however been exposed to a double socialization: one coming from the outside - more ethnonational(ist) prone, and one from the inside - from their parents, possibly aligned with the dissolved system.

The empirical part of this work will tell the story of ethnonationality in today’s BiH and Macedonia from an individual and generational perspective, first reconstructing family backgrounds and then deepening ‘why people are the way they are’.

The inclusion of the older generation in the research is paramount because, generally in the literature, parents’ characteristics are often taken for granted and ‘little attention is paid to how the parents came to be the way they are’ (Beck & Jennings 1975: 83-4). On the other hand, the inclusion of a generation of young adults, old enough to have concerns such as workplace, family, future and politics, allows to see how a generation with a ‘Yugoslav background’ but growing in a divided environment, understand, frame and use its ethnonational background.

The choice for these two generational cohorts, thus, adds value to the existing literature allowing for a deeper comprehension of ethnonationality’s evolution across, and within, generations; and it also sheds light on the possible different socialization processes the two generations have gone through.

#### ***0.3.3.1 Scientific Relevance in Considering Parents and Children***

Socialization is a process through which individuals are enabled to be members of groups and, consequently, part of the wider society. The internalization of enduring rules, roles, skills, standards and values, orients peoples’ behaviours and thoughts them to ‘function properly’ (Kohn 1959) in the groups and societies they living in. Particularly, political socialization is ‘the process of how individuals find their place within a political community by acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes with respect to the political system’ (Abendschön 2013a). Many, indeed, see it as a source of diffuse support for the political system, ‘a stabilizing social mechanism’ (Schwartz



and Schwartz, 1975: 4 in Stolle, Hooghe 2004: 427) where the family is ‘the agent which promotes early attachment to country and government, and which thus “insures the stability of basic institutions”’ (Jennings, Niemi 1968: 169).

The family is, in fact, the most important influencing actor in the socialization process (Barni 2011; Bengtson 1975; Coffé, Voorpostel 2011; Grusec, Hastings, 2006; Miller, Glass 1989); ‘similarity of beliefs and values between parents and children has long been recognized as an important source of stability in society. Indeed, the transmission of socio-political ideologies from one generation to the next permits continuity within families and integration between cohorts of individuals in the population’ (Miller, Glass 1989: 991).

Parents can affect their children’s beliefs/behaviours by directly teaching them values or indirectly through status inheritance and channelling them into groups and institutions that will ‘reinforce the commitment’ (Himmelfarb in Martin *et al*, 2003:171) to the norms. Nevertheless, according to Cunningham (2001), children need to reach a certain maturity before adopting the values to which they have been exposed in childhood, and there may be a lag between socialization and the emergence of those values. It is also for this reason that the present research focuses on a generation of young adult in their 25-30 years old – rather than kids or adolescents, so to better grasp inter-generational dis-similarities as well discontinuities.

The family’s role is influential even during turbulent historical periods (Beck, Jennings 1991) – yet generational continuity may result challenged. Structural changes such as transitions from regimes to democracy, crisis, geopolitical alliances and groups rivalries may, in fact, influence the socialization processes by re-shaping people’s attitudes and behaviours. Accordingly, even though the most enduring values and attitudes are acquired in childhood, drastic socio-political changes may interfere, reshape or re-socialize the population. ‘Periods of political conflict may increase the likelihood of generational political change, with the direction modified not only by the social environment but also by historical forces.’ (Kraut, Lewis 1975: 799).

The importance in focusing the attention on the family and, specifically, on two generations is thus centrally related to the 1990s’ changes, when a drastic and all-encompassing transformation dismantled the previous, four decades old, order.

## **0.4 Methodology of the Research**

Issues connected to ethnonationality and its transformations can be studied both at macro and micro level, and both perspectives are equally valid and promising interesting results. This dissertation takes them both into consideration by adopting a multidimensional approach, however focusing the empirical analysis on the micro-level.

### **0.4.1 Families and Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews represent the instrument of analysis used to gather data in this work. Interviews have been performed in Skopje and Sarajevo with members of both the Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav generations. 25 families – 13 in Skopje and 12 in Sarajevo, for a total number of 71 individuals, compose the final sample of the research.

For what concerns the composition of the families, I tried to respect the triad mother-father-children; however, in some cases, and for different reasons, this has not been possible. In Skopje, only 2 out of 13 families selected were composed by only one parent while, in Bosnia, the single-parent families were 4. However, I didn't consider this 'lack' as a research's weakness: on the contrary, given the reason why, in all the cases except one, these families were composed by the sole mothers (fathers passed away during the conflict), I considered it as a feature of the Bosnian context and especially of that post-Yugoslav generation enclosed in the sample; an element that could potentially influence family's members' perceptions of ethnonational belonging, even leading towards more radicalized positions.

The families have been selected using the snowball sampling and starting from the younger generation, more easily approachable given the age proximity with the author; only then the researcher has been introduced to their parents.

Trying to avoid 'groupism' (Brubaker 2002), while performing the fieldwork in the two selected plural societies, I tried to treat, see and approach my interviewees simply as human beings, citizens of their countries. My samples were neither 'ethnically balanced' nor representatives of the groups composing the larger society. I needed ethnonationality – its importance, meanings and functions – to spontaneously emerge from the context and the interviews. If I were to categorize and approach people

according to their names – beside the nationalist shadow of the procedure - people would have felt to be addresses as ‘Serbs, Bošnjaks, Albanians’ and so on, probably providing me with ‘ethnocentric and ethnically biased’ answers. What I wanted and needed was them as individuals, normal persons in a chaotic multitude of labels; I needed to create ‘an ethnically neutral’ space and establish ethnically neutral interactions, where they could feel free from political categorization and social prejudices. Thus, ethnonational belonging as selection criteria has only been partially taken into consideration and only in the Macedonian case where the boundary line between the groups is considerably less blurred than in the Bosnian case.

In performing the interviews, both in Bosnia and Macedonia, I tried to avoid *a priori* considerations or assumptions connected to the apparently deducible interviewees’ ethnonational background, and in some cases I preferred to ask rather general questions letting the interlocutors answer freely, preventing the feeling of being ‘ethnically labelled’.

The majority of the interviews have been conducted personally and face-to-face while, some others, by using technologies as Skype. Mainly due to logistic and organizational reasons, oftentimes I have been put before the choice of either drop the entire family from the sample or perform a Skype interview. Although initially sceptical, eventually I decided to agree given the difficulty in finding entire families disposed to be interviewed. The Skype video call, however, happened to be a good compromise and did not decrease reliability and validity of the interviews.

The language generally used for the interviews was English<sup>5</sup>; however, in almost all of the Yugoslav generation’s cases, their post-Yugoslav children served as translator – yet always before having been instructed to avoid any sort of possible interference during the interviews and limiting their activity to translation. Interviews with the two parents have been performed separately, avoiding influences in their answers.

#### ***0.4.1.1 Structure and topics of the interviews***

The interviews performed have been divided into three main sections, each one

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<sup>5</sup> My personal knowledge of BCS (Bosnian Croatian Serbian) and Macedonian allows me to understand and interact in informal contexts, hence quite scarcely in the context of research’s interviews; also, I don’t have any knowledge of the Albanian language;

corresponding to a macro-topic: state-masses dynamics of interactions; inter-groups dynamics of interactions and, finally, identifications and feelings of attachment.

Since targeting two different generations, the structure of the interviews has been slightly adjusted according to the generational cohort: in the Yugoslav generation case, indeed, part of the questions was focused on the Yugoslav past and experience, trying to reconstruct personal experiences, memories and the overall changes occurred. Nevertheless, having in mind the wide set of motivations leading toward the possible unreliability of the answers (particularly when asked about some 'hot topics' like nationalism or ethnic-relations), the younger generation has also been asked about their parents, in order to both increase the reliability of the answers and to analyse some topics from both generations' perspectives. Another reason of this 'double check' was that I noticed – while performing some initial, pilot, interview - the youngsters being more open in their answers while the older generations slightly more reserved and sometimes afraid of being judged (particularly in the Macedonian case study). Most probably, this different attitude across generations was connected to the personal characteristics of the researcher, whose age is enclosed in the post-Yugoslav cohort considered.

What follows is a brief but detailed description of the aims pursued by each of the three macro-sections composing the semi-structured interviews:

#### 1) *State, institutions and political parties*

The first set of questions has been structured around two basic elements: state and political parties. The questions asked, besides deepening people's opinions and perspectives about past and current political systems, aimed to deepen nature, motivations and mechanisms of possible relations and negotiations existing between people and the institutions of the state, as well between people and the political parties.

#### 2) *Inter-ethnic dynamics*

The second set of questions was meant to investigate dynamics of inter-group interactions and was designed to reconstruct the quality/nature of inter-ethnic contacts during and after Yugoslavia. Questions, thus, ranged from friendship to marriages, from school education to nightlife, from religion to places of residence.

### 3) *Identifications, attachments and perceptions*

The third and last set of questions was, finally, devoted to explore (and possibly compare with the past) how the two generations perceive themselves, their alleged group of belonging, the other groups and the larger state itself. The answers provided allowed to see how, and through which mechanisms, ways of identification, loyalties and attachments have changed or remained stable in the light of structural changes.

Finally, questions concerning the family and its socializing role have been included in all the three sections; however, since direct questions can't properly assess neither parents' influence nor inter-generational changes, these issues have largely been evaluated through the telling of personal and meaningful experiences and memories.

#### **0.4.2 Informants and semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews have also been performed with a quite large number of informants in both Skopje and Sarajevo (in total 58 interviews) in order to both reconstruct the changes occurred in the 1990s (from an institutional, political and social perspectives), and to better understand the current reality.

Interviews have been performed with:

- Academics from the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje and from the University of Sarajevo;
- High-level religious institutions' members (in Macedonia: one member of the Macedonian Orthodox church and one of the Islamic Community; in Bosnia: one member of the Orthodox church, an expert of the Catholic church, one member of the Islamic community, the president of the Jews Community, as well as a high-level member of the Interreligious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>6</sup>);
- OSCE members experts in inter-ethnic relations and democratization in post-conflict realities, both in Skopje and Sarajevo;

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<sup>6</sup> The Interreligious Council of BiH (*Međureligijsko vijeće u Bosni i Hercegovini, MRV*) was established in 1997, after the war and with the international support, by the leaders of each of the four major religious communities in Bosnia;

- *Nansen Dialogue Center*<sup>7</sup>'s directors, both in Skopje and Sarajevo;
- Journalists of *Nova Makedonija* and *Oslobođenje*<sup>8</sup>, which personally experienced the transition of their respective countries;
- Members of the civil society;
- Politicians/members of political parties (when possible).

The interviews have been modulated according to the informant's field of provenance and were meant to deepen particular ethnonationality's aspects. I, therefore, tried to reach people working in those fields in which ethnonationality has assumed a considerable relevance (as religion, politics, media or education), as well as people working to counteract or smooth the politicization of ethnicity and its effects (as the civil society and OSCE).

In most of the cases the interviews have been recorded<sup>9</sup>, while in some others, as with politicians and OSCE members, I have been asked to avoid the recorder and take notes instead.

Finally, documents and other resources, like reports and constitutions, have also been used to support the arguments stated and enrich the analysis.

All the data collected have been critically analysed and discussed, ensuring objectivity.

### **0.4.3 Research Obstacles**

The research fieldwork took place in a time period of about one year and starting from February 2016. Although successfully completed, there have been some difficulties – yet mostly in Macedonia.

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<sup>7</sup> *Nansen Dialogue* is a network working in both Macedonia and Bosnia, whose activities deal with the active support of intercultural and interethnic dialogue processes at local, national and international levels. Particularly, they are implementing educational projects in public schools (at all levels of education) aimed to cope with the segregated education affecting both countries;

<sup>8</sup> *Nova Makedonija* and *Oslobođenje* are the two most important newspaper in Macedonia and Bosnia respectively;

<sup>9</sup> This happened in the cases of politicians, OSCE members and a other few case

When the fieldwork started, Macedonia was already going through a deep political and economic crisis and particularly the Macedonian national party VMRO-DPMNE was at the centre of the attention due to ‘the wiretapping scandal’<sup>10</sup>. From April 2016 until the end of the summer, people initiated a ‘Colourful Revolution’ taking the streets of Skopje everyday at 6 pm. Political tension was also connected to the elections, and the whole period spent in Skopje was a continuous electoral campaign featured by protests and uncertainties.

But how did this affect the research?

First of all, given the Macedonian political chaos, interviews with people involved/close to politics and political parties represented a big problem. However, interviews with politicians have been problematic also in Sarajevo, and I managed to interview only a couple of politicians in both countries and generally not the ones involved into the main national(ist) parties. Moreover, in Macedonia, the shacking political equilibrium fostered even more a narrative already circulating - namely that foreign powers were working to destabilize Macedonia and infecting the country with mercenaries<sup>11</sup>. Indeed, mistrust towards foreigners and fear of being recorded was clearly perceptible.

Another kind of problem was related to the unit of analysis of this work - the family. In Skopje happened many times that, immediately before or even after the interviews, people suddenly stepped back, boycotting our meetings. In a couple of cases, instead, after the interview, the young adults confessed they were ‘ashamed’ of their parents’ political opinions - defined as ‘too conservative’ (or nationalist), and didn’t want to involve them. On the contrary, the Bosnian post-Yugoslav generation showed a

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<sup>10</sup> See: Berendt J., Macedonia, ‘Government is blamed for wiretapping scandal’, *New York Times*, (Accessed 11 January 2017),

[https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/22/world/europe/macedonia-government-is-blamed-for-wiretapping-scandal.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/22/world/europe/macedonia-government-is-blamed-for-wiretapping-scandal.html?_r=0)

<sup>11</sup> See: <https://www.rferl.org/a/george-soros-macedonia-witch-hunt/28243738.html>; <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/the-ruling-vmro-dpmne-party-s-new-campaign-against-soros-funded-ngos-accusing-them-of-being-foreign-mercenaries-is-taking-a-threatening-turn--01-26-2017>;

greater understating for their parents' attitudes and opinions, even when conservative, and interviews have been performed without problems.

Another issue concerned the divide existing between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians and, in fact, the snowball technique had an arrest obliging me to improve and widen my network.

Overall, although the fieldwork in Skopje has been successfully completed, it took considerably more time than the Bosnian case. An interesting difference I noticed between the two countries was that, generally, the Bosnians (meaning, inhabitants of BiH regardless their ethnonational backgrounds) were more interested and better disposed to talk compared to the Macedonians (meaning, inhabitants of Macedonia regardless their ethnonational backgrounds), which instead were generally more sceptical, reserved and doubtful in sharing their thoughts and experiences (most probably because of the political situation).

Also, despite their dramatic recent past, the Bosnian families were considerably more open to explain and describe and, although *never* asked about the war-time, almost all of them told me some personal experience related to that period, allowing me to go deeper in their lives and ways of thinking and, above all, to understand the reasons that may have led them to 'conservative' positions.

### **0.5 Structure and Findings of the Research**

This doctoral work is structured into seven chapters followed by a conclusive reflection on the case studies and the concept of ethnonationality. The first three chapters provide a theoretical and historical-institutional overview over the case studies, from their Yugoslav past to their respective conflicts; while the remnant four chapters analyse the empirical material collected in Skopje and Sarajevo, from February 2016 to March 2017.

This work is, thus, structured as follow:

Chapter 1, '*Concepts and Theories. Collectivities, Ideology and the State*' provides the needed theoretical basis and looks at how ethnic groups and nations come into being. Great attention is paid to nationalism and the strategies employed in building collective identities and gain popular legitimacy. While exploring ethnic identities' politicization and nationalism's ties with the state, the chapter takes into consideration two different forms of polity: the nation-state and the multinational state. Moreover,



in the latter case, while analysing possible institutional mechanisms suitable to manage ethnonational plurality, the chapter introduces and explores the possibility of an ‘ethnopolitical drift’ - according to which multinational states grounded on democratic institutions and mechanisms end to become ethnocracies featured by ethnopolitics.

Keeping the focus of the attention on the multinational state, and the tie between state-sponsored ideologies and institutional mechanisms, Chapter 2 *‘Nations, institutions and ideology. The ‘Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY)’* analyses how ethnonational plurality was managed in the SFRY. Starting from its birth in 1944, the chapter looks at how the Yugoslav system succeeded in gaining popular legitimacy and managed ethnic diversity while trying to stifle the rise of nationalism. The exploration gives a special attention to the decentralization process initiated in the 1970s, after which the SFRY assumed a ‘quasi-consociational’ character, and stresses how different state architectures can differently impact both the political and social spheres - even favouring the rise of disruptive tendencies aiming at changing meanings and functions of ethnonationality.

Emphasizing the importance of the institutional changes ruled out in the 1970s, Chapter 3 *‘Ethnonationality in the changing. Deterioration of ‘Brotherhood and Unity’ and redefinition of ethnonationality in the federal units of BiH and Macedonia’* goes in depth in the Yugoslav past of BiH and Macedonia, covering a time period that goes from 1974 to 1990. By looking at how institutional and political dynamics differently impacted the two republics’ micro worlds, the chapter reconstructs the ‘evolution’ of meanings and functions of ethnonationality in the two federal units. The analysis makes clear the differences existing between the two republics and since the Yugoslav decades, and it does so especially by considering the different dynamics behind the Bosnian and Macedonian conflicts. The chapter concludes looking at the further redefinition of ethnonationality happened with the signing of the Bosnian and Macedonian post-conflict peace agreements, both entailing the implementation of consociational mechanisms and ethnic power-sharing.

By bearing in mind the arguments exposed in Chapter 1 about the ‘ethnopolitical drift’, Chapter 4 *‘Divide et Impera. Understanding ethnopolitics and its legitimacy in today’s Macedonia and Bosnia Herzegovina’*, deals with the current realities of the two countries surveyed. Major attention is put on how, under certain circumstances

and in presence of certain structural conditions, ethnonationality's exploitation may become the easiest and most successful way to rule in plural societies.

Finally, in order to reconstruct the evolution of ethnonationality from an inter-generational perspective, the last three chapters present and compare the findings of the inter-generational exploration performed in Skopje and Sarajevo between February 2016 and March 2017.

Chapter 5 *Ethnonationality has always mattered. Inter-generational similarity between groups' status and benefits. The case of Skopje*, and Chapter 6 *Ethnonationality has never mattered. Inter-generational continuity between cosmopolitanism and survival. The case of Sarajevo* separately deal with the Macedonian and Bosnian realities. The discussion of the findings is presented starting from the older generation and the Yugoslav past, then proceeding with the younger generation, and concluding with an overview of the possible inter-generational discontinuities and dis-similarities emerged. The two empirical chapters survey people's perspectives, opinions and modalities of interactions with both the state and the other groups living in the plural society, trying to unveil that mutually dependent relation existing between macro and micro, state and masses.

The research's findings show how, in the absence of solid states able to take care of their own citizens - and regardless ethnonational origins of belonging -, the Macedonian and Bosnian populations are 'incentivized' to turn to their own ethnic communities and, especially, ethnic political parties to obtain benefits and resources oftentimes redistributed according to ethno-particularistic criteria. Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, therefore, provide both a generational and inter-generational picture of how, and according to which logic, ethnonationality's meanings and functions have possibly changed (or not) across generations and time periods, also and finally providing the reader with a complete family overview for each country surveyed.

Conclusively, in the light of the research results presented in the previous chapters, Chapter 7 *'Ethnonationality in Macedonia and Bosnia Herzegovina. Inter-generational dis-similarities and dis-continuities across two apparently similar case studies.'* provides a final overview of all the data collected during the fieldwork, and exposes them through a three-level comparison. The first level of comparison looks at BiH and Macedonia from a macro perspective; the second level of comparison separately looks at the two old and young generations by comparing their ways of

signifying and using their own ethnonationality while, finally, the third level of comparison provides a family-level evaluation.

The three comparisons show, among other things, how the apparently very similar socio-political situation of Macedonia and Bosnia Herzegovina is instead the outcome of different political, inter-group and state-masses dynamics; how different are the social realities of Skopje and Sarajevo and, thus, their potential in influencing interaction dynamics between individuals and groups; how different are the reasons behind the meanings and usages of one's own ethnonational belonging in Bosnia and Macedonia and between the different generations, and in what extent these are connected to politico-ideological or instrumental reasons.

Finally, *Conclusion*. *What have we learned from the Macedonian and Bosnian case studies*, while acknowledging limits and possible critiques to the performed research, also takes into consideration ideas for future studies on the topic. The last section of the *Conclusion* ends with a final consideration over the whole work performed, and with a reflection over the concept of ethnonationality – pillar of this dissertation.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **CONCEPTS AND THEORIES. COLLECTIVITIES, IDEOLOGY AND THE STATE**

In order to retrace the steps of ethnonationality's evolution in the context of Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav Macedonia and Bosnia Herzegovina, some theoretical foundations explaining the concepts used and the arguments presented throughout this work have to be laid. As previously said, the approach here followed is relational and starts from the belief that any social and political dynamic is the outcome of interactions involving different elements and actors. The theoretical exploration, thus, begins defining nature, genesis and features of ethnic and national collectivities, however particularly focusing on the second ones - the nations. The chapter proceeds by extensively looking at the role played by the state – its composition and institutions, and by dominant, state sponsored, ideologies in shaping national collectivities and polities as well. In this regard, two different forms of polity are explored: the nation-state and the multinational state.

In the first case, great attention is paid on the role of nationalism while, in the multinational state's case, while describing how different institutional assets may promote or discourage internal disruptive tendencies, it is also considered the possibility of an 'ethnopolitical drift' – in which the state is formally united but practically fragmented along ethnonational lines, however maintaining an ethnocratic equilibrium.

The chapter theoretically prepares the ground for the macro and micro analysis that will follow in the next chapters, providing the reader with the needed tools to understand mechanisms and processes possibly shaping meanings and usages of ethnonationality, and featuring the current realities of Bosnia Herzegovina and Macedonia.

## **1.1 Ethnic groups and Nations**

How, and in which circumstances, a group becomes an ethnic group or a nation? And what exactly is a nation? These questions, among others, have dominated the academic debate for long time, and many are the scholars who brilliantly contributed to better understand nature and dynamics leading to the formation of groups, identities and feeling of attachments (see: Anderson 1983; Brass 1991; Breuilly 1993; Gellner 1983; Smith 1991; Malešević 2004; 2006; 2013). In the following pages the attention is largely put on ethnonational groups – meaning, those national groups in which ethnicity has served a constitutive base. Accordingly, a first due observation concerns the fact that, although often used interchangeably, ethnic and national collectivities are not the same thing, and the difference is in the political underpinning of the latter - which may use ethnicity for political purposes either within an existing state or in a state of its own. Nations, thus, are not only political categories but are also tied and supported by the state itself.

Before deepening issues related to nation's political underpinning and the state's role, it is worth to first better define what makes a group an ethnic group, and then proceed by looking at how an ethnic group may become a nation.

### **1.1.1 Ethnic boundaries and Collectivities**

The pioneering work of Fredrik Barth (1969), by stressing the social and interactive nature of ethnic collectivities, changed the way ethnicity and ethnic groups were conceptualized and studied. By putting the attention on the outside, rather than on the inside, Barth argued that ethnic groups come into life because of social interactions with other groups - and not because they possess some particular cultural features, be these language, religion, ancestors or customs. Groups' existence is thus possible in plural contexts, rather than in isolation, where social interactions make distinctiveness possible. However, ethnic groups do not emerge because of mere social contact: it is in precise moments, and to respond or cope with the changing of the environment in which interactions take place (Malešević 2004), that mobilized cultural differences then become relevant, and at both social and political level.

Contrary to Barth's assumption, thus, the cultural content of the groups matters. In certain circumstances cultural differences 'evolve' into ethnic markers, serving the

purpose of delimiting the groups' boundaries, so assuring uniqueness while defining collective identities. As a consequence, feelings of belonging to a larger collectivity do develop as well, so that the distinction between insiders and outsiders – reflected in the dichotomy 'us and them' – becomes the way to frame reality.

What is crucial in Barth's approach, however, is the difference between ethnic boundary and ethnic content of the group: the former refers to its collective identity while the latter to its inner essence. What is determinant in generating ethnic groups and collective identities are, thus, the boundaries generated by interactions in which *that* cultural content is mobilized. Consequently, ethnicity and ethnic identities are not culturally given but, rather, the product of dynamic social processes.

The theoretical passage from Barth's ethnic groups to the development of ethnic-based nations may be done by considering the contribution of Wimmer (2004; 2008a; 2008b; 2013). Following the constructivist approach of Barth and, relying on the institutionalist tradition in the study of ethnic politics, Wimmer defined ethnicity as something 'subjectively felt' (Wimmer 2008b: 973) while nations as ethnic collectivities that 'have developed nationalist aspirations and demand (or control) a state of their own' (*ibidem*: 974). As Barth, also Wimmer focused on how ethnic boundaries are made and re-made (2008a; 2008b) but, while considering those social interactions enabling their creation, the scholar focused also on three key context's features: the institutional framework in which interactions take place, the distribution of power between the groups, and the networks of political alliances that influence elites' and non-elites' interests and behaviours.

Although the topic of state-masses interactions will be tackled later on in the chapter, it's now worth mention Wimmer's idea according to which ethnic based nations (and nation-states) come into being as a consequence of a 'successful compromise between different social groups: an exchange of the guarantee of political loyalty for the promise of participation and security' (Wimmer 2004: 32). This compromise, defining alliances and interests' protections, is necessarily based on social closure – hence, once again, the need to mark the groups' boundaries by defining 'who is in and who is out'.

From this theoretical perspective, thus, nations differ from ethnic groups because of their political foundation. Nations are political claims (Brubaker 2004: 116) in which ethnicity often serves as a basis for their creation. Role and saliency of ethnicity in building nations, once again, depends on the kind of power relations established

between the groups, and between them and the state itself: nations are, in fact, sustained and tied to the state, and the nation-state is the model providing ‘strong incentives for elites and non-elites alike to emphasize ethnic rather than other types of boundaries’ (Wimmer 2008b: 993).

Therefore, as in Barth as in Wimmer, ethnic collectivities and respective identities are determined first and foremost by their boundaries, and they emerge from interactions and negotiations influenced by the structural environment in which they take place. Nevertheless, when talking about collective identities, we should be very careful in not ending up in reification processes.

### **1.1.2 Identities and Identifications**

The concept of identity is often used and abused and, although extremely vague and difficult to measure and define (Westle, Segatti 2016: 3), it remains a social, political and psychological constant.

Acknowledging and problematizing the uses of the concept of identity, especially when referred to collective entities, Brubaker and Cooper (2000) stressed the need to go ‘beyond identity’ and tried to put some order in the multitude of ways the term is employed, suggesting conceptual substitutes. They distinguished among five identity’s main uses, such as: 1) as basis for non self-interested social or political action; 2) as collective phenomenon denoting sameness among members; 3) as core aspect of selfhood; 4) as processual, interactive and contingent product of social or political action; 5) as denoting the unstable, multiple, fluctuating and fragmented nature of the ‘self’. Since these usages of the concept might cause some problems, the two scholars suggested less-reifying terms such as *identification* and *self-understanding* or *commonality*, *connectedness* and *groupness*.

On a similar vein, trying to make sense on how collectivities and collective identities come into being, Eisenstadt and Giesen (1995) theorized a model based on three, ideal typical, symbolic codes enabling ‘to recognize differences in the fluidity and chaos of the world’ (*ibidem*: 74). The three codes are the primordial, the civil and the cultural/sacred one. Primordial codes are focused on kinship, ethnicity, and unchangeable features making collective identities ‘objective’ and the boundaries almost impossible to cross. Civic codes are, instead, based on the familiarity with the rules and social routines defining the collectivity, so that the outsider can cross the

boundaries by learning those rules and participating in those routines. The third code, finally, links the collectivity to the realm of the sacred, investing it by a missionary attitude towards the outside; in turn, ‘inferior’, ‘mistaken’ (*ibidem*: 83) outsiders may cross the boundaries by conversion. The three codes envisioned by Eisenstadt and Giesen were clearly ideal-typical, so interacting and combining together in the complexity of the social reality.

Accordingly, while dealing with collectivities and related identities/forms of identification, the attention has to be put on several factors, ranging from instrumental rationality aimed to maximize individual benefit to shared cultural values, from state’s influences to powerful ideologies. All these elements, influencing each other and interacting together, contribute to make and re-make collectivities and respective identities.

Therefore, by adopting a relational approach, it becomes clear that any kind of collectivity and identity (be that individual or collective) is fluid and situational, changeable although often considered something that, simply, ‘exists’. This perspective in turn helps avoiding what Brubaker called *groupism*, namely ‘the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts’ (2002: 164).

However, when groups’ cultural features are mobilized for political purposes, sustained by the state institutions, and put at the center of exclusive ideologies, those cultural features become powerful dichotomizing elements, and those bounded collectivities perceived as real and fixed. That force able to mobilize both culture and the groups’ members themselves is nationalism.

### **1.1.3 Building the Nation**

Nations and nationalism go hand in hand, and both are modern phenomena attributed to a particular set of historical and political conditions. Their birth is generally dated at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and linked to the rise of modern West. The world before the era of the Enlightenment, indeed, could not allow for any ‘significant congruence’ (Malešević 2006: 89) between polity and culture while, then, with the introduction of mass education in a standardized language, democratization, secularization and other structural changes, that correspondence happened to be possible. So elite and masses



started to perceive themselves as part of the same cultural unity, identifying with each other and therefore building the nation.

The earlier scholarship on the study of nations and nationalism, the so-called primordialists, tended to see nations as objective natural communities, while nationhood as a primordial feature shared by the community's members. Nations were understood as extended kingship (Geertz 1977). This initial approach has been then criticized by the modernists, which have put the emphasis on the constructed character of nations. They identified contexts and conditions in which nations come into being, agreeing that both nationalism and nations were the result of modernizing processes.

Ernest Gellner (1983) focused the attention on the transition from agrarian to industrial societies - a transition described as a shift from a period in which any formulation of nationalist ideas was not possible to a period in which, on the contrary, ideas about the nation seemed 'a self-evident ideal valid for all times, thus turning [them] into an effective norm' (*ibidem*: 111). Nationalism was, according to Gellner, a direct effect of the industrial society's organization: standardized education in a specific language was providing cultural homogeneity, in turn enabling the rise of nationalism and the formation of nation-states. Homogeneity was, therefore, a necessary condition, foundation of the political life and the principle according to which rulers and ruled had to belong to the same cultural unity.

On a similar vein, and again acknowledging the key relevance of massive alphabetization in enabling nation-state's formation, Benedict Anderson described nations as imagined political communities - that had to be distinguished from other kinds of collectivities by 'the style in which they are imagined' (Anderson 1983: 6). Capitalism and print technologies allowed for imagining new forms of communities. As mentioned by Eisenstadt and Giesen (1995), for example, the German *Kulturnation* was the result of a 'reading revolution' happened in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; neither politics nor economy, but culture and education, enabled the birth of the aesthetic idea of Volk - Nation. However, as Kohn (1961: 443) pointed out, the German romanticism prepared for the rise of nationalism after 1800 by emphasizing, and helping the development of, a 'consciousness of German uniqueness'.

Another important approach in understanding ethnic and national groups is the ethno-symbolic one developed by Anthony Smith (1986; 1991; 1999; 2009). The scholar agreed with the modernists on the imagined character of the nations and their

embeddedness in specific historical and geo-cultural contexts (Smith 2009); however Smith put the attention on symbolic resources such as myths, traditions, symbols and memories in composing the cultural units' heritage. The main difference with modernists is, hence, on how nations come into being: it's not because of industrialization processes but because of pre-existing *ethnies* – meaning 'named and self- defined human community whose members possess a myth of common ancestry, shared memories, one or more elements of common culture, including a link with a territory, and a measure of solidarity, at least among the upper strata' (*ibidem*: 27). *Ethnies* are the basis for the existence of any nation and ethnic ties, more than political and economic interests, guarantee persistence of nations and nationalism. But ethno-symbolists have also acknowledged the importance of the *ethnies*' territorialisation and the presence of symbolic boundaries creating "ethno-scapes" – territorial spaces where a people and its homeland become increasingly symbiotic' (*ibidem*: 50).

In this respect, Smith did differentiate between civic and ethnic nationalism: the former's core element is that 'people and territory belong together' (1991: 9) while, in the latter case, the core element is the common ancestries, so that the community is one 'of [...] descent' (*ibidem*: 12).

Finally, the post-modernists critique, although agreeing with modernists that nations and nationalism are embedded in modernity, claimed the world was witnessing a shift towards 'institutionalized supranationality' (Brubaker 1996: 2), in which the nation-state was ill-matching with the structural changes happening in Europe. Stunningly, however, the 1990s witnessed the rebirth of nationalism and the violent stepping back to nation-state dreams. These events, in Brubaker's (1996; 1998) perspective, urged a study not of nationalism's strength or resurgence, but of its reframing and structure – particularly in the post-Communist and post-Yugoslav space.

### ***1.1.3.1 The role of Nationalism***

Nationalism is a 'potent principle of political legitimacy' (O'Leary 1998: 40) that links together macro and micro, state and masses. Nationalism emerges from complex social, political, economic and cultural dynamics that, in turn, enable nations and possibly nation-states to come into being. Nationalism is not engendered by nations but by '*political fields* of particular kinds' (Brubaker 1996: 17). Claims made in the

name of nations and national identities, although the product of particular social and political situations, need to gain the support of many and different strata of the society. In so doing, nationalism ‘needs simplification, concreteness and repetition’ (Breuilly 1993: 64) – meaning, to articulate its discourses in cultural terms.

So here culture enters the stage.

The groups’ cultural content, as previously seen while discussing Barth and Wimmer, is often mobilized to draw groups’ boundaries and foster inner solidarity in order to differentiate between ‘us and them’. Emphasized cultural differences between groups (such as religion, language, costumes and so on), in turn produce bounded imagined realities and groups’ stereotypes which help differentiation processes either by stigmatizing others or by conferring the nation an aura of uniqueness. As O’Leary (1998: 42) argued, in these processes, culture becomes so important that replaces the social structure, and people are then classified accordingly – by their nationality.

Emphasized and mobilized cultural elements, and the constant threat the nation’s cultural core may be compromised, function as the base for social cohesion and emotional magnets. So although strictly related to structural conditions and seeking power in terms of state control, nationalism penetrates the grassroots of the society, generating social cohesion on the basis of ethno-cultural differences.

Acknowledging the contextual character of both nations and nationalism, Brubaker (2002; 2004) defined nations as not real entities but something that ‘happens’, political claims ‘on people’s loyalty, on their attention, on their solidarity’ (Brubaker 2004:116). In turn, nationalism is ‘a particular language, a political idiom’ (*ivi*) able to mobilize them. In studying nations, thus, the interests should be on how the concept works as practical category, not on what nations are – so that, in this way, we avoid nations’ reification by treating them as objects, rather than tools, of the analysis.

Another key contribution on the topic is the one of Malešević: according to the scholar (2006: 27) ethnicity is ‘politicised social action, a process whereby elements of real, actual, lived cultural differences are politicised in the context of intensive group interaction’. A nation, then, is ‘not simply politicised ethnicity. [...] is a modern ideological construct reinforced by the institutions of the modern state (education system, mass media, public culture) as well as by civil society and family and kinship networks’ (*ibidem*: 28). In a similar vein Wimmer (2004: 1) argued that ethnicity, its politicization and ideologization (so ethnonationalism), are the ‘perennial

bases of human history': not a product of modernity but, on the contrary, its same constitutive bases. Indeed, the scholar argued that:

This politicization of ethnicity is the result of the overlapping and fusion of three notions of peoplehood on which the project of political modernity is based. The people as a sovereign entity, which exercises power by means of some sort of democratic procedure; the people as citizens of a state, holding equal rights before the law; and the people as an ethnic community undifferentiated by distinctions of honour or prestige, but held together by common political destiny and shared cultural features: these three notions of peoplehood were fused into one single people writ large [...]. Democracy, citizenship and national self-determination became the indivisible trinity of the world order of nation-states (Wimmer 2004: 2).

In the light of this research's aims, the approaches developed by Malešević and Wimmer – scrutinized in detail in the next section - deeply interest us because of their linkages with nationalism and state structures, and in both the two polities' case here analysed: the nation-state and the multinational state.

In fact, not all the nations have their own state and not all the states are nation-states. It's the kind of interactions and alliances existing between socio-political groups, and between them and the state, that defines i) which groups will become nations and ii) which shape will the polity assume, if mono, bi or multinational.

In order to get closer to the core issues of this dissertation - namely, how the connection between states, institutions and ideologies possibly shapes nations' birth as well as meanings and functioning of these practical categories - the next section examine the nation-state model while, after that, the multinational state will be explored.

## **1.2 The Nation-State**

Nation, nationalism and the state are strictly tied together.

Although often considered synonymous, the concepts of nation and state are different and describe two different yet related political phenomena. A similar conceptual confusion is often occurring between nation or state and nation-state: the latter is, in

fact, a state for and of the nation's members, generally key aspect of nationalist movements. However, although nationalism engenders nations, it however not always tries, or is able to, establish nation-states.

These general remarks point the attention on two issues: first, nationalism can assume a variety of forms: there are separatist and unification nationalisms (Breuilly 1993), as well as nationalisms coming from majority and minority groups (Brubaker 1998). Second, in both national and multinational states, institutions' shape and ideologies have a paramount role in enabling any dynamic between state and masses/nations and between the national groups themselves, encouraging or discouraging the rise of disruptive tendencies and, possibly, even conflict.

In what follows, the 'perfect social order' is carefully analysed alongside with its nationalist foundations and functioning mechanisms.

### **1.2.1 Nationalism and the Nation-State**

According to Breuilly (1993: 63-69), nationalism arises to make sense of the complex relation between state and society (the nation) and the solution it finds is the establishment of a nation-state, so that each nation would have its own government.

The nation-state is, in fact, a particular state form in which ethno-cultural and territorial boundaries of the national community overlap. This means the creation of a political unity for and of the nation's members; a perfect social order in which the nationalist ideology ties together peoples and institutions, and whose existence is direct consequence of continued popular support grounded on nationalism as legitimizing ideology.

Malešević (2010; 2013) has explained the nation-state's creation as resulting from two intertwined and mutually supportive processes called 'cumulative bureaucratization of coercion' and 'centrifugal ideologization'. The two processes enable nationalism and the nation-state to remain dominant, popularly sustained and legitimate.

The 'cumulative bureaucratization of coercion' entails the expansion of bureaucracy as efficient mean for managing large numbers of individuals; although coercive, it is not imposed upon people but sustained and approved because grounded on ideological legitimization. 'Centrifugal ideologization' is the consequent institutional and extra-institutional mass phenomena enabled by the expansion of bureaucracy. In a

few words, the bureaucratic scaffolding of the nation-state spreads - via school system, religious institutions, mass media, social movements and so on - 'narratives, imaginaries, practices, institutions and rules that sustain the ideology' (Malešević 2013: 176) so to progressively penetrate any society's strata, and creating popular legitimacy and support. In this way, cultural homogeneity is produced and reproduced, and nationalism and the nation-state progressively legitimized.

The institutional set up of the nation-state is purposely designed to reproduce nationalism in a routinized form. The outcome is what Billig (1995) has defined 'banal nationalism' – namely, the habitual and unconscious reproduction that keeps it alive. Wimmer (2004), instead, pointed the attention on another crucial factor in allowing for the birth of a nation-state: the dynamics of interactions, and the kind of alliances, existing and established between different social and political groups. As the scholar argued, the centrality of ethnicity in defining both nationalism and nation-states does depend on a reorganization of the modalities of inclusion and exclusion, in which identities and group memberships are defined on ethnic base.

Nevertheless, what matters the most is masses' naturalized and routinized loyalty to both the nation and its bureaucratic extension – the nation-state.

### **1.2.2 Nationalism and Masses' Loyalty**

Pervasive ideological processes meant to deeply penetrate the micro-word, and generate unconditioned loyalty towards the nation and the nation-state, are the chief means to achieve popular legitimacy. Loyalty and solidarity among the nation's members are at the heart of any nationalist movement: love and attachment for the nation, as the one for one's own family, have to surpass any other form of love and attachment, and be defended by enemies keen to compromise its unity and cultural purity.

Not surprisingly, nationalist leaders are very careful to the words they use and the metaphors they employ while addressing their audiences: they talk to 'the Nation' as a living, natural entity, progressively changing the way people see themselves and the others (Brubaker 2004). The nation, thus, must become the unit of 'human solidarity and political legitimacy' (Malešević 2013: 75).

### ***1.2.2.1 Nations as Extended Families***

Nationalism relies on pre-existing social, political and cultural elements to colour its narratives and depict the nation in a way able to foster emotional attachment. One of the metaphors often employed is the one of the nation as extended family.

Nations' members are, from this perspective, tied together by the same blood, they are 'brothers and sisters' living in, and ready to defend, their 'motherlands/fatherlands', and all of them descend from alleged ancestors identified as 'fathers'.

This idea of the nation as a 'family of political loyalty and shared identity' (Wimmer 2013: 4) provides both an ideological framework and the needed solidarity among its members.

Nationalism is able to project parental and other forms of love onto the contours of the nation-state. By invoking images of our brothers, who are sacrificing their lives so that we can live, and our mothers and daughters who need to be protected from the merciless enemies, nationalist ideology can tap into the micro-universe of families, lovers and friends and, in the process, make a nation-state resemble those most dear to us. (Malešević 2013: 16)

Solidarity is above all generated by a sense of belonging to the same group, whose collective identification may become, in particular moments, superior and more powerful than any other form of identification and attachment. In Durkheimian (Durkheim 1995 [1912]) sense, the nation is featured by organic solidarity among its members, and the nation itself assumes the feature of a *totem*, adored and worshipped. Solidarity among 'siblings' transcends any state boundary and doesn't care about geographical distance – brothers remain brothers even when scattered all around the globe.

### ***1.2.2.2 Sacred Nations***

Another metaphor widely present in nationalist narratives is the one of 'sacred nations' and the idea of 'chosenness', which combine the myth of divine election of the group with selected historical facts. On the one side the nation, rather than transcendental divinities, becomes the object of collective worship while, on the other

one, by establishing close relations with religion and its institutions, nationalism portrays the nation as legitimized, blessed and chosen by god itself.

The 'chosen people' narrative has its roots far back in the past and specifically in the Old Testament, which described the Jews as such. The idea of chosenness elevates the group to a superior level, tracing a line between 'us and them', fostering inner solidarity and stressing the unique and authentic character of the national group.

The 'sacred' narrative may be spread by political and religious leaders as well, often cooperating together in the processes of nation building.

Religion, indeed, functions as a powerful cohesive and distinctive element, oftentimes becoming a key ethnic marker and central element in the nation-building process. Once politicized and ethnicized by ethno-political entrepreneurs (Brubaker 2002; Mujkić 2016), religion becomes 'the hallmark of nationhood' (Perica 2002: 5) and 'the entwining between church, state and nation result[s] in the secularization of the first and deification of the last two entities' (Anzulović 1999: 4).

### **1.2.3 Nations, State and Violence**

Emotional attachment to the nation, and inner solidarity among its members, are fundamental for the nation's birth and survival: the nation's members have to defend its purity and, possibly, its territory, at any cost. As the history shows us, it is not uncommon for men and women to proudly die to defend their 'imagined communities'. However, it is not matter of a sudden collective schizophrenia.

The establishment of a nation-state requires a quite high degree of internal ethno-cultural homogeneity and the main principle to be respected, as Gellner (1983) pointed out, is that ethnic likes should be ruled by ethnic likes. Political domination by ethnic others may represent a possible cause of war. The state, in this perspective, is/should be ethnicized and culturally pure, so that its institutional articulation and ideological underpinning, as seen in Malešević, can more easily develop identitarian ideologies.

However, the creation of nation-states, for and of the nation's members, has historically proven to be a hard task, oftentimes cause of violence. One of the most recent and massive examples is the break up of Yugoslavia, where virulent and violent ethnonationalism caused and legitimized wars fought to create ethnic nation-states in a multinational space. Nevertheless, although nationalism is by definition



ethnocentric and privileges the ethnic likes over anyone else, its relation with violence is more complicated and the presence of nationalist movements doesn't automatically imply violent wars (see Wimmer 2013). When, for instance, groups' interests do not overlap and a shared view of the 'division of the world' cannot be agreed, or again when assimilation is not possible, then conflict between groups may occur. But much depends on the circumstances.

On this purpose, the work of Conversi (1999), which describes the dynamics involving the triad ethnic boundaries, ethnic content and violence, is very useful to understand the processes of nation-building and the connected nation-state aspirations.

On the one side, Conversi explained, when cultural difference is reduced to a minimum and the groups share many elements of the same culture, 'the leaders of the subordinated group have then to create other contexts and fabricate new option in order to emphasise group identity and redefine ethnic boundaries' (Conversi 1999: 583): one of the possible ways to draw boundaries is 'to invent traditions' – as Hobsbawm and Ranger (1992) pointed out. Invented traditions are 'a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past' (*ibidem*: 1). When de-differentiation is perceived as a threat to the group's existence, violence may represent the response to reassert and mark boundaries hitherto almost non-existing. Consequently, conflict dynamics may be maintained to preserve groups' distinctiveness and identities.

On the other side, the groups need internal homogeneity. As Malešević (2006: 206) said, when homogeneity 'is achieved gradually and slowly [...] then we accept it as something normal and natural. But when this same principle is applied suddenly in front of our eyes without any restraints we are utterly shocked and disgusted by its savagery'. In the modern era, in fact, people are killed because of *who* they are; and 'who they are', in some circumstances and contexts, hampers the nation-state building plans of someone else. Nationalist narratives spread through propaganda are firstly aimed to demonstrate, even scientifically or biologically<sup>12</sup>, the others' diversity,

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<sup>12</sup> A clear example on this purpose has been Biljana Plavšić, Bosnian Serb, was Dean of Science at the University of Sarajevo and respected Biologist. At the eve of the Yugoslav

where diversity means danger and danger possibly legitimizes violence and even ethnic cleansing. In Malešević's opinion, genocides and ethnic cleansings are not due to backwardness but they are the modern means used to establish nation-states, whose idea 'has set the foundation for all future genocides' (Malešević 2006: 206). The argument is even more sustained by Wimmer (2013: 110), which has empirically proven 'that there is indeed a systematic association between imperial incorporation and nation-state formation on the one hand, and war on the other hand'.

Nevertheless, as internally homogeneous nation-states can be forged, sustained and legitimized by both masses and the state's institutions, so can the multinational ones.

### 1.3 The Multinational State

Multinational states are states in which two or more nations, with their distinct national identities, coexist within the borders of the same polity. Multinational states are different from the multicultural ones since, in the latter, although the groups have different cultural traditions they all belong to the same nation; 'multicultural states become multinational when the different cultural groups aspire for independent statehood' (Keil 2013: 27).

The major issue multinational states have to deal with concerns the management of the groups' collective identities and feelings of attachment and belonging.

The multinational state may, in fact, adopt different strategies to deal with these collectivities while avoiding the state's collapse. Among these, some more extreme policies go in the direction of assimilation, repression and even physical elimination of minority groups; other solutions may discourage political mobilization on ethnic

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collapse, Plavšić became politically active and, together with Radovan Karadžić, founded the SDS – the Serbian Democratic Party. She also served as member of the Bosnian triple presidency representing Republika Srpska. In the war-time, she affirmed that: '*Muslims are genetically spoiled material who converted to Islam. And those genes have been reinforced generation after generation. They have become worse and they dictate and express the Muslim way of thinking and behaving. The latter is embedded in their genes*' (in Svet, September 6, 1993 cit. in Subotić 2012: 42). After the war, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) indicted Plavšić of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. She plead guilty and sentenced to 11 years of jail, then released and welcomed back home as a hero;

bases or, finally and opposite to the previous solutions, the state may opt for more inclusive and pluralist strategies aimed to build a 'state-nation' (Stepan, Linz and Yadav. 2011). State-nations do recognize groups' cultural specificities and identities nonetheless promoting attachment and identification with the larger state and its institutions. This means the introduction of policies able to positively influence inter-group relations and their relation with the larger state and, finally, the state survival. In a few words, political leaders in multinational states may want to craft a state where the collectivities, beside identifying themselves with their own groups, strongly identify with, and are loyal towards, the larger state, so to engender a 'loyalty that proponents of homogenous nation states perceive that only nation state can engender' (*ibidem*: 4).

Contrary to the 'one nation, one state' equation, the state-nation approach 'respects and promotes *multiple but complementary* identities' (*ivi*). Legitimacy, credibility and popular support of the multinational states, hence, come from the state's commitment in respecting and recognizing groups' differences, leaving them space of expression and, at the same time, establishing mechanisms of accommodation.

### **1.3.1 Political Engineering to Manage Plurality**

As seen for the nation-state's case, the bureaucratic scaffolding of the state and its institutional asset are crucial in building and gaining popular legitimacy and support. The same can be said for the multinational state, where institutions that include, represent and protect all the groups composing the larger society stand as an indispensable tool in managing ethnic diversity. The behaviour of the political elite entrenched in these institutions, and their capability in going beyond the boundaries of ethnic belonging, is another key element when it comes to plural realities – yet it is true that certain institutional assets may promote certain elites' behaviours, and not always going in the direction of cooperation between the groups.

The academic debate on the topic is, in fact, dominated by two different approaches: the consociational model developed by Arendt Lijphart (1977) and the centripetalist one, advocated above all by Benjamin Reilly (2004; 2006; 2011) and Donald Horowitz (1985). The former relies on cooperation between (ethnic) leaders representing the different segments composing the larger society while, the latter,

promotes the establishment of institutions and mechanisms encouraging inter-group moderation.

### ***1.3.1.1 Consociationalism, Centripetalism and Critiques***

Plural societies, according to Lijphart, are ‘societies that are sharply divided along religious, ideological, linguistic, cultural, ethnic or racial lines into virtually separate sub-societies with their own political parties, interest groups, and media of communication’ (Lijphart, 1984: 22). Therefore, the consociational model is grounded on the fundamental assumption that ‘it is often more perverse to deny the existence and salience of ethnic identities [...] than it is to build upon them’ (O’Leary 2005: 19).

Consociations are based on four main elements: 1) the establishment of a grand coalition formed by political leaders representing all the significant society’s segments; 2) proportional representation of the society’s segments; 3) mutual veto rights and 4) a high degree of groups autonomy, usually reflected in a decentralized state system and/or federalism. As we shall see afterwards, both Bosnia and Macedonia are currently based on this model and, to some extents, so was Yugoslavia from 1974 until its collapse.

The focus of the consociational prescriptions is on strengthening the autonomy of each group, also favouring a party system that explicitly represents the different collectivities ensuring their equal representation. However, as consociationalism’s opponents often argue (see: Brass 1991; Horowitz 1985; Noel 2005; Reilly 2004), Lijphart’s model ‘freezes and institutionally privileges (undesirable) collective identities at the expenses of more “emancipated” or more “progressive” identities (O’Leary 2005: 5). Consociations are, indeed, accused to reify groups’ identities and institutionalize ethnicity - in turn producing an ethnic political pluralism that strengthen ethnic, rather than civic, identities while making dialogue and compromises more difficult to achieve. Eventually, consociationalism increases, rather than decreasing, the sources of inter-group conflict. And its main weakness is, indeed, the perception it engenders of the multinational state itself - seen as ‘composed of nations, rather than citizens’ (Hayden 2000: 51).

Although furnishing empirical examples of consociationalism’s efficacy, Lijphart (1977: 47) himself was aware that, possibly, the model ‘may be criticized for not

being democratic enough and also for being insufficiently capable of achieving a stable and efficient government’.

The centripetalist approach was, therefore, meant to provide an alternative solution to manage diversity in plural societies. Contrary to consociationalism, centripetalism is based on the assumption that the best way to manage plurality is not to replicate existing differences and divisions but, rather, to depoliticize ethnicity – for example by encouraging parties to present themselves as multiethnic and attract votes across ethnic lines. ‘Centripetalism’, indeed, means that the focus of political competition is directed towards the center, not the extremes, and institutions should be tailored to encourage cooperation and moderation avoiding centrifugal tendencies. Its advocates argued that, by giving politicians reasons to seek support from groups beyond their own, it’s possible ‘to create an environment in which cooperative interaction and mutually beneficial “win-win” exchanges are possible, so that norms of cooperation and negotiation can become habituated amongst political actors’ (Reilly 2004: 7). Centripetalism, therefore, emphasizes the key role of institutions encouraging collaboration and accommodation *across* ethnic lines and that can, thus, ‘break down the salience of ethnicity rather than fostering its representation institutionally’ (Reilly 2011: 263).

Among others<sup>13</sup>, an important area of divergence between the two approaches regards territorial solutions: while consociationalism recommends federalism, decentralization and autonomies, centripetalism advocates that a unitary state would be more appropriated to manage plurality and avoid disruptive tendencies.

Finally, as consociationalism, also centripetalism has been criticized, and particularly because of its empirical paucity and the difficulty in forming and maintaining multiethnic parties and coalitions in plural societies.

Concluding, although diverging on some issues, both approaches agree on the general ability of institutions and political engineering in managing plurality and assuring the functioning of the multinational state.

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<sup>13</sup> For a deeper understanding of consociationalism and power-sharing mechanisms see: S. Noel (ed.), *From Power Sharing to Democracy. Post-conflict Institutions in Ethnically Divided Societies* (Montreal & Kingston 2005);

### 1.3.2 The Ethnopolitical Drift

Multinational societies, especially when featured by a weakly centralized government, run a dangerous risk: the one of becoming ethnocracies featured by ethnopolitics (Howard 2012).

If the multinational state is not able to foster dual and complementary sentiments of attachment, loyalty and identification, disruptive tendencies are more likely to arise. Groups that don't feel to belong to the larger state may want to change the internal boundaries of the state or even to secede from it and form a polity for their own; for the same reason, they may also drastically turn towards their ethno-cultural origins over-emphasizing group differences, hence sharpening groups' boundaries and, eventually, fostering animosities and tensions.

However, beside the cases in which the multinational state's political elite fails to craft a state-nation, there are also situations in which the political elite apparently doesn't want to: as multiple and complementary identities can be nurtured and promoted, so can the opposed and antagonist ones (Stepan 1998: 232). What Stepan, Linz and Yadav (2011: 11) defined as 'pure multinationalist' state is, indeed, a multinationalist state made up by groups that conceive their nationalities as 'nation-states *in potentia* and aim at reducing the state to a basic minimum, with the result, intended or not, of bringing about an extremely weak "we-feeling" - if any' (*ivi*). Hence the state, formed by many nations and featured by weakly centralized institutions, may become an empty shell characterized by an ethnopolitical system where political leaders are *ethnonational* political leaders, and where social and political cleavages overlap with each other (Ramet 2014). Moreover, when such a state is grounded on democratic institutions and mechanisms, ethnocracy would be in place at the expenses of liberal democracy. As Howard (2012: 155-56) defined it:

[Ethnocracy] is a political system in which political and social organizations are founded on ethnic belonging rather than individual choice. Ethnocracy, in this sense, features: 1) political parties that are based foremost on ethnic interests; 2) ethnic quotas to determine the allocation of key posts; and 3) state institutions, especially in education and the security sector, that are segmented by ethnic group. Ethnocracies are generally parliamentary systems with proportional or semiproportional representation according to ethnic classifications. Contrasting

political platforms—e.g., socialist-liberal, secular-religious, left-right, and the like—are of secondary importance to ethnic-group membership. The ethnic bases of political parties are often mandated by law. In ethnocratic regimes, the heads of government are determined first by ethnic affiliation and only then by other means of appointment. Ethnocratic regimes often segment education and the security services by ethnic group as well. [...] Slots in the military and police may also be designated primarily along ethnic lines rather than with a view to experience, merit, or other criteria.

But for ethnocracy to be established, ethnopolitics has to become *the* way to do politics, and it also has to be popularly supported. In these cases, some conditions need to be in place, and among these we can mention: 1) decentralized government and institutionalized ethnonationality; 2) an ethnically polarized political spectrum; 3) widespread ethnocentrism and nationalism and, additionally, 4) weak state's economic performances and particularistic mechanism of resources' allocation.

### ***1.3.2.1 Understanding the Loop***

Given the two case studies of this work are both based on ethnic power-sharing mechanisms and consociational principles, let's consider institutionalized ethnonationality as the first, necessary but not sufficient, condition for ethnopolitics' birth.

On this purpose, it's worth to briefly recall the debate between opponents and advocates of consociationalism: the former argue that consociations institutionalize ethnicity, promote segregation, condone ethnic cleansing (O'Leary 2005) and, therefore, are more prone to generate centrifugal tendencies preventing accommodation and cooperation (see Horowitz 1983; Reilly 2004); the latter, instead, argue that 'it is often more perverse to deny the existence and salience of ethnic identities [...] than it is to build upon them' (O'Leary 2005: 19).

Although both standpoints are reasonable, it's fair to say that ethnicity's institutionalization *per se* doesn't lead towards ethnopolitics and deep social divisions. In order for ethnopolitics to exist, social divisions need to overlap the political ones – hence, not only they have to be nurtured, but also and especially politicized: it's when ethno-cultural elements become political tools that social

antagonism between groups becomes more pronounced. Pointing the attention on the political elite's role, Brass (1991: 245) strongly argued against consociationalism, saying it implicitly allows the political class to maintain power and make its own interests, rather than to solve tensions and conflicts – which, on the contrary, are perpetuated remaining unsolved. In Brass' view, all the efforts are concentrated in the hands of competing ethnonationalist political elites that, in specific circumstances, compete over resources by converting cultural differences into bases for political differentiation, hence possibly laying the basis for conflict. 'In the process of transforming cultural forms, values, and practices into political symbols, elites in competition with each other for control over the allegiance or territory of the ethnic groups in question strive to enhance or break the solidarity of the group' (Brass 1991: 15).

In turn, ethnic political pluralism (mirrored in an ethnically polarized political spectrum) represents the second condition for ethnopolitics' birth and establishment.

Accordingly, in ethnically plural societies, political leaders and their parties are often (and for the largest part) monoethnic, and the multiethnic ones rarely get a wider support. However, their mere presence in the political scenario does not represent neither a threat for the society's cohesion, nor the beginning of ethnopolitics. Conversely, it does so when those ethnonational parties become dominant, the ruling political class, each one pushing for its own group's interests' satisfaction, seeing worthless any cohesive attempt.

Particularly in the context of consociationalism - where the state structure is grounded on ethnicity and where the different groups' representatives have the democratic possibility to rule together in grand coalitions - these political parties may find institutional advantages in presenting themselves as ethnonational groups' protectors – eventually making ethnopolitics and ethnocracy democratic outcomes while compromising the possibilities of crafting a state-nation featured by dual but complementary identities.

But for ethnonational parties to become the ruling elite – hence the most supported, it's necessary to gain trust and legitimacy, popular before institutional. And here we come to the third, necessary but not sufficient, condition for ethnopolitics' birth: ideology.

On the one side, being political parties the connecting point between the citizens and the state, they may use a wide set of means they have at their disposal (oftentimes



allowed/provided by the state structure itself) to re-draw in their favour the ideological blueprint of the state, channelling individuals' accordingly and politicizing groups' cultural features. In turn, ethnonationality becomes a key and contingent element put at the center of mechanisms of 'centrifugal ideologization' (Malešević 2010; 2013), aimed to provide people with good enough reasons to support and ally with their ethnonational representatives. The state-sponsored ideology, hence, plays a great role because it's the ideological umbrella within which ethnicity's institutionalization and politicization is realized that largely influences the outcome, making ethnonationality's protection either a political tool to stifle ethnonationalism or its exact opposite.

At the same time, ethnonational groups also become groups of interests: once the multinational state is divided across ethnonational lines and featured by ethnopolitics, ethnonational groups may represent not only an ideological target but also a fruitful pot of votes. Hence, given the state is 'both a resource and a distributor of resources, on the one hand, and a promoter of new values, on the other one' (Brass 1991: 272), ethnonational entrepreneurs in control of state institutions may develop particularistic mechanisms of interactions with their ethnic masses, in which ethnonational belonging serves as a proxy for accessing benefits. These interactions and alliances, especially but not exclusively when in presence of economic deficiencies, 'can take the form of clientelistic and patronage networks [...] or of a system of favouritism and corruption' (Wimmer 2013: 11). Therefore, the fourth condition: state's economic performances and mechanisms of resources' allocation.

Ethnic clientelism, in fact, on the one side helps ethnonational parties to stay in power by instrumentally exploiting the economic conditions of many/most of the population's strata while, on the other one, channels people into the loop by offering them the illusion of some sort of stability - at the condition of absolute loyalty to the party and, therefore, to the ethnonational group. In this way, ethnonationality becomes a mere tool to satisfy different but fundamental needs – power and survival.

To this ethnopolitical loop, however, has to be added one other element, which perhaps weight more than anything else: individuals' agency.

Simplifying we can say that, as in any society, there are two kinds of individuals: the rulers and the ruled – but let's focus briefly on the former.

Rulers are political leaders that, once their parties acquire legitimacy and support, become the ruling elite – hence, they are in control of the state's institutions; rulers

are those spreading certain ideas and values in/about the society, and they do so by using different strategies and institutions. Rulers are also those whose decisions, interests, policies, rhetoric and narratives are able to affect, shape, and re-draw the state ideology and the discourses circulating in the society; and finally, rulers are those in need of masses' support and, thus, those promising them a better future.

In ethnically plural contexts, political leaders are confronted with a choice: either depoliticize ethnicity, promoting civic values untied from people's backgrounds, or appeal their ethnic portion of electorate making ethnicity a political instrument and the multiethnic/non-ethnic alternative worthless. Even if they chose the second option, ethnopolitics may not be the outcome: it becomes so, when the vast majority of the political parties on offer are ethnic, and the vast majority of the masses support them. So masses will chose on the basis of what political parties and their leaders can offer them – and what they usually offer is the illusion of stability and protection.

This illusionary protection, as mentioned, may take two forms: 1) protection from different 'others', hence the ideal of the nation as a extended family or sacred entity that doesn't have to be contaminated and 2) economic protection, helping the ethnic-likes in gain some benefits – of course, at some conditions.

Ethnonational collectivities, under certain conditions and circumstances, become both an ideological target/product and a group of interest. The outcome is, thus, an ethnopolitical system grounded on the '*divide et impera*' principle, and whose concrete actuation is partly allowed by the institutional state asset; this latter is, in turn, exploited by ethnic leaders relying on both pragmatic and ideological mechanisms to gain and maintain power, governing together the state although each one separately dealing with its own ethnic portion of electorate – so to create an ethnocracy. In this way, ethnonational belonging becomes, on the elite side, a political tool to appeal and rule over ethnicized masses and, on the masses' side, either an ideological tool to satisfy the human need of belonging to a larger community or an instrument to gain (basic) benefits. Finally, nationalism and ethnocentrism confirm themselves as the most powerful sources of state legitimacy and mechanisms of mass mobilization (Malešević 2006).

Nevertheless, it's worth to highlight again that, if on the one side a socio-political structure grounded on ethnonationality ends to become 'natural and meaningful to the participants and thus [...] taken-for-granted, routinized and institutionalized'

(Wimmer 203: 13), on the other side creation and maintenance of the described vicious circle would never be possible and long lasting without the consent, support and legitimacy of the largest part of the population – whose role is empirically analysed in the second part of this work.

#### **1.4 Conclusive Remarks**

This chapter has provided a theoretical overview of what ethnic and national groups are, focusing on the role of nationalism in engendering nations as well as the one of the states - and in both the nation-state and multinational cases – in promoting or preventing the spread of certain ideologies and dynamics between state and masses and between different groups.

Keeping the focus of the analysis on ethnonational collectivities, the second part of the chapter devoted its attention to the multinational state and the ‘ethnopolitical drift’ - given both the two case studies of this work (Bosnia Herzegovina and Macedonia) are plural states based on power-sharing/consociational principles and featured by ethnopolitics.

The theoretical bases laid by this chapter serve to better understand what follows: Chapter 2 analyses the institutional and ideological asset of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), while Chapter 3 goes more in detail in the Bosnian and Macedonian Yugoslav realities. Then, recalling the here presented theories and analysis about the multinational state and the ethnopolitical drift, Chapter 4 explores the ethnopolitical realities of current BiH and Macedonia, enriching the exploration with empirical material.

Finally, by always bearing in mind any social and political dynamic is the result of mutual and interdependent interactions between state and masses, the last chapters of this work will deeply examine the role exerted by the people in shaping the reality they live in.

## CHAPTER 2

### NATIONS, INSTITUTIONS AND IDEOLOGY.

#### THE 'SOCIALIST FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA' (SFRY)

This chapter enters the reality of a multinational federation - the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY)<sup>14</sup>, lasted for four decades, and terribly collapsed due to a different set of reasons. As we shall see, among those reasons we can find those factors previously identified as crucial for an 'ethnopolitical drift', namely a decentralized government featured by institutionalized ethnonationality; an ethnically polarized political spectrum; widespread ethnocentrism and nationalism and weak state's economic performances.

The SFRY was a multinational federation composed by six republics and two autonomous provinces, and its inhabitants spoke different languages, wrote in different alphabets and had different religious legacies and historical pasts. As Chapter 1 explained, internal heterogeneity in multinational states has to be carefully managed, and both institutional and ideological strategies have to be wisely planned in order for the larger state to gain legitimacy, tie together its peoples and avoid nationalism. It was, in fact, when the SFRY assumed a 'quasi-consociational' and 'quasi confederal' shape (in the 1970s) that the institutional management of that heterogeneity began to raise problems. Institutional issues, coupled with an economic malaise that soon assumed ethnonational and political tones, had a great responsibility in redefining meanings and uses of people's ethnonational backgrounds, and in the collapse itself.

The aim of the chapter is, therefore, to provide an overview of the principles and mechanisms that for decades allowed the SFRY to be a functioning multinational

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<sup>14</sup> For a complete and exhausting overview of the history of Yugoslavia, among others, see: Lampe, J. 2000. *Yugoslavia as history Twice there was a country*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Pavković, A. 2000. *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia. Nationalism and War in the Balkans*. London: Palgrave Macmillan;

country, as well as of those responsible for eroding that sense of overarching community Tito sought to create. These pages represent a needed step before going more in depth in the Bosnian and Macedonian realities, analysed afterwards.

## **2.1 Groups before the SFRY: a brief historical overview**

### **2.1.1 From the *Millet* to Nationhood**

From the second half of 1400 until 1878 and 1918 respectively, Bosnia Herzegovina and Macedonia were part of the Ottoman Empire, which deeply influenced local culture and identities.

The Medieval Serbian state's nobility tried to arrest the newcomers and, as Privitera (2007) wrote, guided by Prince Lazar they fought the Turks in Kosovo Polje, in 1389. The Serbian defeat won't be forgotten and will deeply shape nationalist narratives, first during the national romanticism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Bijelić, Savić 2002), and than again in the 1980s and 1990s.

The Ottoman's official religion, Islam, gradually spread in the region and particularly in Bosnia where, next to Catholics and Orthodox communities, there also was an autochthonous Bosnian church whose followers, called *Bogumils*<sup>15</sup> (Sekulić T. 2002), largely converted to Islam. The reasons behind the conversions were various, ranging from the recently happened catholic crusades,<sup>16</sup> the not deeply rooted character of Christianity in Bosnia (Fine 1993; Malcom 2000), and Muslims' socio-political and economic status within the Ottoman domain (see Bega 2008). The Ottoman society was organized into *millet* - administrative units whose population was divided across religious, rather than ethnic, lines. Although the non-Muslim millets were granted with a wide array of autonomies (Pinson 1993), Muslims occupied a privileged position and, for example, they were prevalently landowners while non-Muslims were

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<sup>15</sup> The Bogumils were an heretic Christian sect diffused in Bosnia and Serbia in 13<sup>th</sup> century;

<sup>16</sup> The worried Europe reacted to the Ottoman expansion with crusades organized by the Vatican and Venice that, nevertheless, couldn't impede the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Once conquered the Balkans and defeated the Byzantines, the Ottomans gained the support of the defeated previous administration by including the Christian nobility in their institutions;

prevalently peasants. Religion-based divisions, thus, overlapped with the socio-economic ones and, when occurred, conflict was framed in economic more than ethno-religious terms. Consequently, albeit relatively infrequent, conversions to Islam were often driven by instrumental and pragmatic motivations (Banac 1984).

Stressing the pivotal role religion had in the Ottoman society, we can see how, when the Kingdom of Greece was established (1832) and Serbia gained autonomy from the Ottomans, the empire 'recognized the necessity for autocephalous ecclesiastical jurisdiction in these units, eventually leading to the establishment of independent national churches in both states' (Roudometof 2002: 84). In 1870, then, a Bulgarian Exarchate was also established. As a consequence of these provisions, religious allegiances progressively turned into national, synonymous of national identities (Roudometof 2002). Macedonia stood in the middle between the three states but, at that time, the term 'Macedonia' denoted a geographical area - not yet a nation or an ethnic group; therefore, the territory soon became 'a bone of contention' between Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece<sup>17</sup>. 'The eventual annexation of the largest possible portion of geographic Macedonia became thus pivotal in the[ir] nationalist and irredentist plans [...] a fundamental consideration of their national consciousness' (Floudas 2002). It thus started what has then been defined the 'Macedonian question' (Poulton 2000), meaning a debate gravitating around the Macedonian territory and its Slavic-speaking inhabitants' identity – if they were Bulgarians, Serbs or Greeks (Roudometof 2002).

In the course of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, then, the rise of nationalism in Western Europe influenced also the Ottoman territories and the *millet* started to be identified with the national group, becoming 'the prime focus of identity' (Poulton 2000: 36).

In Bosnia Herzegovina identity's developments and processes of national awareness were highly influenced by the politics of neighbouring Serbia and Croatia: the emergence of an autonomous Serbia, combined with anti-Ottoman and anti-Islamic attitudes (due to the Serbs' condition as prevalently peasants), and their religious consciousness centred on the Orthodox Church, helped them to develop a separate

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<sup>17</sup> Macedonia was claimed by Bulgaria on the basis that its population was allegedly Bulgarian; by Greece, which claimed the Macedonian territory was its own; and by Serbia on the basis that the population of Macedonia was Slavic-speaking;

Serb national identity, and then nationalism. Croatia<sup>18</sup>, instead, was enclosed in the Austro-Hungarian Empire already in late 17<sup>th</sup> century and, although during the Ottoman rule Bosnian Croats retained and preserved their catholic traditions, the official status occupied by Catholicism in the Austro-Hungarian Empire helped them in strengthening their national consciousness, developing a separate national identity. Finally, the Bosnian Muslims started developing a sense of ethnic distinctiveness already in the Ottoman times but, in their case, the process of national identity formation followed a different, slower path, particularly because they didn't have a golden age nor a glorious state back in the past (Pinson (1993: 90-1). Hence, in addressing this initial phase of consciousness, it seems better to talk about political, rather than national, awakening.

With the Congress of Berlin in 1878, then, Bosnia Herzegovina fell under the Austro-Hungarian administration and, progressively, groups' identities became national, also witnessing the emergence of the first political organizations. An important aspect to take into consideration is, in fact, the identity-politics followed by the Austro-Hungarians: not only all the major Bosnian religions were recognized and guaranteed with self-rule but, for the first time, the groups living in the empire had the opportunity to establish their own political parties. The Muslim National Organization (*Muslimanka Narodna Organizacija*, MNO), the Croat National Union and the Serb National organization were created in 1906-07 and BiH was then provided with a Parliament based on a 'proportional representation system [...] mark[ing] the beginning of consociation decision-making' (Keil 2013: 62).

Moreover, the Empire's authorities tried to promote a 'Bosnian' national identity encompassing all the groups living in it, therefore hoping to prevent separatist national movements based on religion (Banac 1984). The attempt however fell short

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<sup>18</sup> Until the 18th century, the Habsburg Kingdom of Croatia included only a small north-western part of present-day Croatia around Zagreb, and a small strip of coastland around Rijeka that was not part of the Ottoman Empire or part of the Habsburg Military Frontier. Between 1744 and 1868 the Kingdom of Croatia included a subordinate autonomous kingdom, the Kingdom of Slavonia. The territory of the Slavonian Kingdom was recovered from the Ottoman Empire, and was subsequently part of the Habsburg Military Frontier for a period. In 1744 these territories were organized as the Kingdom of Slavonia and included within the Kingdom of Croatia as an autonomous part. In 1868 both were merged again into the newly formed Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia;

and had the opposite effect of reinforcing different identities: both Serbs and Croats tried to ‘nationalize’ and ‘awake’ the Muslims, endangering and denying their national distinctiveness.

For what concerns Macedonia, instead, it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that a separate Macedonian national consciousness slowly began to develop (Ramet 2005) and, eventually, on 2 August 1903 the first remarkable struggles for an independent Macedonia occurred: the ‘(Internal) Macedonian Revolutionary Organization’ (IMRO) - a revolutionary organisation tied with Bulgarian nationalist (Roudometof 2002) organized a rebellion which played an important role in fighting against both the Ottomans and Greek and Serbian aspirations in Macedonia. However, ‘the idea of Macedonian autonomy (or separatism) was strictly political and did not imply a secession from Bulgar nationhood’ (Banac 1998: 315): the Macedonian consciousness, in fact ‘remained fixed for decades on Bulgaria’ (Reuter 1999: 29).

### **2.1.2 The South Yugoslavs’ Unity: from *Karađorđević* to Socialism**

The regional situation then changed with the Balkan Wars in 1912-13, when the geographical area of Macedonia was partitioned into three areas of domain: Aegean, Pirin and Vardar Macedonia, respectively under the control of Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. Soon after, the explosion of the First World War marked the end of the Austro-Hungarian rule and the birth of the First Yugoslavia, which existed from 1918 until 1941.

Although the idea of South Slavs unity appeared already during the Austro-Hungarian rule (Keil 2013), national issues remained alive and shaped political discussion over the organizational structure of the new state (Banac 1984: 214; Radan 1998) particularly between Serbs and Croats. The first were proposing unitarism and centralization to strength the Serbian domination over the other groups while, the latter (and more generally the non-Serbs), were either demanding a federal state or, at least, guarantees for their national aspirations.

In 1918, king Karađorđević established the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and the Vidovan Constitution (1921) set up a centralized state dominated by Serbs. From 1929, the Kingdom became a royal dictatorship under the name of Yugoslavia, and ‘the Yugoslav Unity was forced upon the other nations’ (Keil 2013: 64). Bosnian Serbs welcomed the new state, while Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats had



different opinions and expectations from the new state: Bosnian Muslims were in favour of a united but decentralized Bosnia and feared any partition of the country, which would have compromised their very existence as a separate group; Bosnian Croats, on the contrary, supported the federalization of Yugoslavia (*ivi*). Nevertheless, in 1929, the territorial unity of Bosnia Herzegovina was dismantled, and the territory divided in four *banovina*, regions.

At the same time, the Serbian-dominated *Vardarska Banovina* (Vardar Macedonia) was target of ‘Serbianization’ aimed to dissolve Bulgarian affiliations (Roudometof 2000) and the region was referred to as ‘Southern Serbia’. Generalized discontent among the population eventually led many to welcome the Bulgarian occupying forces in 1941, but the same processes of Bulgarization and national homogenization occurred also in that case. In 1941, Germany invaded Karadžević’s Yugoslavia, which was then split in three areas of influence – one of which became the Independent State of Croatia, which totally included Bosnia Herzegovina. The State of Croatia was an *ustaša* (fascist) state led by Ante Pavelić and set up by means of violence, which caused the reaction of both the *četniks* and the partisans. The Četniks were a Serbian military group led by Draža Mihailović, strongly in favour of the continuation of the Serbian domination, while the partisans a resistance movement led by Josip Broz Tito - fighting against četnik, ustaša and foreign occupiers as well. Inter-group violence widely occurred but, however, it did for political-ideological, rather than ethno-cultural, reasons.

Eventually, the partisans led by Tito - and especially his idea of Yugoslavism, the promise of social and national justice in a different and newly organized Yugoslavia, appealed many (also the Serbs), which largely saw in a new Yugoslavia a possible solution for their own national issues.

## **2.2 Socialism and Yugoslavia**

The Yugoslavia Tito had in mind was a different one compared to the pre-war, first Yugoslavia: Karadžević’s Yugoslavia was a nation-state where the idea of Yugoslavism and pan-Slavism were simply ‘hiding’ an hegemonic dream reflected in the establishment of a Great Serbia while, the new Tito’s Yugoslavia was based on the Marxist understanding of nation and state (Jović 2003: 159).

Socialist Yugoslavia had, thus, to be less centralized and guarantee equality and justice for all the peoples living in it, deleting the traces of oppression and the rule of one nation over the others. These goals could be achieved only through Socialism.

Tito meant Yugoslavia as a great project able to unite together all the South Slavs in a common state and he believed that, one day, national differences would have disappeared merging in a single nation. This belief, on the one side, led him to try to incorporate in Yugoslavia also Bulgaria (being Bulgarians Slavs too) while, on the other one, caused some problem with the Albanian population, which eventually felt alienated and not really part of the 'Brotherhood and Unity' (since not Slavs).

Nevertheless, among the party ranks there were some conflicting ideas, which may be linked to ideological interpretations of Marxism and Socialism: on the one hand, the so-called 'statists' - as Tito - believed Yugoslavia should have remained 'a state'; on the other one, the 'non-statists' - as Kardelj -, linked Socialist ideology and anti-statism with identity and sovereignty of Yugoslavia, arguing that if not decentralized, the new Yugoslavia would have been not different from the previous Yugoslavia and Soviet Union as well (Jović 2003). Also, if for Tito Socialism was a way to secure the unity of Yugoslavia, on the contrary to Kardelj and the non-statists Yugoslavia was the way to progress Socialism, demonstrating that only Socialism could solve 'the national question'. This debate will persist over the decades and 'the history of post-1948 Yugoslavia could be best interpreted as a process of defeating the "statist" and introducing "anti-statist" trends' (*ibidem*: 162).

Initially, however, the statist understanding prevailed, and the new Yugoslavia was constituted very similarly to the Soviet Union. It was, indeed, a centralized system though provided with a two-chambers Parliament (the Federal Assembly)<sup>19</sup> in which an equal number of deputies represented the republics and the two autonomous provinces. In order to assure equality and equal representation of the nations, also key bureaucratic positions were allocated maintaining as much as possible national balance (Radan 1998: 189). However, that of the 1946 constitution was a period of totalitarian rule and the only holder of power was the Communist party. It was then,

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<sup>19</sup> The Federal Council was elected by the population while the Council of Nationalities was elected by the parliaments of the six republics and two autonomous provinces (see Chapter 3 – *The Tito years*, pp. 39-55 in Hudson, 2003. *Breaking the South Slav dream. Rise and fall of Yugoslavia*, London: Pluto Press;

after the Tito-Stalin split (1948), that the rigid centralism gradually left space to decentralization, the workers' self-management<sup>20</sup> and the foundation of the Non-Aligned Movement<sup>21</sup>. The detachment from the Soviet system, in fact, helped to better define Yugoslavia's identity: in spite of its initial centralization, decentralization became an unavoidable condition to differentiate Yugoslavia from both Stalin's regime and Karadžević's Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav leadership, as Malešević (2006: 169) stated, 'had to demonstrate abroad and at home that its political system was more in tune with the origins of the Marxist doctrine and hence more just, free and equal [...]'.<sup>22</sup>

The tendency towards decentralization will then become more pronounced in the 1960s and particularly with the 1974 constitution and, eventually, Tito had to accept Kardelj's non-statist perspective; the SFRY became a loosely formulated confederation and 'the victory of Kardelj's concept in the constitutional debate of 1967-74 marked the beginning of the last phase of the history of socialist Yugoslavia' (Jović 2003: 174).

### **2.2.1 Nations and Legitimacy: the birth of Socialist Yugoslavia**

In 1944, based on the AVNOJ<sup>22</sup>'s decisions, the Socialist Federal Republic of

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<sup>20</sup> The workers' self-management was based on the Socialist property system according to which workers were in control of the means and resources of the enterprises and there was no control from the side of the state. Elected workers' councils were in charge to organize work, salaries, vacations and distribute benefits among the workers – like social apartments. The Yugoslav authorities put considerable efforts in involving people in the self-management and there were training courses all over Yugoslavia. For a clear and critical analysis of self-management see: Chapter 2, *The official ideology of self-management*, pp. 48-75 in Zukin, 1975. *Beyond Marx and Tito. Theory and practice in Yugoslav Socialism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press;

<sup>21</sup> In early 1960s, together with India's and Egypt's presidents, Tito set up the Non-Aligned Movement as an alternative block in the middle of the Cold War. The movement enormously increased Tito and Yugoslavia international standing and helped the country to maintain good and balanced relations with both the West and the Soviet Union;

<sup>22</sup> *Antifašističko Vijeće Narodnog Oslobođenja Jugoslavije* - Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia;

Yugoslavia was established under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito.

Tito's Yugoslavia was an ambitious project coming from two important historical developments: first, the idea of South Slav unity and the failed experience of the first Yugoslavia and, second, the experience of the Soviet Union as a multinational federation (Keil 2013). The Yugoslav project was, thus, aimed to unite together not simply different ethnic groups but also groups which occupied different socio-political positions in the recent history and that also fought against each others in the inter-war period, bringing ahead different ideologies and national plans. Therefore, the risk of rising nationalism and groups' antagonism was high, and the creation of the SFRY had to be founded on shared, solid, principles able to both legitimize a multinational federation and constitute a common ground for the peaceful coexistence of different national groups.

As Sekulić T. (2002: 43) explained, the leading legitimizing principles the SFRY had been built upon were a) the anti-fascist struggle and liberation of the country from foreign occupiers; b) the Socialist ideal based on the Marxist-Leninist ideology and c) a politics of equality, brotherhood and unity among all the Yugoslav peoples despite their differences. Particularly, the emphasis over the equality of all the individual citizens', nations and republics was a key principle securing legitimacy to the SFRY (Lampe 1994). Indeed, in the eyes of the Yugoslav authorities, what constituted a possible problem was not ethnonational plurality but the potential rise of nationalist feelings that, if not properly stifled, would have led to ethnocentric claims and perhaps conflict.

### ***2.2.1.1 Nations' status in the SFRY<sup>23</sup>***

Similarly to Soviet Union, which established a federation based on an agglomerate of national territories, 'each expressly defined as the homeland of and for a particular ethnonational group' (Brubaker 1996:17), Yugoslavia too was established as a federative multinational state in which nationality was basically territorialized. Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Bosnia Herzegovina, plus the autonomous regions of Kosovo and Vojvodina within the Serbian borders, were the

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<sup>23</sup> For additional informations, see: Shoup, P. 1968. *Communism and the Yugoslav National Question*. New York: Columbia University Press

constitutive units of the SFRY, each one – except Bosnia Herzegovina – with an ethnonational majority above 50%.

The internal ethnic composition of the SFRY was highly heterogeneous, ‘one of the most diversified structures among European countries’ (Janjić 1997:12). Serbs were the largest group (36,3%), followed by Croats (19,8%), Muslims (8,9%), Slovenes (7,8%), Macedonians (2,6%) and Montenegrins (2,6%). Among the minorities, the largest group were the ethnic Albanians (7,7%). (see Sekulić 2002: 46-7). Following the Soviet model of multinational federalism, and in order to assure each ethnic group enjoyed a special status within the federation (Shoup1968: 119), each republic’s majority group was recognized as constituent nation, thus satisfying identity and psychological needs of groups that, until very recently, were bearers of antagonist ideals. Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Montenegrins, Macedonians and, from 1971, also Muslims were recognized as *narod* - constituent nations, not only in their respective republics but all over Yugoslavia’s territory (for example, Croats were not only a constituent nation in Croatia but also in Bosnia Herzegovina). Groups with a homeland outside Yugoslavia, like Albanians, Turks or Hungarians, were defined as *narodnost* (nationalities) while *etničke grupe* (ethnic groups) were groups like the Roma or others minorities (Bringa 1993).

Nevertheless, only in the 1970s, and similarly to Soviet Union, will become more clear that the federation was a multinational state ‘not only in *ethnodemographic* terms [...] but, more fundamentally, in *institutional* terms’ (Brubaker 1996: 23). Indeed, with the ‘non-statist drift’ of the 1970s, the republics will be constitutionally addressed as ‘states’ (often understood as ethnic based nation-states) and institutionalized ethnonationality will eventually shape the next decades’ events, allowing for the penetration of ethnonationalism and continuing to shape national issues in the successor states.

### ***2.2.1.2 Recognition of National Specificities***

The 1946 constitution recognized equal status to the three main religions – Roman Catholic, Christian Orthodox and Islam, providing ‘separation between state and church, freedom of worship, religious equality, and the seclusion of religion to the private sphere, and banned the exploitation of religion or religious institutions for political ends or the creation of political religious organizations’ (Velikonja 2003:

185). Nevertheless, particularly in the initial phase, religion's activity was limited to spiritual affairs and religious education in schools banned (Radić 2003). The Yugoslav authorities had, not without a reason, some suspects towards the Catholic Church given its 'sympathies for the ustaša' (Ramet 2006: 196), as well as towards the Orthodox Church, seen as the symbol of the previous Serbian hegemony; finally, the position of Islam got slightly better in the 1960s with the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement and the then recognition of Muslims as a nation (1971).

Moreover, minority rights' protection represented a peculiar aspect of the Yugoslav policies as, for instance, the constitution guaranteed to all the groups the right to speak and write in their own mother languages and each republic also had its own official language - although the official State's idiom was Serbo-Croatian<sup>24</sup>. Additionally, both Cyrillic and Latinic alphabets were used and learnt at school, and there was no supremacy of one over the other.

Therefore, given the groups' cultural differences, previous identity issues and the dividing experience of the civil war happened meanwhile the Second World War, the principle of equality among the groups and the emphasis over their common Slavic roots was essential, the only solution against divisions and instability (Andjelić 2003). On the other side, although seemingly contradictory, the appeal and recognition to the groups' national identities was also indispensable to attract and gain their support and legitimacy (Radan 1998).

### **2.2.2 Fostering the 'we-feeling': *Bratstvo i Jedinstvo* and *Jugoslovenstvo***

The state's authorities widely endorsed and promoted a policy of unity and brotherhood among the constituent nations, nationalities and ethnic groups living in the SRFY – epitomized by the *Bratstvo i Jedinstvo* (Brotherhood and Unity) slogan.

According to Perica (2002: 95), *Bratstvo i Jedinstvo* was a 'civil religion', meaning 'an alloy of myths, quasi-religious symbols, cults, rituals, beliefs, and practices that secure the nation's legitimacy and convince the people that the system is "good"'. Although Perica's argument is certainly relevant, I argue the slogan was much more

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<sup>24</sup> On this purpose, it's curious to note how the official denomination of the language was varying according to the republic: in Croatia it was denominated Croat-Serbian, in Serbia and Montenegro it was Serbo-Croatian, while in BiH it was Serbo-Croatian, Croat-Serbian;

than an ideological mantra: on one side, it consisted in constitutional guarantees, practices and policies aimed to safeguard groups' and individuals' equality; on the other one, as we shall see in the empirical part of this dissertation, the feeling of 'being brothers' all over the federation's territory was real and strictly connected to the individuals' pride of living in a big, geopolitically important, safe and, overall, free state (particularly from the 1960s). Brotherhood and Unity was thus a necessary condition for the functioning of the multinational federation of Yugoslavia, base of equality and peaceful coexistence of peoples as well as essential for the development of Socialism.

Moreover, it's worth to stress that the concept of equality was not uniquely directed towards the national groups: it had to be understood and included in the broader frame of social equality – since, for instance, economic inequality or lack of prosperity of some ethnonational groups also represented a possible source of tension. Hence, as Pearson (2015) highlighted, the 'national key' was part of the 'social key', meaning equality and equal representation of social, rather than only national, categories (thus, workers, youth, women etc.) and the national aspect was only one among others scrutinized by the party.

Because of the essentially ethnic nature of each federal unit, next to the 'brotherhood' also stood the notion of *Jugoslovenstvo* - Yugoslavism, which was a sort of cross-national encompassing concept used to describe Yugoslav attachment and patriotism, hence a decisive factor in counterbalancing nationalism and separatism (Keil 2013; Pearson 2015). It referred to, and wished the birth of, a Yugoslav consciousness nonetheless untied from the creation of a Yugoslav national identity: the suppression of national identities would have led to nationalism, and Tito was perfectly aware of that. Accordingly, the recognition of national identities and their equality within the SFRY was essential for the SFRY survival itself. And until late 1960s, 'every attempt to institutionalize nations (or ethnicity) was seen as nationalism and a danger. Such proposals, it was argued, would destroy "Brotherhood and Unity," freedom and equal rights, and the achievements of the revolution. Parity representation could lead to the disintegration of the Yugoslav community' (Pearson 2015: 220).

Yugoslavism was above all about Yugoslav citizenship, a way in which the Yugoslav peoples defined themselves as citizens of a larger country and, therefore, was not in contrast with particular national identities. Nevertheless, Tito always hoped in the nations' disappearance and their merging in a single one; indeed, when asked about

this 'lack' in 1978, he answered that 'was definitely not a success that he had not created greater cohesion among the people of Yugoslavia' (Marmullaku 2003: 309).

### ***2.2.2.1 The Yugoslavs***

The LCY<sup>25</sup> in fact never tried to impose or promote a supra-national Yugoslav identity (Sekulić *et al.* 1994; Hodson *et al.* 2002). Similarly to Soviet Union, where a Soviet nation was never established, also the Yugoslav authorities had 'no intention to create a new Yugoslav nation, as the nations [...] should gradually vanish, parallel to the development of socialism' (Pearson 2015: 215). Indeed, the Yugoslav ideologists thought that through modernization, efficient education system, mobility and social equality the importance of particularistic national identities would have progressively decreased (Hodson *et al.* 2002) – if not disappeared.

Only in 1961, for the upcoming census, was introduced the category 'Yugoslavs – nationally undetermined', which however did not refer or constitute a nation. This reflected Kardelj's belief that to constitute a new nation was a futile idea, possibly causing 'nationalism and chauvinism' (Jović 2003: 179). In a similar vein, also the Soviet rulers, in the 1960s and 1970s, 'developed a doctrine of "Soviet People" (*sovietskii narod*) as a "new historical community"' (Brubaker 1996: 28). But this nascent category, as the 'Yugoslavs', was conceived as *supra*-national, and ethnonational identities remained central to the groups (Štikš 2010).

Accordingly, being it not a nation, identification as 'Yugoslavs' was generally related to the mix-marriages phenomenon or, before their recognition as a nation, it was used by Muslims who did not feel comfortable to identify themselves as Serbs or Croats. The introduction of the national category 'Muslim' in the 1971 census, in fact, saw a decline of 'Yugoslavs', especially in Bosnia (Sekulić *et al.* 1994).

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<sup>25</sup> League of Communist of Yugoslavia;



**Tab. 1: Percentages of adult population identifying themselves as Yugoslavs in Yugoslavia and each Federal Republic and Province, in the years 1961, 1971, 1981**

Geographic Area	Percentage Identifying as Yugoslav			Predominant Nationality in 1981	
	1961	1971	1981		
All of Yugoslavia	1.7	1.3	5.4	36.3%	Serbian
<i>Republics and Provinces</i>					
Croatia	.4	1.9	8.2	75.1%	Croatian
Serbia	.2	1.4	4.8 <sup>Testo</sup>	85.4%	Serbian
Bosnia/Herzegovina	8.4	1.2	7.9	39.5%	Moslem
Kosovo	.5	.1	.1	77.4%	Albanian
Macedonia	.1	.2	.7	67.0%	Macedonian
Montenegro	.3	2.1	5.3	68.3%	Montenegro
Slovenia	.2	.4	1.4	90.5%	Slovenian
Vojvodina	.2	2.4	8.2	54.3%	Serbian

Sources: *Statistički Bilten SFRJ* (No. 1295), 1982, Beograd, Yugoslavia: Government Printing Office. *Statistički Godišnjak SFRJ*, 1981, Beograd, Yugoslavia: Government Printing Office, in Sekulić *et al.* 1994: 85

The Yugoslav system, also, never attempted to promote or develop a civic understanding of the nations within the single Republics (Adamson, Jović 2004): meaning, it never encouraged the development of a ‘Bosnian Herzegovinian’ nation including ethnic Serbs, Croats and Muslims or, similarly, it never tried to create a ‘Macedonian’ nation comprehensive of ethnic Macedonians, ethnic Albanians and other groups. As we shall see later, this lack of supra-ethnic civic identification within the republics will continue to shape political and social dynamics (and conflicts) in both post-Yugoslav Bosnia and Macedonia.

Ethnonational self-identification was thus allowed and, essentially, ‘the regime did not see danger in individual ethnonational expression but in organized groups’ (Andjelić 2003: 35). However, the 1980s saw a considerable increase of the number of people identifying themselves as Yugoslav, particularly the youth, also ‘as the result of increased inter-ethnic contacts and education’ (Hayden 2000: 27).

### 2.2.3 The Constitutive Role of the State

If on the one side the Yugoslav authorities intentionally avoided to build supra-ethnic identities (both in terms of Yugoslav and in terms of Bosnian Herzegovinians or Macedonians encompassing the groups living in those republics), on the other side they saw the necessity to build or, more appropriately, to recognize the existence of some others. This points the attention on a special ability the state has: it can constitute collectivities and made their existence official by recognizing them as political subjects.

#### 2.2.3.1 *The Macedonians and the 'New Macedonian Question'*

Macedonia became part of the SFRY in 1944; as we shall see more in detail in the next chapter, previous to that the geographical area of Macedonia fell under different domains and empires, which tried to influence the inhabitants' ways of identification via 'Serbianization', 'Bulgarization' and 'Hellenization' of the population and that, generally, denied the existence of a separate Macedonian nation. After the Balkan wars (1912-13), the geographical area of Macedonia was split into three parts and one of those, *Vardarska Banovina*, became part of the first Yugoslavia. Under Karađorđević's rule, however, Vardar Macedonia's inhabitants were target of 'Serbianization', hence many then welcomed the Bulgarians in 1944 shifting their identifications towards Bulgaria itself. Therefore, when Vardar Macedonia became part of Tito's Yugoslavia, the new Yugoslav authorities had to establish 'that Macedonians were *not* just Bulgarians' (Ramet 2006: 165), so eradicating pro-Bulgarian feelings and 'anchoring [...] the new Macedonian national ideology in the people' (Reuter 1999: 30). The post-1944 period has indeed been defined as the 'new Macedonian question' (Pettifer 1999).

Substantial efforts have been made in building the Macedonian nation and, in Troebst's (2003: 6) view, 'the Macedonian case had been an exception in Yugoslavia, as Macedonia was the only federal republic where the Yugoslav aspects of nation-building were less intense than the Macedon'. One of the most important steps was the standardization of the language and the writing of national history: among the narratives promoted there was also the idea of ancient Macedonian nationhood which, however, was mostly 'instrumentalized in the disputes with Bulgarian historiography

and also as a protection from the nationalist discourse [...] based on the idea of “returning the Bulgarian consciousness” of Macedonians’ (Vangeli 2011: 16). Moreover, the Yugoslav authorities helped the birth of an Autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church in 1967, in order to clearly differentiate Macedonians from Bulgarians and Serbs. However, Bulgaria never recognized the existence of a Macedonian language – which claims it is a Bulgarian dialect, while Serbia did not recognize the autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church.

Eventually, the Yugoslav efforts succeed in building a Macedonian nation and national identity but, however, Greece and Bulgaria denied and still deny ‘the whole concept of a Macedonian nation’ (Poulton 2000: 174) stressing that the Macedonian nation was and is a Tito’s invention, nothing more than a ‘state-sponsored ethnogenesis’ (Roudometof 2002: 41).

### ***2.2.3.2 The Muslims***

If in the Macedonian case the Macedonian Communist leadership had to strength and, to some extent, build the Macedonian nation, slightly different was the Muslims’ case - where their recognition as a different national groups came from an already existing feeling of being different from Serbs and Croats and part of a separate group.

The Muslim question, similarly to the Macedonian one, entailed the ethnic origins of these people: Serbs and Croats nationalist claimed Muslims were either Serbs or Croats who adopted Islam during the Ottoman empire, while some Muslims nationalists claimed to have Turkish origins (Ramet 2006: 286). However, until late 1960s, Yugoslavia’s citizens with an Islamic heritage were not officially recognized as part of a separate ethnic or national group and, in the countings of the population, they could identify themselves as Croats or Serbs, ‘nationally undetermined’ or, later, as ‘Yugoslav - nationally undetermined’.

In 1964, during the Eight Congress of the LCY, the Muslim question was reopened (Ramet 2006) but there remained some uncertainties about recognizing the Muslims as a nation, particularly because of the importance of Islam in forming their identity.

However, in 1968, Tito acknowledged the need to recognize their ethnic specificity while, in 1971, Muslims officially became a nation<sup>26</sup>.

Moreover, since the Muslim population was mainly, but not exclusively, concentrated in Bosnia Herzegovina, the 1974 constitution recognized Bosnia as a socialist democratic state composed by three (not anymore two) titular nations – Serbs, Croats and Muslims.

Nevertheless, the particular tie the Muslim nation had with Islam worried many: in the 1970s there were the first warnings against ‘Pan-Islamism’ and the mobilization of Islam for political purposes in Bosnia<sup>27</sup>; while, in 1983, some were arrested<sup>28</sup> and accused of Islamic fundamentalism - among those, Alija Izetbegović, future president of Bosnia Herzegovina.

These two examples of nation-building point the attention on two important issues: the role of the state to foster and promote, via their institutional recognition, certain collectivities and related identities; and secondly, the always existed importance and centrality of ethnonational issues in the SFRY. As theoretically explained in Chapter 1 when dealing with multinational states, the logic behind was that, if ethnonational collectivities were recognized, equally treated and represented within the larger state, nationalism wouldn’t have had any reason to emerge.

### **2.3 The Reappearance of the National Question and the 1974 Constitution**

In the 1960s the political elite was vacillating between decentralization – expressed by Kardelj’s ‘non-statist’ point of view, and re-centralization – closer to Tito’s idea of

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<sup>26</sup> In 1971 the Yugoslav authorities introduced the category Muslims (with capital M) to identify the nations’ members; however the category ‘muslims’ (with tiny m) identified the believers’ religious community. The name chosen for the new nation, thus, introduced some discomfort among non-religious people with Muslim origins;

<sup>27</sup> However these concerns, the tie with the Non-Aligned Movement was much stronger and the feeling of suspicion was more related to the anti-Ottoman legacy (see Todorova 1997), a latent anti-Muslim nationalism coming from both the Serbian and Croatian sides;

<sup>28</sup> Many considered the arrests as unfair since the group was punished against the principle of freedom of thought and the press. Many Yugoslav intellectuals, indeed, signed a petitions for their release;

Yugoslavia and Socialism. Economic disparities among the republics played a huge role since closely tied with national issues: the years prior to the 1960s' reforms, indeed, were years riddled with difficulties, the workers' self-management started to lose its legitimacy and differences in the republics' economic standards aggravated (Sekulić T. 2002) catalysing some latent antagonisms, soon assuming political tones. The socio-economic and the national issues, therefore, went hand in hand and the Yugoslav system had to be very careful in how to deal with those disparities while suppressing nationalist feelings and claims. The national issue, in fact, couldn't be solved once for all and always occupied a crucial role in the SFRY survival, seeing its political elite constantly committed in managing plurality in the best way possible.

By emphasizing that Yugoslavia helped the nations to become fully constituent and the republics states, Kardelj was of the idea that the Yugoslav states were 'mature enough to take care of their own interests' (Jović 2003: 168); Tito, although a 'statist', accepted the state decentralization considering highly improbable the SFRY's dissolution. On the other side, however he believed the key of socialism was laying in the party, so its unity had to be preserved. 'When they spoke of decentralization, they had in mind a devolution of administrative responsibilities and the surrendering of some tasks to local leaders or party organizations, rather than the withdrawal of the party from the real authority' (Ramet 2006: 205). The party's unity was, thus, the key to assure Yugoslavia's existence.

Eventually, economic malaise and nationalists raising their voices, demonstrated that the strategies adopted until that moment were not enough and the system had to re-adjust itself. Therefore, it was the political elite itself that reopened the national question and its reappearance was due to initiative by the non-statist wing of the party willing to 'defeat the "statist"' (Jović 2003: 167). The 1963 constitution increased the republics' rights and resulted to be quite successful in addressing economic issues; nevertheless, it failed to properly address nationalism and more than everything else, it failed to democratize the state and the society.

### **2.3.1 Liberals and Conservatives – 'Serbian Liberalism' and the 'Croatian Spring'**

The gap between liberals and conservatives, meaning between statist and non-statists, widened in the 1960s. Liberals occupied key positions in the party and

promoted an agenda that favoured more cultural and literary activities, ‘softening of censorship in the media, a softening policies vis-à-vis religious<sup>29</sup> associations, and non-interference in the affairs of other republics’ (Ramet 2006: 227).

The economic reforms enacted in mid-1960s represented a partial success enabling the economic boom in the 1970s; nevertheless, the republics did not develop in the same way, and the ones in the north continue to develop faster, deepening the gap between north and south. Slovenia and then Croatia started opposing the policy of redistribution of resources<sup>30</sup>, demanding more decentralization in the fields of economy and finance. Croatia, however, disappointed with the economic reforms, felt its resources ‘were being drained away by Serbia’ (*ibidem*: 228); nationalism increased, claiming the need to safeguard the Croat nation from the Serbs and advocating decentralizing reforms. Therefore, economic issues soon became political, widening not only the gap between liberals and conservatives but also between the federal republics.

These animosities produced two consequences: on the one side, nationalism (also) of the Serbs living in Croatia arose; while, on the other one, conservatives (still in control of the party) saw liberals’ attitude as weakening socialism and the Yugoslav unity. Croats liberals were allied with nationalist and, this alliance, ‘marked the return of ethnic politics of the interwar years. The major difference was that in the SFRY

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<sup>29</sup> Although with the 1960s a period of general liberalization began, religion always remained rather discouraged among the party ranks as well as among those employed in the state institutions. The so-called ‘state atheism’ did not mean religion disappearance or people were not believers: on the contrary, people could be, and were, religious. Nevertheless, religious people couldn’t cover high level positions in the party and the state - and this explains why party members and civil servants, when religious, were used to practice far from the Party’s eyes and sacraments like baptism were practiced secretly;

<sup>30</sup> The 1960s recession initiated a debate between the Northern republics – more economically developed - and the Southern ones – considerably behind the standard. Montenegro, Bosnia Herzegovina, Macedonia and Kosovo were among the less developed republics and, in order to fill the economic divide, in 1965 the ‘Federal Fund for the Accelerated Development of the Underdeveloped Republics and Kosovo’ (FADURK) was established. Nevertheless, economic reforms and the creation of the Fund ended to be not enough in filling the economic gap, and a huge economic crisis hit the SFRY in the beginning of the 1980s, increasing nationalist tensions;

ethnic politics was played within the framework of a one-party system; but it was the federal system itself, which the communist had developed in order to “tame the beast”, which provided the setting within which ethno politics could develop’ (*ibidem*: 261-2).

Eventually, in 1971 protests in support of the liberalist and against centralization erupted in Zagreb. Tito, until that moment letting things develop, expelled thousands of LCY’s members from all over Yugoslavia, attempting to eradicate from the inside both nationalism and what he defined ‘rotten liberalism’ (Hodson 2003: 54). However, he also tried to undercut the popular bases of this malaise by satisfying some of the demands.

### **2.3.2 The Kosovo Issue**

But the problems internal to the SFRY did not finish, and the ‘Kosovo issue’ exploded for the first time in the end of the 1960s.

Kosovo was designed to be a province belonging to Serbia, however its population was mainly ethnic Albanian and ethnic Serbs were in minority. Nevertheless, Serbs were over-represented in the institutions, while the Albanian population consistently unrepresented. Inter-ethnic relations between the two groups were quite complicated but it was in the second half of the 1960s that deteriorated, eventually escalating in violence in 1981 and again in the 1990s with the rise to power of Milošević.

In 1968 Kosovar protestors demanded the status of republic<sup>31</sup> for Kosovo, the drop of the Serbian name ‘Metohija’ from the name of the region, more rights for the ethnic Albanians and higher education in their own language. As we shall see later, the events taking place in Kosovo had a spillover effect also in Macedonia, where ethnic Albanians represented the second major group. The Yugoslav authorities, not ready to elevate Kosovo into a republic, however accommodated most of the requests: the name Metohija was dropped, Kosovo and Vojvodina acquired more autonomies, measures were taken to improve both economy and the ethnic Albanians’ representation in the institutions. Moreover, ethnic Albanians were allowed to fly the Albanian flag and, in 1971, a university in Albanian language was opened in

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<sup>31</sup> See Bieber, Daskalovski (eds.) 2003. *Understanding the war in Kosovo*. London: Franck Cass Publisher

Prishtina. Nevertheless, these measures contributed to deepen the inter-ethnic divide between Serbs and Albanians, also impacting relations between ethnic Albanians and ethnic Macedonians in Macedonia, increasing nationalism and ethnocentrism from all the sides involved, and in both the federal units.

With the 1974 constitution, then, 'Kosovo was bestowed a constitution separate from that of Serbia [and] the status of the Socialist Autonomous Province with rights equal to those of the nations of Yugoslavia' (Daskalovski 2003: 15). Macedonia, instead, will become 'the national state of ethnic Macedonian nation and the state of the Albanian and Turkish nationalities in it'<sup>32</sup>.

### **2.3.3 The 1974 Constitution: the victory of Kardelj's understanding of Yugoslavia**

As seen, the 1960s represented a turbulent period demanding institutional adjustments and reforms, and pointed the attention on the fragile equilibrium upon which multinational states are based; multiple factors may, in fact, potentially shake that equilibrium, producing disintegrative tendencies. On the one side, economic malaise was fostering nationalism and antagonism between the republics while, on the other one, 'inadequate' collective rights and institutional representation were pushing in the same direction.

The events characterizing the 1960s, thus, required further reforms aimed to ameliorate the overarching system and make its functioning smoother. With the constitutional amendments voted in 1971 and, more consistently, with the constitution voted in 1974, Yugoslavia became highly decentralized, resembling a sort of confederation (Koneska 2014) - or, as others pointed out, resembling the Soviet 'ethnofederalism' (Hayden 2000: 30). The amendments to the 1963 constitution were aimed to cope with growing nationalism and, with the 1974 constitution, both republics and provinces became 'federal units' - key unit of government. Kosovo and Vojvodina, from having a limited array of powers, were granted with equal representation at federal level, while, the republics became *de facto* sovereign nation-states (except for highly mixed Bosnia Herzegovina).

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<sup>32</sup> 1974, Constitution's Preamble of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia;



The new constitution introduced ethnic power-sharing mechanisms and consensual decision-making strategies at federal level, and granted every federal unit (included Kosovo and Vojvodina) with veto powers for any decision taken at federal level. Moreover, since Tito was getting old, the constitution also introduced a collective presidency<sup>33</sup> system in order to both prevent anyone from becoming a new Tito and, above all, to give equal representation to all the republics; it also was established that, once Tito would have passed away, the position of president of the republic would have been removed.

Although it was not the goal the LCY had in mind, the structural changes implemented had the effect of elevating the national dimension into a fundamental pillar of the entire system. The system's 'quasi-consociational' character, 'aimed at promoting consensus' (Hayden 2000: 49), was however not coupled with the democratization of the society, and political pluralism did not follow the reforms. The federal units remained *de facto* sub-mitted to the central power (Sekulić T. 2002) and the effective functioning of decentralization mechanisms was limited to the federal level's institutions - 'more a façade than a real sharing of power between nations and their representatives' (Koneska 2014: 43). The LCY remained the core of the power—considered by both Tito and Kardelj the way to secure Yugoslavia's existence. In other words, the reforms' result 'was not genuine decentralization or democratization, but rather micro-centralization at the level of the republics' (Malešević 2006: 174).

The victory of Kardelj's understanding of Yugoslavia, and the progressive institutionalization of ethnonationality, also weakened from the inside the sense of belonging to Yugoslavia: as Jović (2003: 177) explained, 'any expression of belonging to Yugoslavia first, above and before belonging to any separate ethnic group, republic or province, was treated with great suspicion, as an attempt to promote unitarism and great-statist centralism. Expression of Yugoslavism now became almost an anti-socialist activity'.

Eventually, anti-statist ideas, institutionalized ethnonationality, economic disparities and the progressive weakening of the central state (and then also of the LCY), provided the republican elites with the constitutional and institutional tools to protect

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<sup>33</sup> The collective presidency included nine members - one representative for each republic and autonomous province, and an individual president chaired the presidency on annual rotation basis;

their own ‘nation-states’, as well as space - to people like Milošević - to spread rhetoric of re-centralization advocating the coming back to the ‘pre-Kardelj’s Yugoslavia’.

## 2.4 Crisis and Collapse of the SFRY<sup>34</sup>

All the attempts the Yugoslav authorities’ made in avoiding the rise of nationalism and antagonism between the groups vanished in less than a decade. The 1980s, indeed, witnessed a progressive reverse in the economic and social conditions and problems started to come up to the surface after Kardelj’s and, above all, Tito’s deaths - in 1979 and 1980 respectively.

The devolution of power introduced in the 1960s and 1970s produce uncertainty and political chaos, fragmenting power and proving the inability of the party in coping with the complex situation Yugoslavia was going through. The party was internally more and more divided, with advocates of re-centralization on the one side (Serbia and Montenegro), and liberalists favouring decentralization on the other one (Slovenia and Croatia) - yet both claimed to be protecting Tito’s heritage (Radan 1998).

The first years of the 1980s were, thus, featured by some (abortive) attempts in reforming the system, followed by (again abortive) attempts in reforming the constitution. Moreover, the party was progressively abandoning the idea of Yugoslavism and ‘Brotherhood and Unity’ replacing them with ‘an even vaguer concept of “togetherness” (*zajednistvo*). Yugoslavia was, according to this concept, a state in which different nations and nationalities only lived *together* but, apart from this, they had no other ties [...]’ (Pavković 2003: 252).

The LCY was loosing legitimacy and support, allowing each republic’s party leadership to easily switch ‘from the universalism of an all-state ideology to the individual particularism of their own republics. They successfully attempted [...] to gain legitimacy by shifting their problems outside of the borders of their respective republics’ (Malešević 2006: 175) – hence they began to blame each others (either republics or groups) for their problems.

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<sup>34</sup> For a clear overview of the academic debate about the dissolution of Yugoslavia, see: Bieber F., Galijaš A., Archer R. 2014. *Debating the end of Yugoslavia*. Burlington: Ashgate;

The beginning of serious national(ist) tensions started with the Kosovo riots in 1981, ‘perpetual question of the Yugoslav crisis’ (Andjelić 2003: 96). The Yugoslav authorities, fearing nationalism and secessionism, repressed the demonstrations that however triggered (even more) the Serbian hostility.

In 1986, a Memorandum drafted by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts was published, making clear a wave of Serbian nationalism was going to invest Yugoslavia. The Memorandum addressed the causes of the economic and political crisis, arguing that the confederal character assumed by the SFRY was the source of all the problems, since it betrayed the foundational principles on which Yugoslavia was built upon (Pavković 2003). The rise of nationalism in Serbia, culminated with Slobodan Milošević coming to power, had deep consequences in all the other Yugoslav republics, triggering the first ethnic incidents and divisions.

Milošević officially introduced nationalism in the Yugoslav politics and discourse, mobilizing ethnonational identities for political purposes, so definitely breaking with Tito’s struggle of forging a sense of ‘we feeling’ able to go beyond ethnonational differences. However, in a sense, the Serbian leader was following Tito’s politics, calling for a re-centralization of the Yugoslav system.

Once in power, Milošević exploited the ‘Albanian “threat” to build popular support for the Communist Party’ (Roudometof 2002: 168) and Serbian demonstrations and propaganda appealed many Serbs all over the federation. In 1989, a massive demonstration to remember the Serbian defeat against the Ottomans happened in the Battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389, took place in Kosovo and the enormity of the event confirmed the Serbian nationalists’ power, helping Milošević to gain Serbs’ consent all over Yugoslavia<sup>35</sup>.

The federal government of Ante Marković (elected in 1989) and the LCY were definitely loosing any appeal. Milošević, while claiming and pretending to be a Yugoslavia’s protector, was actually trying to establish Serbian control all over the federation, eventually fulfilling the old dream of Great Serbia. Together with Kosovo and the Albanians, also Kučan’s Slovenia became a Serbia’s enemy, since it was

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<sup>35</sup> In the early 1990s, Serbia assumed control over Kosovo, taking back the rights it gained in 1974; already in 1988 and 1989 respectively, the local government of Vojvodina and Montenegro fell under Milošević’s control;

defending Kosovo's rights, planning democratic reforms and openly going against Serbian nationalism and re-centralization.

Despite the unprecedented tensions at political level, inter-ethnic relations among ordinary citizens were still reasonably good: from the 1950s to the 1980s almost all the Yugoslav territories became 'increasingly heterogeneous' (Hayden 1996: 788) and internal plurality favoured good inter-ethnic relations - witnessed by the quite high rate of inter-ethnic marriages particularly where the population was highly intermingled (as in Bosnia, Vojvodina, some areas in Croatia as well as big urban centres).

Ordinary citizens did not consider the fall of Yugoslavia as an option. And it was even more so in highly mixed Bosnia Herzegovina.

The conflict was political, neither social nor cultural or religious.

As Brubaker (1996: 25) argued about the Soviet Union case, but perfectly applicable to Yugoslavia as well, 'Soviet and post-Soviet "national struggles" were and are not the struggles of nations, but the struggles of institutionally constituted national elites - that is elites institutionally defined as *national* - and aspiring counter-elites'.

#### **2.4.1 Nations or Republics? Controversies over the right of Self-Determination**

Slovenia and Croatia shortly realized secession from the SFRY was a plausible, in a way inevitable, option – eventually occurred on 25 June 1991 after popular referendums. However, secession from the SFRY was not easy to pursue, and it was related to the 'dubious' right of self-determination.

When the SFRY was created in 1943, it was established 'on a democratic federative principle as a state of equal people'<sup>36</sup>, consisting of six republics and five constituent peoples. The first Yugoslav constitution (1946) mentioned the right of self-determination and secession (Article 1) by stating that:

The Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia is a federal peoples' state, republican in form, a community of peoples equal in rights who, on the basis of

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<sup>36</sup> *Deklaracija Drugog zasedanja Antifašističkog Vijeća narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije*, 29 November 1943, in Petranovid and Zetevii, 3; *jugoslovenski federalizam, 1914-1943*, pp. 795-6 in Radan 2001: 187

their right to self-determination, including the right of secession, have expressed their will to live together in a federative state.

However, the article did not grant any right of unilateral secession and the willingness to live together was interpreted ‘as being a final and irrevocable exercise of the right to self-determination, and a rejection of the right of unilateral secession as an exercise of the right to self-determination’ (Radan 2001: 189). The ambiguity of the rights to self-determination and secession was also connected to sovereignty issue, which however remained dormant until the 1990s.

The 1974 constitution, in its introductory part, re-opened the question and reaffirmed the existence of those rights<sup>37</sup>: Article 3<sup>38</sup> defined the republics as ‘based on the sovereignty of people’, thus ‘republics were the result of the peoples’ exercise of the right to self-determination’ (Radan 2001: 198). However, that ‘unclear wording’ (Koneska 2014: 40) left room for different interpretations: yet the tension between national and territorial bases of sovereignty, the ethnic nature of the republics, as well as the distinction between nation and republic shaped the political debate, and tensions, in 1990-91. The issue, hence, was: ‘Who’s the holder of such rights? The Nations or the Republics?’

Slovenia and Croatia argued the republics were vested with such rights while, on the contrary, Serbia meant the right to be exerted by the peoples, the nations. These different interpretations demonstrated how deep the political crisis was and how weak and divided the party had become. In 1989-90 the republics rewrote their respective constitutions, so ‘to justify the state on the sovereignty of the ethnically defined nation (narod)’ (Hayden 1996: 789); hence, trying to reconcile territorial and ethnonational sovereignty, they used ‘*constitutional nationalism* [to privilege] the

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<sup>37</sup> SRFY Constitution 1974, Section I, Basic Principles: “*The peoples of Yugoslavia, proceeding from the right of every people to self-determination, including the right of secession, on the basis of their will freely expressed in the common struggle of all nations and nationalities in the National Liberation War and Socialist Revolution, and in conformity with their historic aspirations, aware that further consolidation of their brotherhood and unity is in the common interest, together with the nationalities with whom they live, have united in a federal republic of free and equal nations and nationalities and created a socialist federative community of working people*”;

<sup>38</sup> 1974 SRFY Constitution, Section I, Basic Principles;

members of one (ethnic) nation over those of any other resident in a particular state' (Hayden 2000: 68).

#### 2.4.2 The Multiparty Elections

In January 1990, during the last LCY congress, became clear the party had ceased to exist. In the same year, the federal units held their first democratic and multiparty elections, which took place at republic, rather than federal, level.

New leaders of new political parties, oriented towards one or another republic, were in turn addressing *their* own (ethnic) people, initiating 'a cultural struggle' translating the political conflict into an identity one. As Kapidžić (2014: 559) explained, 'serving both as an information source and filter, ethnicity influences voters to believe that an ethnic party representing their own ethnic group will best protect their interests'. Hence, for the first time after the Second World War, differences such as religion, language and alphabets were politically used, and the past mobilized, for political purposes. Moreover, religious institutions, until that moment politically irrelevant, consistently re-emerged in the public arena<sup>39</sup> coalescing with national leaders, adopting nationalist rhetoric and widely influencing political dynamics and inter-ethnic relations. Religion became 'not so much a matter of *private* conscience as of one's *public* identity' (Perica 2002: 5) and the national identity question soon became even more important than the survival of the SFRY itself.

However, despite those massive changes, until 1990 the prospect of war was far.

In 1990 the ban over ethno-national parties was officially ruled out, though ethnic parties had already appeared although not officially constituted (Andjelić 2003). Political pluralism was translated into *ethnic* political pluralism and, although successor parties of the LCY had also been constituted, it was the ethnonational ones that gained masses' trust. Ordinary people were disoriented, felt to be unprotected

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<sup>39</sup> For a better overview of the role played by religious institutions in the 1990s, see: Perica, V. 2002. *Balkan idols. Religion and nationalism in Yugoslav States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Ramet, S. P. 2014. *Religion and Politics in Post-Socialist Central and Southeastern Europe. Challenges since 1989*. London: Palgrave MacMillan; Velikonja, M. 2003. *Religious separation and political intolerance in Bosnia Herzegovina*, College Station: Texas University Press;

and, for the most, the electoral support of ethnonational parties came semi-spontaneously, out of alternatives (*ibidem*). As Breuilly (1993: 344) argued about the Soviet case, nationalism was the logical political response to the ‘unravelling of the [...] state power, rather than a “natural” identity which was chosen by large numbers of people as soon as political controls were relaxed’.

Although with their political preferences people did concur to shape the destiny of the country, it’s worth to say that ethnonationalism acquired such a big strength also because of economic and ideological issues, and because of the federation’s structure as well. With the introduction of decentralization, the LCY tried to keep the federal unity yet supplying the local-republican elites with the institutional channels to build their power and support at local level, progressively delegitimizing the central state (Malešević 2006: 180). Once the central state and the LCY lost their legitimacy, the local political elites had the means to act individually and mobilize groups’ cultural features to legitimize, gain and maintain control.

Therefore, the new elite introduced the false dilemma of a choice between democracy and authoritarian state, where democracy and self-determination coincided with the creation of ethnic nation-states (Sekulić T. 2002), and presented the dilemma ‘through the prism of ethnicity’ (Stojarová 2010: 190). Soon, inter-ethnic relations worsened leading to fear, distrust and sometimes hatred. However, as demonstrated by a study conducted by Sekulić D. *et al.* (2006), intolerance among groups did not precede the breakup of war, but increased consistently during the conflict, then decreasing with the end of violence though not returning to the pre-war level. Until before the 1990s’, in fact, inter-ethnic relations across the federation were peaceful and there was ‘no evidence of urban violence between ethnic groups, ethnic ghettoization, or interethnic village confrontations’ (*ibidem*: 800). Moreover, sporadic nationalist episodes should not be confused with inter-group hostilities or hatred.

All the republics, but Macedonia, left Yugoslavia going through violence and highly mixed Bosnia was the republic that suffered the most. As Ramet (2006: 414) pointed out, the war wasn’t simply ‘a spontaneous reaction to economic stress [...]. It was, on the contrary, the fruit of deliberate policies adopted in Belgrade’.

## 2.5 Conclusive remarks.

### **Ethnic plurality, Nationalism and the State**

The historical, political and institutional analysis provided by this chapter has shown the centrality of the national issue since the very birth of the SFRY, as well as its tie with socio-economic conditions and the institutional architecture of the federation.

The question on how to manage plurality, trigger peoples' loyalty and a sense of community able to go beyond ethnonational differences was, in fact, perfectly clear to Tito since the 1940s – reason why he established the new Yugoslavia on supra-national principles (like the antifascist struggle and the unity of all the South Slavs) giving the federal state an ideological, rather than national, identity. As illustrated in Chapter 1, institutional and ideological mechanisms aimed to protect ethnonational identities while, at the same time, develop a feeling of belonging to the state as a whole, are crucial for the survival of multinational states. To some extents, Tito wished to create that 'state-nation' encouraged by Linz, Stepan and Yadav (2011). Indeed, what the scholars advocated, resemble Tito's idea of Yugoslavia:

‘[...] state-nation policies stand for a political-institutional approach that respects and protects multiple but complementary sociocultural identities. State-nation policies recognize the legitimate public and even political expression of active sociocultural cleavages, and they include mechanisms to accommodate competing or conflicting claims made on behalf of those divisions without imposing or privileging, in a discriminatory way, any one claim. State-nation policies involve crafting a sense of belonging (or “we-feeling”) with respect to the state-wide political community, while simultaneously creating institutional safeguards for respecting and protecting politically salient sociocultural diversities. The “we- feeling” may take the form of defining a tradition, history, and shared culture in an inclusive manner, with attachment to common symbols of the state, or of inculcating some form of “constitutional patriotism”’ (*ibidem*: 4)

Nevertheless, with the constitutional changes ruled out in 1974, the SFRY became very similar to Lijphart's consociations and, indeed, it produced those same negative outcomes usually attributed to consociations themselves - namely, institutionalized and reified ethnonational identities, ethnic political pluralism, difficult inter-group



dialogue and compromise, ethnic politics and finally increasing of the sources of conflict. Recalling Brass (1991: 245), that Yugoslav quasi-consociationalism allowed political elites in conflict with each other to maintain power at local-republican level while progressively eroding the state's social legitimacy and support. Therefore, culture entered the game becoming matter of political power and state control. As Malešević's (2006. 183) argued, in fact, 'Yugoslavia did not collapse because it was an artificial conglomerate of many ethnonational groups. It collapsed because it unwittingly created the institutional conditions for the stern politicisation of cultural differences'. The rise of nationalism was indeed the response to the breakdown of the central power, not the other way around; and political conflicts widely preceded and caused the social ones.

Concluding, what exposed in this chapter theoretically corroborate the arguments presented in Chapter 1 about the 'ethnopolitical risk' run by multinational states: under certain circumstances and in presence of certain conditions, groups' ethno-cultural differences may become a political weapon, however only *when and if* mobilized by political movements and elites for political-power purposes. Elements such as institutional structure of the state, economic conditions and political elite's behaviours do concur in developing the conditions for ethnonationality's exploitation. Therefore, I can safely say that ethnic plurality is neither the logical cause of nationalism and ethnopolitics, nor of the difficult functioning often characterizing multinational states.

In order to get closer to the two case studies' realities, the next chapter goes deeper into the ethnic plurality of BiH and Macedonia since their Yugoslav past, so to lay the bases for understanding logic and reasons behind their current ethnopolitical environments and ethnocratic regimes.

## CHAPTER 3

### DETERIORATION OF 'BROTHERHOOD AND UNITY' AND REDEFINITION OF ETHNONATIONALITY IN THE FEDERAL UNITS OF BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA AND MACEDONIA

There are two main interconnected differences between Bosnia Herzegovina and Macedonia: first, in Bosnia none of the three main groups has ever been in majority while, in Macedonia, there has always existed an ethnic majority (the ethnic Macedonians). Second, inter-ethnic relations within the two former, and ethnically plural, republics have always been rather different, with BiH featured by inter-ethnic trust and close relations while Macedonia always featured by some inter-ethnic distance and mistrust.

According to a study performed by Hodson *et al.* (1994; see also Massey *et al.* 1999), during the Yugoslav decades Bosnia was the most nationally diverse and, at the same time, the most tolerant republic; Macedonia, instead, although ethnically plural was the least tolerant - with ethnic Albanians representing the most significantly intolerant group in Yugoslavia, and regardless their status of minority (as in Macedonia) or majority (as in Kosovo). Ethnic Macedonians, instead, given the majority status they occupied in 'their' federal unit, happened to be rather intolerant towards minorities' in order to legitimate their aspirations of dominance (Hodson *et al.* 1994: 1548).

Eventually, however, it was Bosnia Herzegovina going through a disastrous conflict, and nowadays it is perhaps the most ethnically divided country in Europe. Macedonia, instead, happened to be the sole republic leaving the SFRY almost without any fight. As the scholars explained, the reason for BiH and Macedonia's different destinies was related to the different status the groups occupied in their own republics.

As we shall see in the chapter, in fact, the shape assumed by inter-ethnic relations in the two republics, during but above all after Yugoslavia, was clearly connected to the two above mentioned differences, then reflected in issues pertaining to i) the institutional representation and socio-political status the groups occupied in their respective republics – but also in others (since Serbia and Croatia were and are kin-states of Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats, and a sizeable portion of the ethnic

Albanian community was and is living in Kosovo); and to ii) previous political issues and frustrations then translated into ethnonational.

This chapter goes closer to the current inter-ethnic reality of BiH and Macedonia, retracing step-by-step the ‘evolution’ of ethnonational issues at both political and social level, and in both the former federal units. Encompassing a time period that goes from the 1970s until their respective post-conflict realities, the following pages analyse and take into consideration the role played not only by institutions’ shape and political elites, but also by internal and external factors and actors in modelling ethnonationality’s meanings and functions and, consequently, inter-ethnic relations.

### **3.1 Bosnia Herzegovina and Macedonia as Federal Units of the SFRY**

Bosnia Herzegovina has always been ‘neither Serb, nor Croat nor Muslim but Serb and Croat and Muslim’ (Hoare 2007: 288 cit. in Keil 2013: 68). The federal unit was a ‘*Jugoslavia u malom*’ (Yugoslavia in miniature), considered a good example of groups’ coexistence all over the federation. Nevertheless, given the Yugoslav authorities’ concern over the possible rise of ethnonationalism, those good relations among groups had also to be institutionally nurtured and the LCY had always been committed in promoting national equality and non-discrimination among the groups. From this perspective, BiH was the most controlled of all the Yugoslav republics, but the concrete application of the national key - in any field of the social and political life, was more based on informal rather than official practices (Pearson 2014), and ethnic quotas were not officially prescribed – though carefully observed. With the institutional and constitutional changes ruled out in the 1970s, the party improved national representativeness and the Bosnian leadership structure changed to better reflect the ethnic composition of the population; the leaders on top of the hierarchy were belonging to different groups, though they were not ethnonational leaders (Andjelić 2003). For instance, the Presidency of BiH was composed by seven members, two for each of the three constituent nations plus one representing ‘Others’ - hence mirroring the composition of the republic (Kapidžić 2014). As Andjelić (2003: 38) explained:

Cosmopolitanism was one of their main characteristics and they were always the first to criticize the appearance of nationalism in each of their respective ethnic

groups. This kind of leadership proves that ethnic policy was imposed from above. Although the nationality policy was very carefully observed and exercised, it was never publicly stated that the next leader of the Central Committee should be of a certain ethnic origin. Potential domination of any ethnic group was prevented by unwritten rules that were always respected. The leadership's main concern had always been ethnic equality and Tito's policy of 'brotherhood and unity'. There is no recorded confrontation between the top leaders on any ethnic issue. The monolithism of the leaders was translated into the unity of the population.

Given the centuries-old presence of different groups and religions, and the absence of an absolute (above 50%) ethnic majority, BiH developed a peculiar culture based on respect, tolerance and cooperation among groups – symbolized by the Turkish word *komşuluk*, which means 'good neighbouring relations'. Relations among ordinary citizens have, in fact, always been peaceful and remained as such until the 1990s – when, eventually, violence began to appear in rural areas and provincial towns, ultimately pervading the whole republic.

Quite different was instead the Macedonian reality where, contrary to BiH, an ethnonational majority existed and the federal republic, although composed by different groups, only had one constituent nation – the ethnic Macedonians. According to the Yugoslav system, ethnic Albanians, the second largest group in Macedonia, were classified as 'nationality', because they had a homeland outside the federation. Since the 1946 constitution, national minorities living in the republic formally enjoyed the same rights and liberties (and had the same duties) as the majority, and the dual term 'nationalities-national minorities' 'had a crucial significance: it eliminated the potential possibility of treating nationalities as second-class citizens' (Caca 1999: 150).

A clear improvement in the equality's direction happened with the 1974 Constitution, which defined Macedonia as '*the national state of ethnic Macedonian nation and the state of the Albanian and Turkish nationalities in it*'<sup>40</sup>. Therefore, although the republic was commonly seen as 'the republic of (ethnic) Macedonians' (Koneska 2014: 61), the nationalities had also been constitutionally equalized with the ethnic majority. Nationalities, for example, could use their mother languages, alphabets, and

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<sup>40</sup> Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, Preamble, 1974;

national symbols and also had the right of receiving education in their mother tongues. Moreover, with the introduction of power-sharing mechanisms and the implementation of the principle of equal representation, the nationalities became (more) represented at municipality, republic and federal levels. Accordingly, before the 1974 changes, the ethnic Albanian population in Macedonia was rather discriminated and ‘completely absent until 1965 from the powerful executive committee of the Communist Party of Macedonia’ (Iseni 2013: 177).

Nevertheless, beside greater inclusion and representation in the institutions, at republics’ level the system was majoritarian and very little power-sharing arrangements were adopted. In fact, it is important to bear in mind that, although on paper equalized with ethnic Macedonians, ethnic Albanians were not a constituent nation and post-1974 Macedonia was a *de facto* ethnic Macedonian nation-state. This will constitute a pivotal point around which the following decades’ events will gravitate around, worsening inter-group relations and nurturing nationalism on both the two sides.

Accordingly, with the constitutions voted in 1989 and 1991 the Macedonian political elite will demonstrate to have very little knowledge - and even less interest, in sharing power with other groups and accommodate ethnonational issues. The same may be said for Bosnia where, however, the absence of an ethnonational majority and the powerful role played by external actors (namely, the outside homelands’ ethnonational elites) in attracting their ethnic-likes eventually destroyed the ‘little Yugoslavia’ - and not only metaphorically.

### **3.1.2 Institutional collapse and external influences**

#### ***3.1.2.1 Bosnia in the middle: ethnic kin-states’ influences***

Although the LCY experienced some crisis in the 1970s due to the ‘Croatian Spring’ and ‘Serbian liberalism’, Bosnia remained out of these tensions. The first divisions in the Bosnian leadership, indeed, appeared in 1989 but only after a long period of destabilization of the system, and the rise of nationalism in Serbia. ‘The leaders did not show any break along ethnic lines for almost two years after Milošević’s rise. There were no indications that a serious nationalist threat to society in Bosnia-Herzegovina would happen [...]’ (Andjelić 2003: 69). Nationalism in Bosnia indeed

was a possible danger, but not an issue: there were no social divisions, no ethnically homogenous areas, no ethnic tensions.

However, the rise of Milošević, alongside with political discussions going on at federal level, affected BiH - that, nonetheless, due to its plural character could not clearly position itself in the debate. By 1990, the Bosnian communist party lacked strength and determination and this deficiency allowed the three Bosnian groups to embrace different positions and plans: the majority of Bosnian Serbs were favouring Milošević's ideas wishing either annexation to Serbia or an independent (Bosnian) Serb nation-state; most of the Bosnian Croats were supporting Zagreb and decentralization while Bosnian Muslims, having them no kin-state, wanted a united Bosnia without any partition between Serbia and Croatia (Keil 2013: 72).

By shifting focus and meaning of the 'Brotherhood and Unity' principle from all the groups living in the SFRY to one's own group, the influence exerted by the kin-states and their leaders deeply affected the Bosnian environment and progressively worsened inter-ethnic relations, favouring the penetration of nationalism. However, to conclude that nationalism was exclusively imported from outside is partly wrong: on the one side, nationalism's germs were semi-spontaneously growing in the rural areas (Andjelić 2003: 103) but, on the other one, nationalist indoctrination widely penetrated also thanks to the intellectuals' and media's role (Dragović-Soso 2003). Concerning the latter, contrary to Belgrade's and Zagreb's media, that were under total control of their nationalist leaders, Sarajevo's media were the only ones broadcasting programmes from all the sides, offering the population a complete and as much as possible objective picture of the surrounding reality - paradoxically enabling the penetration of dangerous ideas.

### ***3.1.2.2 Kosovo, the ethnic Albanian community and the ethnic Macedonians' frustrations***

As mentioned in the previous chapter, already back in 1968 Kosovar Albanians started demanding more rights and autonomy for the wished Republic of Kosovo, and ethnic Albanians from Macedonia supported the claim; however, the Macedonian authorities reacted imprisoning and sentencing the 'Albanian nationalists', as they were defined, reacting in a harsher way than the Kosovo's authorities.

The ethnic Albanians' general conditions got slightly better in the 1970s<sup>41</sup>, when the 'Albanian culture started being partially recognized by the authorities, allowing for the proliferation of scientific, literary, artistic, and media (print and broadcasting) production' (Iseni 2013: 18). Nonetheless, the improvements achieved did not last very long.

Riots in Kosovo spread again in April 1981 and that was the gravest threat posed to the inter-ethnic equilibrium in Yugoslavia (Babuna 2000). After Tito's death in 1980, in fact, the Albanian discontent became more pronounced and, since the Albanian population in Kosovo and Macedonia was in close contact, the Kosovo events provoked smaller-scale manifestations also in Macedonia, where the state authorities reacted imprisoning the dissidents. The Macedonian authorities saw the rise of Albanian nationalism as a great menace 'not only to the territorial integrity of the republic but even to the very existence of the Macedonian nation' (Poulton 2000, 127).

Afraid by the 'spectre of expanding "ethnically pure" Albanian areas akin to the situation developing in Kosovo' (*ibidem*: 128), ethnic Macedonians adopted some punitive administrative measures – as for instance the closure of school classes for Albanian pupils - provoking Albanian protests then culminated in the imprisonment of many considered nationalist, irredentists and dissidents, and their expulsion from the party (Rusi Spasovska 2013). Despite the official policy of *Bratstvo i Jedinstvo*, the Macedonian reality was one of mistrust and separations which, when the circumstances allowed for, manifested itself also in a violent way – as it will be explained afterwards.

Inter-group antagonism was not based on ethno-cultural groups' features, but on issues concerning the groups' socio-political status, their institutional representation and collective rights. Moreover, ethnic Macedonians' frustrations stemming from their past of 'denied nationhood' led them to see ethnic Albanians as an internal threat to their survival as dominant group in what was perceived to be *their own* state. As we shall see, this 'ethnic' understanding of the Macedonian state has widely survived

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<sup>41</sup> In 1970, the University of Prishtina was established, offering higher education in Albanian language thus attracting Albanian students especially from Macedonia. Moreover with the 1974 constitution, the status of nations and nationalities in the federal unit of Macedonia – hence of ethnic Macedonians, ethnic Albanians and Turks as well – was officially equalized;

until the present days and, accordingly, ethnic Macedonians still fear to become a minority in *their own* state.

### 3.2 The 1990s. When Nationalism seemed the only Option

#### 3.2.1 The multiparty elections and Bosnia's road to war

Until the first half of 1990, a ban over ethnic political parties was in vigour and, as Adjelić (2003: 135) documented, 'the political weekly, *Danas*, conducted a survey in April and May 1990. Citizens of Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Mostar [...] were asked about the ban on ethnic political parties. In Banja Luka, 81 per cent supported the ban, while the percentage in Sarajevo was 72 per cent and in Mostar 66 per cent. [...] civil war was seen to be a possibility by only 6 per cent in Banja Luka, 3 per cent in Sarajevo and 2 per cent in Mostar'. These data indeed show how, at least in the urban areas, until 1990 people were not supporting nationalist policies, and social division based on ethnonationality were therefore not yet an issue.

The ban eventually was ruled out and new political alternatives appeared on the scene. Beside the communist, not as strong as in Serbia, there were the Reformist of Ante Marković (Federal Prime Minister advocating economic and political reforms aimed to avoid ethnic politics), and the ethnonational parties – which happened to be the most supported ones. These parties appeared on the scene in the spring-summer 1990, immediately before the first multiparty elections: SDA<sup>42</sup>, founded by Alija Izetbegović, was in favour of a united and more centralized Bosnia Herzegovina; HDZ<sup>43</sup> was, instead, representing the Bosnian Croat population and was tied with Tuđman's party in Croatia; finally, the last to be constituted was SDS<sup>44</sup>, founded by Radovan Karadžić, tied with Belgrade, and representing the Bosnian Serb population. While tensions and nationalism were growing in the neighbouring republics, Bosnia held her first multiparty elections, and the three nationalist parties - SDA, HZD and SDS - largely won.

The three parties, although containing in their names the word 'democracy', were

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<sup>42</sup> *Stranka Demokratske Akcije* - Party of Democratic Action;

<sup>43</sup> *Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica* - Croatian Democratic Union;

<sup>44</sup> *Srpska Demokratska Stranka* - Serb Democratic Party;



anything but democratic (Sekulić T. 2002). Ethnic belonging was the sole ideology and, since religion was crucial factor in differentiating among the three major Bosnian groups, politicized and ethnicized churches and mosques played a great role in appealing masses<sup>45</sup> (Velikonja 2003). Religion became ‘the hallmark of nationhood’ (Perica 2002). However, religion’s importance did not suddenly emerge: it was the process of democratization and liberalization initiated in the 1970s that gave more space to religious institutions, hence allowing religious leaders to play a more influential role – yet become clearer and stronger in the 1990s (see Perica 2002; Ramet 2014; Velikonja 2003).

Beside religion and ethnicity, however, there was another major difference among the Bosnian people: the area of residence. The urban population was better educated, supporting democratization and economic reforms, rejecting nationalism and following ‘a unique Bosnian culture’ (Andjelić 2003: 146); the rural population, instead, was less educated and more concerned with its own ethnic background and differences. Also mixed marriages, widely practiced all over the country, were more often happening in urban areas, like in Sarajevo, than in the rural ones (*ibidem*);

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<sup>45</sup> Recalling what stated in Chapter 1 about the role of religion in fostering in-group solidarity and nation-building, it’s interesting to see how, since the 1980s but particularly during the Yugoslav wars, nationalist leaders have often employed in their narratives the divine link between the group and the transcendental so to mobilize their respective ‘ethnic masses’ legitimizing and giving a superior sense to their national struggles. The Croatian and Serbian nationalisms, for example, showcased interesting instances of how divine ties, or divinities themselves, may confer the group an aura of holiness. The sacredness of the Croatian nation had a powerful boost with the Virgin Mary’s apparition in June 1981, in the small village of Međugorje in the south of Bosnia Herzegovina. In the middle of a political crisis and growing tensions, the Virgin appeared to six children presaging the reawakening of the Croatian nation; as argued by Skrbiš (2005: 458), the symbolical meaning conveyed by the apparitions ‘allowed Croatian nationalists to imagine themselves and their nation as chosen for the task of community-building, in which the Virgin, with her felt presence, offers guidance and purpose’. The Serbs, instead, since when Prince Lazar was defeat by the Ottomans in Kosovo Polje in 1389, developed and progressively interiorized a sense of victimhood that led them to imagine themselves as ‘the greatest martyrs of humankind’, hence often ‘echoing the Serbo-Jewish analogy’ (Perica 2002: 167), and portraying their nation as a ‘heavenly nation’ (Anzulović 1999; Velikonja 2003) and its members as brave martyrs scarifying their lives for a superior goal;

however, this picture became clearer only after the 1990 elections.

In spite of the positive character of inter-group relations, ethnonationalism rapidly grew and the lack of a Bosnian Herzegovinian national identity, able to counterbalance it, signed the tragic destiny of the country.

### ***3.2.1.1 'No one will touch Sarajevo'***

After the elections, the three parties' representatives, familiar only with the Yugoslav model of power-sharing, formed a coalition government dividing the main executive positions among them<sup>46</sup>, and the collective presidency system was replicated in the Bosnian republic. Despite some institutional similarities with the federal level, the implementation of power-sharing and multiple presidency was a choice out of alternatives, since no single party won enough seats to rule alone and since, due to BiH's mixed population, no single group was in majority. Hence the legitimizing principles behind the application of the national key went from being all nations' protection via equality and brotherhood to *our* nation protection via homogenization and exclusion of different others. Moreover, given that nationalist parties' source of power were their respective 'ethnicized masses', those parties were not competing between them but against a common enemy: the multiethnic and civic parties. Thus the coalition also served that purpose: to mobilize ethnic masses eliminating civic alternatives, definitely paving the way towards Bosnia's collapse. Although 'Bosnia seemed much more likely to witness ethnic accommodation than Croatia or Macedonia' (Koneska 2014: 46), similarly to what happened at the federal level, the center crumbled and fragmented along ethnic lines. Deep disagreements over Bosnian statehood drove the ethnic leaders (domestic and non) into a fight for territory and the dismemberment of BiH was seen as the best option by most of the parts involved; only the leader of SDA, representing the Muslim-Bošnjak population, had no alternative than defend his group by defending the idea of a united BiH.

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<sup>46</sup> Alja Izetbegović (SDA) became President of the Republic, Momčilo Krajišnik (SDS) was appointed President of the Assembly and the Jure Pelivan (HDZ) became Prime Minister;

By 1991, however, Milošević's and Tuđman's territorial plans over Bosnia Herzegovina became clearer; their most significant meeting happened in Karadžević, Serbia, and the agreement was to split the Bosnian republic in order to create their own 'Great' countries. Borders' issues, both territorial and ethnic, became overly important and had dramatic consequences in some Croatia's regions and in Bosnia above all: in those areas, people were living mixed and scattered all over the territory and new internal borders couldn't be drawn but with blood.

Violent tensions firstly occurred between Slovenia and Serbia; then, since Milošević and Tuđman couldn't agree over the Croatian Serb population, war erupted in Croatia. Following Milošević's ideas and politics, Bosnian Serbs held a referendum in favour of remaining in a Yugoslav federation with Serbia and Montenegro, which however resulted unconstitutional. Regardless the Court's decision, the Bosnian Serbs headed by Karadžević started establish their own separate institutions within BiH (as Serbs did in the Croat Krajina), paving the way for the birth, on 9 January 1992, of a self-proclaimed Serbian para-state called *Republika Srpska* (RS) within BiH. Also Bosnian Croats were doing the same and, already on 18 November 1991, they auto-proclaimed the *Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosna* under the leadership of Mate Boban; as we shall see, contrary to the RS, the Croatian republic won't survive the end of the Bosnian war.

On 6 April 1992, after a referendum for independence (boycotted by the vast majority of the Bosnian Serb population) Bosnia officially left the Yugoslav federation. Notwithstanding the United Nations immediately recognized the new state, the war broke up: Sarajevo, capital city of 'the most Yugoslav of all the republics' (Lampe 2000: 337), symbol of peaceful coexistence between peoples, religions and cultures, had to be destroyed. Sarajevo went through the longest siege of modern history, which terribly damaged the city and its inhabitants - but not (entirely) its spirit.

What was happening in Bosnia Herzegovina was the result and consequence of political and institutional weaknesses, worsened by an economic crisis that first triggered the Yugoslav dissolution and then the Bosnian war. The conflict was not the result of ancient ethnic hatred (Hayden 2000; Malešević 2006; Sekulić T. 2002) but a political war mainly driven by outside, and especially (but not only) by Tuđman and Milošević (Velikonja 2003), in which national and territorial aspirations legitimized ethnic cleansing and other atrocities, and in which ethnonationalism was the only way new leaders had to appeal disoriented masses. Ethnonationalist entrepreneurs forged

new collectivities in order to satisfy their political and (perhaps above all) economic interests, and ethnic belonging became matter of survival.

Ordinary people, left without alternatives different from take up a rifle, escape from their places of residence or run under the bombs<sup>47</sup>, for the largest part conformed to the surrounding environment in order to survive. Of course there were, and there are, people ideologically convinced, but most of those who casted their vote for nationalist parties in 1990 did not really support ethnonationalist ideas (Andjelić 2003: 199). Indeed, more than a conscious and spontaneous endorsement of nationalism and sudden rediscovery of religion, the centrality acquired by the ethnonational background was a political phenomenon, the result of a modern nationalist idea centred on the notion of sovereign nations wishing to establish their own nation-states. The new political elite channelled the discontent and reframed it in ethnic terms, manipulating culture and history to legitimize its role as new groups' protector. Eventually, people did adapt to that ethnicized environment and, as Hanna Arendt said, 'if we are attacked as Jews, we can only react as Jews' (in Sekulić T. 2002: 38). Eventually, the killing stopped, the war continued with other weapons, and *everyone* lost – and much more than a war.

### **3.2.2 'Constitutional nationalism' and the independence of Macedonia**

In line with the events that were taking place all over Yugoslavia, nationalism entered also in the Macedonian political discourse worsening already superficial inter-ethnic relations between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians.

In 1989, while Milošević's Serbia was abolishing Kosovo's autonomy, the Socialist Republic of Macedonia amended the 1974 constitution declaring Macedonia '*the national state of the Macedonian people*', thus omitting the phrase '*and of the Albanian and Turkish people*'<sup>48</sup> (which was instead present since the 1974 constitution). The Macedonian ethnic majority downgraded the nationalities to the status of minority as a way to preserve and consolidate their national identity. Ethnic Albanians' discomfort grew demanding equal status alongside the ethnic

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<sup>47</sup> About 1.2 millions of people are IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons), forced to flee from their homes but remained within the BiH country's borders;

<sup>48</sup> 1974 Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, Preamble;

Macedonians, and their loyalty towards the new state was contingent to that (Holliday 2005). In spite of a long tradition of coexistence, fear and dissatisfaction grew increasing both Macedonian and Albanian nationalisms, thus characterizing the position assumed by new political parties and making more difficult inter-ethnic communication and mutual understanding.

As happened in the other republics, the introduction of the multiparty system in 1990 saw the birth of ethnic parties representing the different ethnonational communities, polarizing the political spectrum. On the ethnic Macedonian side, VMRO-DPMNE<sup>49</sup> emerged as a nationalist and conservative party, self-proclaimed successor of the revolutionary organization protagonist of the Ilinden uprising in 1903 – fundamental event for the birth of the Macedonian national state. Next to it, another ethnic Macedonian party was SDSM<sup>50</sup>, successor of the League of Communist and guided by Kiro Gligorov, one of the main former communist leaders in this republic, and very respected by the population. On the ethnic Albanian side, instead, the first party to be established was PDP<sup>51</sup> while, as a result of a merging between two ethnic Albanian parties<sup>52</sup>, in 1997 DPA<sup>53</sup> was established under the leadership of Arben Xhaferi.

During the 1990 elections, VMRO-DPMNE - strongly anti-communist and anti-Albanian, and advocator of independence - didn't win enough seats to form a government on its own, however refused to make a coalition with both ethnic Albanian parties and the former Communist.

Kiro Gligorov, elected President of the Republic of Macedonia, together with Alija Izetbegović, neo-elected President of Bosnia Herzegovina, concerned for their republics' future out of the Socialist Federation, tried to preserve their states within a

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<sup>49</sup> *Vnatrešna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija – Demokratska Partija za Makedonsko Narodno Edinstvo* - Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity;

<sup>50</sup> *Socijaldemokratski sojuz na Makedonija* - Social Democratic Union of Macedonia;

<sup>51</sup> *Partia per Prosperitet Demokratik* - Party for Democratic Prosperity;

<sup>52</sup> Early in the 1990s, dissatisfied supporters of PDP left for NDP (*Partis Demokratits Populore* - People's Democratic Party). After 1994 election the PDPA (*Partia per Prosperitet Demokratits Shquiparëve* - Party of democratic prosperity of Albanians) was formed. In 1997, the two parties, NDP and PDPA, merged and formed DPA;

<sup>53</sup> *Partia Demokratike Shqiptare* - Democratic Party of Albanians;

new confederal framework, proposing the so-called 'Platform for the future of the Yugoslav community' – which, however, did not see any future due to the fold assumed by the events.

In September 1991, when the referendum for independence took place, the Albanian community, almost unanimously, boycotted it - and the ethnic Macedonians interpreted the boycott as a sign of disloyalty (Holliday 2005). In November 1991 Macedonia's independence was proclaimed and a new Constitution voted; the document, again, declared the Republic of Macedonia as a (ethnic Macedonian) nation-state, reiterating the Albanian discomfort and their call for revision.

Although Macedonian nationalism was a relatively new phenomenon, the former socialist political elite behaved according to the new mainstream ideology, seeing independence 'as the next stage in the historical development of the Macedonian nation toward *full* statehood' (Adamson, Jović 2004: 301).

So, by bearing in mind that, throughout the history, Macedonia has mostly been considered a geographical area, rather than a state, and the Macedonians constantly contested as distinct nation, it is not wrong to say the Macedonians' identity frustrations saw a partial decrease with the implementation of what Hayden (1992: 655) has defined 'constitutional nationalism' - namely 'a constitutional and legal structure that privileges the members of one ethnically defined nation over other residents in a particular state'. The Macedonian elite, then, tried to balance the ethnic nation-state narrative with the recognition of minorities, enunciating the importance of peaceful inter-ethnic relations, but 'in their behavior towards minority communities the Macedonian authorities increasingly adopted a more nationally assertive process of nation- and state-building that combined elements of both repression and assimilation' (Holliday 2005: 143).

Ethnic Macedonians, as a consequence of the Albanians' referendum's boycott, saw *their* nation and nation-state contested also from the inside, by the ethnic Albanians. On their side, instead, ethnic Albanians saw their status downgraded and their rights taken back by the Macedonian state. Therefore, they demanded equal status alongside the ethnic majority, representation in the State's institutions and bodies, the right to speak their own mother language in the public institutions of the state and Parliament as well, and the right to receive higher education in Albanian rather than only in Macedonian language. As described by Ramet (2005), in fact, at the time of independence, ethnic Albanians did not have any single institution of higher

education in their own language and, in terms of students enrolled, they were underrepresented in both high schools and university. In few words, they wanted not to be considered as a minority or ‘second-class citizens’ – a feeling, however, still widely present in the current society.

Experiencing a deep feeling of subordination, the ethnic Albanians began ‘to think in terms of autonomy’ (Ramet 2002, 189). After having boycotted the referendum of Macedonia’s independence, on 11 and 12 January 1992, 74% of the 92% of the ethnic Albanians eligible to vote, voted in favour of the ‘territorial and cultural autonomy of Albanians in Macedonia’ (Iseni 2013, 183), asking for the independence of the Western parts of the country. Frustrated by the government’s answer, which maintained that autonomy would not serve Albanians’ interests but would ‘[cut] them off from the mainstream Macedonian public life’ (Ramet 2002, 190), a group of Albanian nationalists declared the creation of a ‘Republic of Illyrida’. Thus, in the context of growing ethnonationalism, the wished republic represented a possible solution to the on-going disputes and frustrations (see Jenne 2004).

The project, however, did not last long but the situation deteriorated immediately.

In November 1992, protests broke out in Skopje. A new Law on Citizenship stated that ‘individuals that have not lived legally and continuously in the Republic for 15 years do not have the right to acquire citizenship’ (Koppa 2000: 44), implicitly going against the Albanians fled from Kosovo to Macedonia since the 1970s. After Serbian authorities closed down the University of Prishtina, ethnic Albanians in Macedonia tried to create their own university in the city of Mala Rečica, near Tetovo, but the situation culminated in violence. Then, in 1997, an attempt to reopen the Pedagogy Faculty for Albanians in the capital city of Skopje was violently rejected by the ethnic Macedonians students, chanting ‘Albanians to the gas chambers’ or ‘Macedonia for Macedonians’ (Neofotistos 2012). The ethnic Macedonians’ narrative on this topic was that ‘higher education was available to all citizens (including the Albanians), but it was the Albanians who failed to take advantage of the educational opportunities’ (Roudometof 2002: 177). Finally, a law on the restriction of the use of national

symbols among the non-Macedonian communities was also voted<sup>54</sup>, breaking with the Yugoslav tradition in protecting and safeguarding groups' rights.

Furthermore, the 'Macedonian question', that during the Yugoslav decades seemed to have ended, re-emerged with the 1991 independence, which 'set off a diplomatic, cultural, and international struggle over the recognition of the new state' (Roudometof 2002: 29), increasing even more ethnic Macedonians' fears, frustrations and nationalism – as well as the ones of the neighbouring states.

Greece fiercely opposed the recognition of the newly born state, opposing both the use of the name 'Macedonia'<sup>55</sup> and the Sun of Vergina<sup>56</sup> as official flag's symbol. Macedonia then changed the flag's design but not its name, therefore leaving the name dispute open and unsolved<sup>57</sup>. Bulgaria, on its part, although recognized the republic's independence, did not recognize the existence of a separate Macedonian nation, claiming Macedonians are nothing more than Bulgarians<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> Also in this case violence occurred: the Macedonian police intervened in the city of Gostivar, where an Albanian flag was flying in front of the town hall, and among other also the city major was arrested;

<sup>55</sup> As explained by Roudometof (2002), the Greek claim over Macedonia is that Macedonia is part of Greece, and no one can be Macedonian without being Greek; those who claim to be Macedonians, therefore, are Slavophone Greeks. See also: Floudas, D.A.M.A. *FYROM's Dispute with Greece Revisited*. The New Balkans, East European monographs. Columbia University Press, 2002;

<sup>56</sup> The Vergina Sun is an artefact discovered in a royal tomb, in 1978, during archaeological excavations in Greek Macedonia. Since then, both contemporary Macedonians and Greeks are claiming property over the symbol emphasizing the historical legacy of the Ancient Macedonians. In 1992, the new-born Republic of Macedonia adopted the Vergina Sun as official symbol of the state's flag, provoking a strong reaction from Greece;

<sup>57</sup> The constitutional name of the state remains 'Republic of Macedonia' while 'Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' (FYROM) is the 'provisional name' introduced by the United Nations in 1993. Finally, the dispute with Greece over the name continued and, in 2008, Greece blocked Macedonia's membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European Union (EU) (Crisis Group Europe Briefing 2009);

<sup>58</sup> Bulgaria has been the neighbour with the most direct influence on Macedonia and during the 19<sup>th</sup> century many Macedonians fled to Sofia. The Macedonian language, also, remains still largely considered a Bulgarian dialect;



For both Greece and Bulgaria, the Macedonian nation remains a Tito's invention, a 'state-sponsored ethnogenesis' (Roudometof 2002: 41) happened in 1944 for political reasons. Albanians' claims and nationalism also remained seen as a menace, 'not only to the territorial integrity of the republic but even to the very existence of the Macedonian nation' (Poulton 2000: 127), deepening ethnic Macedonians' frustrations and fears (see Saideman, Dougherty, Jenne 2005).

### **3.3 After Yugoslavia. When Nationalism becomes legitimate**

#### **3.3.1 The Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) and the Bosnian state-building (failure)**

The war in Bosnia Herzegovina lasted until the end of 1995.

The peace negotiations took place in Dayton, Ohio, in November 1995. International actors pressed the leaders of BiH, Serbia and Croatia to come to a compromise and, eventually, they signed a long and complex peace treaty also containing the domestic constitution of Bosnia Herzegovina (DPA, Annex IV). Underlying the importance of territorial issues, however avoiding the total dismemberment of the country, Bosnia Herzegovina was preserved as a united state but internally partitioned into two entities – the Republika Srpska established in 1992 by Radovan Karadžić, and the Federation of Bosnia Herzegovina established in 1994 by the Washington Agreement<sup>59</sup>. The former is rather centralized while the latter is highly decentralized and subdivided in ten cantons - administrative areas granted with many autonomies. In 1999, the district of Brčko became autonomous, meaning not belonging to any of the two Entities.

Bosnia Herzegovina, for the first time in its history, became an independent democratic republic - yet internally divided in almost totally ethnic homogenous areas, which give perpetual *raison d'être* to nation-state oriented narratives and

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<sup>59</sup> The Washington Agreement was signed in 1994 between the authorities of the Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosna (auto-proclaimed in 1991 under the leadership of Mate Boban) and the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina; the territory was divided into ten autonomous cantons, hence establishing the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH). The existence of the FBiH has been ratified with the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, and it occupies the 51% of the Bosnian territory; the remnant 49% is occupied by the Republika Srpska;

ethnically fragmented feelings of attachment.

The DPA set up a complicate state, grounded on people's dis-unity and functioning according to complex and slow mechanisms; however, back in 1995, it probably was the best solution to stop the killings and, it was thought, the set up of democratic institutions and elections would have progressively taught citizens and elites to practice democracy (O'Halloran 2005).

However, as happened to Yugoslavia after the 'non-statist drift', the DPA created a loose federation where the central government has a limited array of functions and it's the entities the real holders of power. As Keil (2013) explained, the entities can run their own affairs separately, even in contradiction/opposition to each other. Hence, on the one side, the division of the state into entities and cantons has created a massive, expensive and dysfunctional bureaucracy while, on the other one, it contributes to give people a divided image of the state, which resemble a shell for 'wannabe ethnic nation-states', eventually hampering the birth of a feeling of belonging to BiH rather than to portions of it. As Bunce (2004: 180) argued in her analysis on ethnofederalism, 'by drawing tight linkages among the nation, the territory, and political power, ethnofederalism can lock in differences and freeze identities' (see also Jenne 2009).

Current Bosnia, thus, to some extents resemble the SFRY in late 1980s – where ethnic leaders are protecting their ethnic people, settled in their ethnic territories, and where there is no supranational attachment and feeling of unity. However, it's worth to say that, although the implementation of power-sharing and the application of 'national key' are neither a Dayton's invention nor something new to Bosnia, aim and context in which they have been applied are now diametrically different compared to the Yugoslav past – and so are the outcomes.

One of the main differences with its past is the overarching ideological framework: institutionalized and territorialized ethnicity, during the SFRY, never represented neither a social nor a political problem because the system itself was deeply committed in promoting unity and equality, without which the federation would have collapsed (as eventually happened); Dayton's Bosnia is instead the outcome of a war in which the partition of the country was one of the major goals, and where all the three parts involved would have preferred something different than living together in a common state. Hence distinctiveness - namely emphasis and protection of

differences, rather than unity and equality despite differences -, is the principle that legitimises a state, its institutions and party system, built upon dis-unity.

### **3.3.2 Constitutional debates, ethnic Albanians' frustrations and the 2001 conflict**

After the collapse of the Socialist system, the Macedonian society faced several challenges while building a new state and transiting from one to another regime (Musliu 2006). The first decade of independence was marked by uncertainty and instability, and the difficulties faced were not only connected to the transition from single to multi-party system, but also related to a fragile economic situation, then worsened by unlawful privatization and increased unemployment.

In the period 1991-2001, due to its characteristics and complexity, the Macedonian constitutional design has been defined a 'constitutional hybrid' (Vankovska 2012) and it suffered from many weaknesses. It designed a parliamentary and liberal democracy in which citizens were supposed to be protected by a considerable number of human rights' provisions; however, violations of human rights, particularly due to the lack of rule of law, have been frequent (Vankovska 2013). Moreover, from the very beginning the political arena was constituted by ethnic political parties, and collective rights often prevailed over the individual ones.

The ethnic Albanian population was dissatisfied with the new constitutional document, also drafted by a commission of experts in which no Albanian was present. Despite the ethnic Albanian parties have always been part of the governing coalitions, the 'constitution issue' remained an apple of discord between the two major groups and many, indeed, saw in it the triggering reason of the 2001 conflict (Vankovska 2012: 17).

Accordingly, the long-term consequences of being considered as belonging to a lower status, first in Yugoslavia and then in independent Macedonia, shaped the form assumed by ethnic Albanian political mobilization. The events happening in Kosovo since the 1980s, together with the increase of Albanians' frustration for not being recognized as a equal group alongside the ethnic Macedonians in the independent state, are crucial factors to properly interpret the deterioration of inter-ethnic communication and the then conflict, since both deeply influenced internal stability and shacked an already precarious equilibrium.

The war in Kosovo, indeed, directly impacted the Macedonian situation and the Kosovo Liberation Army (UÇK) 'made its presence very clear in the small republic'

(Koppa 2001, 39). In March 2001, tensions escalated first in the areas around the border with Kosovo, then in the city of Tetovo and Kumanovo areas, while other cities with large Albanian population (as Gostivar, Struga or Debar) remained outside the armed clashes. Then, however, the fights have been widely supported by the majority of the ethnic Albanian population in Macedonia and the rebels, organized in the NLA<sup>60</sup>, looked as national heroes, as ‘freedom fighters’.

Although, at that time, the Macedonian government was formed by a Macedonian-Albanian coalition, dialogue between the two parts resulted difficult and nationalism growing; the conflict, eventually, showed the incompatibility between their respective ethnocentrism.

Trying to solve the conflict, a ‘national unity’ government<sup>61</sup> was formed but the short-lived attempt showed its dysfunctionality and the incapability of both sides’ political parties to coalesce even in a war-like situation. After a few months of conflict, under the supervision of the EU and President Boris Trajkovski, the four major political parties signed the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) ending the violence. The NLA did not participate in the negotiations but some of their demands have been met with the signing of the peace treaty, probably also spreading the wrong message that violence may be a viable solution to obtain political visibility and results (Marolov 2013).

Compromises between the two parts led to some constitutional changes, decentralization and more rights to the Albanian community. However, mistrust and social distance between the two groups have widely persisted until today.

### ***3.3.2.1 The Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) and the Macedonian de facto bi-national state***

The peace treaty was rather simple compared to the Bosnian Dayton Peace Agreement; it contained provisions and guidelines for the introduction of power-sharing and

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<sup>60</sup> NLA (National Liberation Army) was an ethnic Albanian organization, linked to the UÇK, active in Macedonia during the 2001 conflict;

<sup>61</sup> The ruling coalition, when the conflict occurred, was formed by VMRO-DPMNE and the Albanian DPA; the opposition, instead, by SDSM and PDP. The four parties all together united in the ‘coalition of national unity’;

stressed the need for some constitutional changes in order to ameliorate inter-ethnic relations and bring the country towards democracy.

The OFA addressed some of the ethnic Albanians' claims but, in trying to avoid a Bosnian-type solution, it firmly opposed internal partitions or regional autonomies, seen as a 'probable concession of the separatist sentiment' (Musliu 2006: 40). However, although it stated that 'there are no territorial solutions to ethnic issues'<sup>62</sup>, in practice areas of strong political influence were and are present, since ethnic Albanians live mostly in the Western areas of the republic and ethnic Macedonians in the rest of the country.

Nonetheless, the OFA tried to promote a civic understanding of Macedonia, giving the opportunity for building a new state identity focused on citizenship rather than on ethnicity. The amended Preamble of the Constitution, major cause of discord, now states that:

The citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, the Macedonian people, as well as citizens living within its borders who are part of the Albanian people, the Turkish people, the Vlach people, the Serbian people, the Roma people, the Bosniak people and others [...]

One of the provisions directly aimed to satisfy some of the Albanians' demands concerned *Education and use of Languages*: the compromise reached was that 'any other language spoken by at least 20 percent of the population is also an official language' (OFA, 6. 5). However, the Macedonian language remained the official one at state level: 'plenary sessions of the Parliament cannot be conducted in the Albanian language [...], Albanian ministers in the Government cannot speak or write in Albanian language, Albanian language is not used at all at the state Presidency; the Albanian language cannot be used in the army and the police' (Shasivari and Zejneli, 2013, 601).

For what, instead, concerned education, primary and secondary education remain ethnically segregated (Barbieri *et al.* 2013) while, in 2004 and under the auspice of Max van der Stoel (former OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities), the South Eastern Europe University (SEEU) was opened in Tetovo, providing education in Albanian language (and English as well).

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<sup>62</sup> Ohrid Framework Agreement, Art 1.2;

Despite some important changes in the democracy's direction, the effective implementation of the OFA's provisions still remains partial and incomplete; political compromise and dialogue difficult, political parties' bargain often non transparent and 'Macedonians have been struggling in defending their superior position in the country and the post-OFA period suggests a *zero sum game*' (Rosulek 2011: 83). Populism and ethnocentrism, widespread corruption and (ethnic) clientelism are worsening an already critical situation, further slowing down the democratization process. Also, 'the lack of economic perspective is breeding ground for nationalism [...]. Nationalists articulate the social contradictions in ethnic terms. This is how the recurring populism feeds in Macedonia' (Iseni 2013, 189).

For what concerns ethnonationality, the OFA provisions and the following constitutional changes have ended to stress the *bi-national*, rather than multinational, character of the state, unofficially elevating the ethnic Albanians 'to a status that makes them quasi-constituent' (Bieber 2005, 115). The Agreement, indeed, addressed primarily the ethnic Albanian community and didn't provide enough mechanisms of smaller groups' rights' protection, leading to the *de-facto* bi-nationalization of the country.

Eventually, as happened in the case of Dayton's Bosnia Herzegovina, the overall outcome has been the development of ethnic parallel systems, where ethnic political parties and their ethnic masses are strongly connected together while separated from each other. Inter-ethnic relations, at both political and social level, thus remain overshadowed by mistrust and mutual suspect.

### **3.4 Conclusive remarks.**

#### **Political issues' social impact: re-shaping identities and inter-ethnic relations in post-Yugoslav BiH and Macedonia**

The 1992-95 war in Bosnia Herzegovina destroyed the country but, more than that, its society. The nationalist collectivisation provoked a drastic shrinkage of the identity spectrum and individuals' identities became inferred by ethno-religious backgrounds, hence by kinship (Abazović, Velikonja 2014). The family turn out to be an ethnopolitics' pillar, key element for the survival of the nation and the reproduction of its members (Malešević 2013). Moreover, since religion was the main element in making a difference between the three Bosnian groups, it became the principal ethnic

marker (Conversi 1995; 1999), used to build boundaries between the groups.

Eventually, the concept of nation was reframed and used 'to change the way people see themselves, to mobilize loyalties' (Brubaker 2004: 116), therefore assuming a completely different, even opposite, meaning compared to the one forged and fostered for decades by the Yugoslav system.

Internal and external territorial aspirations and plans concerning BiH provoked ethnic cleansing, forced movement of entire sectors of the population (Sekulić T. 2002) and their re-settlement in areas where their own groups were in majority. In the absence of a strong state able to protect them, people turned to their ethnonational groups (hence, parties), hoping for protection – or simple survival. Although the war was political, meaning it was a clash between different leaders' territorial plans, the conflict was presented as cultural and religious, thus ethnic.

The vast majority of the people had been sucked into the vortex against its own will (see Drakulić 1993) - yet, inevitably, war's dynamics and narratives have poisoned inter-ethnic relations, increased distrust, suspect and produced fear. Nonetheless, violence and divisions were clearly politically orchestrated and channelled, not inherently social.

The same may be said to be true also for the case of Macedonia; the only difference with BiH is that inter-ethnic relations were, already back in Yugoslavia, quite distant and only superficially good.

In the opening of the chapter I quoted a study performed by Hodson *et al.* (2002), according to which ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians emerged to be the least tolerant of all the peoples living in the SFRY. Nevertheless, and once again, I tried to demonstrate how political issues evolved into collective frustrations, then framed in ethnic terms finally provoking social antagonism.

The difficulties faced by the ethnic Macedonians in their process of nation and state building have not only shaped their behaviour towards the other groups living in the small republic, but have also displayed a double character - political and psychological. Politically speaking, in 1989 and then also in 1991, by declaring the independent state as *their own* (ethnic) nation-state, the Macedonian political elite acted in line with the dominant, nationalist, paradigm as well as in accordance with the Yugoslav heritage, featured by an already existing collective image of Macedonia

as the state of ethnic Macedonians (since they only were constituent nation) as well as by the lack of a civic understanding of the nations composing the federal units.

On the psychological side, instead, after being contested for long time, first by outside and then also by the inside, the creation of a Macedonian nation-state answered the psychological need of being internationally recognized as a distinct, titular, nation in its own sovereign, national, state. Hence, the articulation of the state in ethnonational terms was aimed to strength and protect the Macedonian national identity, and its status as dominant group had not only to be understood in ethnic, rather than civic, terms, but also confirmed by its hegemonic presence in all the spheres of the socio-political life, thus reflected in the administrative, political, cultural and religious ones. Ethnic Albanians, instead, equally frustrated for not being a constituent nation neither in Yugoslavia nor in independent Macedonia - furthermore declassified to a minority in democracy, expressed their political concerns by protesting and then also by means of violence.

Also in the Macedonian case, therefore, political antagonisms and frustrations preceded and caused the social ones.

Moreover, in both BiH and Macedonia, external factors have widely contributed to negatively influence domestic inter-ethnic relations: as seen, Serbia, Croatia and Kosovo played a considerable role particularly in the 1990s. But again, the role they played was a political one, aimed to instrumentalize and politicize ethno-cultural features of the groups to appeal and mobilize masses – eventually succeeding.

Said that, in presence of weak democratic states whose assets are grounded on ethnicity, and in the absence of supra-ethnic nations (as Bosnian Herzegovinians and Macedonians understood in civic rather than ethnic terms), it cannot be surprising ethnonationality has acquired new meanings and importance; and, in the context of democratic multiparty systems, so are ethnonational parties.

Therefore, after having examined how ethnonational issues evolved in BiH and Macedonia, and how political disagreements - framed into ethnic - have also conditioned social relations among the groups composing the two plural societies, the next chapter will deeply analyse the current Bosnian and Macedonian institutional and political realities, featured by the overlap between social and political cleavages - that is to say, ethnopolitics (Ramet 2006).



A closer look at the Bosnian and Macedonian ethnopolitical systems, while exploring institutional mechanisms of groups' representation, the role and strategies employed by socializing agents in tying together ethnic masses while dividing citizens, will prepare the ground for the two-generations analysis.

## **PREMISE TO THE EMPIRICAL CHAPTERS**

The following chapters consist in the analysis of the empirical material collected for this research.

The semi-structured interviews conducted for the study were structured conversation performed with both informants (politicians, academics, journalist, civil society and international organizations' members) and families. The fieldwork has been performed in Skopje and Sarajevo in a period of time of about one year, from February 2016 to March 2017.

Chapter 4 deals with the current politico-institutional systems of Macedonia and BiH and it explains the ethno-political reality by focusing the attention on four main elements: institutionalized ethnicity, political pluralism, ethnocentrism and nationalism as dominant narratives and economic condition of the states and mechanisms of allocation of resources among the groups. It analyses the role played by these macro-factors in tailoring, shaping and influencing meanings and usages of ethnonational backgrounds, preparing the ground for the subsequent inter-generational analysis. The arguments treated in the chapter are enriched with interviews' extract.

Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 deal with, respectively, the Macedonian and Bosnian families composed by two differently socialized generations.

The unit of analysis consisted in a generation of 'Yugoslav parents', born between 1952 and 1965, entirely socialized during Yugoslavia and possibly re-socialized in the 1990s with its fall; and their 'post-Yugoslav' children, born between 1985 and 1990, which have perhaps exposed to a double socialization: one coming from the outside, more ethnonational(ist) prone, and one from inside - from their parents possibly aligned with the dissolved system.

The reflections and discussions presented in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 seek to explore not only the social impact of political-institutional changes entailing ethnonationality,

but also possible inter-generational dis-continuities about ethnonationality's meanings and functions.

Therefore, the aim is to try to answer two main questions<sup>63</sup>, and corroborate the following main hypothesis:

- 1) How do members of two different generations living in the same family, but socialized in different macro-environment, interact with and within their plural societies? In what extent macro-factors and events have shaped people's/generations' ways of interaction with-in their plural realities?

I hypothesize four possible ideal-typical pattern of behaviour: a) utilitarian; b) contextual; c) ideological and d) no use of ethnonational belonging.

- 2) What kind of ideas, meanings, rules and possible usages of ethnonationality have been transmitted by the Yugoslav generation to their offspring?

I hypothesize four main ideal-typical family scenarios: a) Linear interruption, where parents and children are respectively aligned with the system they have been socialized into; b) Reverted Interruption, where parents are now aligned with the new system while their children are not; c) Adjustment, where both generations are aligned with the new system and, finally, d) Reverted Adjustment, where both generations have remained aligned with the previous system, preserving/trying to preserve as much as possible generational continuity.

A final and broader comparison of the two case studies will follow in Chapter 7, while conclusive reflections over the topic studied in this three-years research will be presented in the Conclusion.

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<sup>63</sup> For a more detailed explanation of the research's questions and hypothesis driving this work, as well as its aims and relevance, please see the 'Introduction';

## CHAPTER 4

### *DIVIDE ET IMPERA.*

#### UNDERSTANDING ETHNOPOLITICS AND ITS LEGITIMACY IN TODAY'S MACEDONIA AND BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA.

*'To defeat nationalism, one has to manipulate contexts  
(from the political agenda to the political alternative) rather than people.  
Many of the region's nationalists [...] can recognize  
a good political choice when offered'* (Bunce 2004: 75)

Following the SFRY collapse, ethnonationality became a political weapon, used and misused by different actors, as well as *the* pillar of the multinational states of Bosnia Herzegovina and Macedonia.

The republics' transition was characterized by the emergence of mechanisms of re-ethnicization of citizenship (Spaskovska 2010/11), ethnic engineering (Štiks 2010), politicization and exploitation of feelings of ethnonational belonging. Therefore, on the one hand loyalties, identifications and solidarity between the groups were reshaped accordingly; while, on the other hand, nationalism also assumed different forms (Brubaker 1996: 4-5). Since the kind of nation imagined by nationalist not always correspond to the bounded territoriality of the state, there emerged 'nationalizing' nationalism endorsed by 'core nations' claiming to be the legitimate owners of the state – as showcased by Macedonia in 1991 and its 'constitutional nationalism' (Hayden 1992); there also was the nationalism of 'external national homelands' willing to protect their ethnic-kin in other states – as the one endorsed by Serbia and Croatia; and also emerged the nationalism of national minorities, identifying and perceiving themselves as national, rather than ethnic, groups – as the one showcased by the ethnic Albanian population in Macedonia.

As Mungiu-Pippidi (2004: 71) brilliantly affirmed in *Nationalism after Communism*:

Due to its positive association with political fatalism and distrust in politics, nationalism emerges [...] as *substitute ideology, a form of distinctive political*

*identity*. Frustration and helplessness over the difficult transition, basic distrust in the outside world, lack of proper political information, and the habit of having one's political thinking done by others all combine with residual collectivism.

Therefore, particularly in newly born ethnically plural states, such as BiH and Macedonia, different nationalisms and ethnocentrisms clashed with each other, however coexisting under the same roof and within a new ideological and institutional framework.

Recalling the reflections about the 'ethnopolitical drift' presented in Chapter 1, and in view of the inter-generational analysis, the following pages aim to reconstruct the macro environment in which people currently live in. These pages explore the Bosnian and Macedonian ethnopolitical systems and look at how four macro-factors – namely, institutional state asset, dominant ideology, multiparty system and state's economic conditions – can possibly tailor meanings and usages of ethnonational origins and belongings.

After a brief introduction about how the ethnopolitical system works, the following sections will separately deal with the four mentioned macro-elements, describing both the Bosnian and Macedonian realities, ultimately reflecting on the role exerted by the political elites of both countries in the ethnocratic loop. The arguments here presented are sustained and enriched by interviews performed in Sarajevo and Skopje, from February 2016 to March 2017, with experts and academics, members of the civil society as well as of international organization and, when possible, politicians.

#### **4.1 Where does Ethnopolitics come from?**

Today's Bosnia Herzegovina and Macedonia are sovereign, independent states whose institutions are tailored according to the consociational model of democracy<sup>64</sup>,

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<sup>64</sup> See Chapter 1. Moreover, for additional information on the BiH's consociationalism and power-sharing, see: Bieber F., 2005. 'Power-sharing after Yugoslavia: functionality and dysfunctionality of power-sharing institutions in post-war Bosnia, Macedonia and Kosovo' in Noel S. (ed), *From power-sharing to democracy. Post-conflict institutions in ethnically divided societies*, pp. 85-103. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press; Bieber, Keil 2009. 'Power-Sharing Revisited: Lessons learned in the Balkans?' *Review of Central and East European Law*, 34, 337-360

however both featured by ethnopolitics – that is the overlap between ethno-cultural and political cleavages (Ramet 2006). Because of their particular features and functioning, both states have recently been ranked among the ‘hybrid regimes’ or ‘transitional democracies’<sup>65</sup>, where democratic mechanisms and institutions seem to beget, and to be exploited by, ethnic oligarchs that see ethnonationality’s political exploitation as the easiest and more profitable way to govern their plural republics.

The previous chapters tried to demonstrate and emphasize that, although some agree that ‘free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities’ (Mill 1958: 230), ethnic plurality represents a ‘problem’ only when ethnonational and cultural origins are politicized and treated as ‘primordially given’ (Przeworski 1995: 20). Therefore, ethnic politics in multiethnic societies, although a possible risk, is not a straightforward outcome<sup>66</sup>.

Institutional design and political engineering may consistently help ethnically plural societies in not becoming internally fragmented and made up by ethnic ‘sub-societies’ (Musliu 2006: 30), featured by their own political parties, media, interests and so on. Conversely, and particularly after-conflicts, certain institutional settings – as the consociational one - may be more easily exploitable due to the saliency conferred to ethnonationality, in turn developing disruptive and centrifugal tendencies (see Chapter 1), possibly and paradoxically making ethnopolitics a ‘democratic’ outcome. However, it’s not *only* matter of institutions’ shape.

The composition of the multiparty system, the political elite’s behaviour and interests, bad governance (see Morrow 2005; Zahar 2005), state’s economic conditions and the ideological umbrella within which socio-political dynamics take place, largely influence the outcome, making ethnonationality’s institutional protection either a tool to stifle ethnonationalism or its exact opposite.

Ethnic identities’ protection and institutional representation, and ethnic plurality more in general, may not represent a hindering problem or the causes of ethnopolitics; on the contrary, they become so when a set of mutually reinforcing circumstances are in place, making divisions more profitable than unity, and ethnonationalism a valid

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<sup>65</sup> Freedom House, 2017, *Nations in Transit Report*;

<sup>66</sup> Issues concerning the rise of nationalism and ethnocentrism in the post-Communist and Post-Yugoslav space in detail analysed in: Mungiu-Pippidi, Krastev (eds.) 2004, *Nationalism after Communism. Lessons learned*. Budapest and New York: Central European University

political option. As showcased by the SFRY and its federal units until the 1980s, ethnonational identities' institutional recognition and protection were at the center of a state ideology committed in assuring equality and unity between the groups so to guarantee the well functioning of the state and its stability. In the post-Yugoslav era, and especially in post-war scenarios, recognition and protection of ethnonational identities have been put at the center of ethnically fragmented state ideologies each one committed in safeguarding its own group so to guarantee, if not the well functioning of the state, at least its administrative integrity – which doesn't imply unity between the groups.

Particularly after conflicts, political actors representing the major societal segments may see more advantaging to build their support upon ethnicity, exploiting the grey spaces of the consociative institutional structure and changed ideological framework, to gain and maintain power by means of the ethnic divide - rather than by depoliticizing ethnicity and building 'multiple but complementary identities' (Stepan, Linz and Yadav 2001). Indeed, 'grand coalitions are particularly problematic when each group is represented by only one dominant party, resulting in limited variations for coalitions (Bieber 2004: 238). However, in order for ethnopolitics to come into being, political cleavages overlapping the social ones have to be wisely nurtured – hence, ethnonational parties have to acquire legitimacy by appealing people and making the multiethnic and civic alternatives worthless to be voted and supported.

Similarly to the SFRY in 1990, ethnonational leaders may use different strategies to appeal and govern their own 'ethnicized masses', discouraging shared feelings of attachment and identification with the larger state while fostering the ones with one's own ethnonational collectivity. Mechanisms of 'centrifugal ideologization' (Malešević 2010; 2013) aimed to provide people with good enough reasons to support their ethnonational representatives may take different forms, and among these stand the use of media, school system and religious institutions as powerful means to spread certain ideas in, and about, the larger society.

Finally, as happened to Yugoslavia and its federal units, the economic conditions of the state and the mechanisms of redistribution of resources among the groups, might also have a dividing potential. Yet, given the difficult economic transition both BiH and Macedonia experienced after the SFRY's collapse – and that are still experiencing -, another strategy widely used by ethnic political parties to gain popular support is to rely on people's basic needs and exploit them accordingly. Roughly

speaking, this means to manipulate consociational principles and economic insecurities to develop informal networks of ethnic clientelism, offering the ethnic masses the illusion of some sort of economic stability at the condition of absolute loyalty to the party – and, in turn, to the ethnonational group.

Ethnonationality, for both the two sides involved, functions as a filter and proxy to achieve benefits, becoming a tool to satisfy different but fundamental needs: power and survival. At the same time, ethnonational groups - besides being ideological targets - also become groups of interest, while, the political parties - retaining their ideologically shaped protective function – become also distributors of recourses. This phenomenon, pertaining to what the Sarajevo's professor Mujkić (2016) defined as 'ethno-capitalism', does also corroborate Wimmer's (2004) argument about state functioning and negotiations between social and political groups: as the scholar said, compromises entailing 'an exchange of the guarantee of political loyalty for the promise of participation and security' (Wimmer 2004: 32) allow the state to function by re-organizing the modalities of inclusion-exclusion.

Given these general premises, in the light of the theories and historical analysis exposed in the previous chapters - and in view of the inter-generational analysis, the role played by four inter-dependent macro-conditions in generating and sustaining ethnopolitics has to be considered.

These conditions are: 1) institutionalized ethnicity via consociationalism; 2) (ethnic) political pluralism; 3) ethnonationalism and ethnocentrism as dominant narratives; and 4) precarious economic conditions of the state and modalities of resources' allocation.

Taken alone, these elements do not generate ethnopolitics nor necessarily crystallize group identities; nevertheless, under specific circumstances, a combination of them may produce not only the conditions for ethnopolitics' emergence, but also a vicious circle from which it's almost impossible to get out.

Stressing the relational nature of any social and political dynamic, besides the four mentioned macro-conditions there is another crucial factor in the loop: people.

People are both those governing the country - hence the political elite (whose role is analysed in this chapter), and those choosing and giving power to the former – hence, the masses (whose role is analysed in the empirical chapters). As we shall see, in particular macro settings, their combined roles may legitimize and maintain in place ethnopolitics hypothetically forever.



## 4.2 a) On institutionalized Ethnicity via Consociationalism

According to the model theorized by Lijphart (1977), consociations are based on four elements: a grand coalition formed by political leaders representing all the significant society's segments; proportional representation of the society's segments; veto rights and a high degree of groups autonomy, usually reflected in a decentralized state system and/or federalism. In the following sections, the focus is put on a controversial outcome of these principles' implementation: institutionalized ethnicity. If on the one side institutionalized ethnicity guarantees all the societal segments to be represented and not to be overruled by others, allowing them to be part of the state, on the other one, it may serve on a silver plate political parties with a legitimizing base for ethnopolitics.

Territorialized ethnicity, namely 'territorial devolution based on ethnicity' (Bieber 2004: 231), also represents a fertile ground for ethnopolitics and ethnocentrism; however, after the 1990s' wars, it has been implemented only in the Bosnian case, while in Macedonia (and Kosovo as well) it was avoided; hence, it will be only partially considered.

### 4.2.1 Macedonia and the *de facto* bi-national state

The Ohrid Framework Agreement envisioned institutional changes going in the direction of consociationalism, and among the key provisions stood the societal segments' representation<sup>67</sup> in all the state's bodies and institutions. The aim was to counterbalance the disproportional presence, or even marginalisation and exclusions, of minority groups in the Macedonian state's institutions. However, the principle's implementation didn't provide enough mechanisms<sup>68</sup> of smaller groups' rights'

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<sup>67</sup> See: VV.AA. 2016. *Life and Numbers. Equitable ethnic representation and Integration at the workplace*. Skopje: European Policy Institute (EPI); Shasivari J. 2013. 'The past and the present of the constitutional system of the Republic of Macedonia in terms of the position of Albanians' *European Scientific Journal*, 9:17, pp. 190-206;

<sup>68</sup> The OFA gave to the Ombudsperson the competencies for monitoring the implementation of the principle of equal representation and, additionally, established a Secretariat for Implementation of the Framework Agreement and a Committee for Inter-Community Relation (See: Velickovska G., 2013. *Implementation of the principle of adequate*

protection, and it addressed primarily the ethnic Albanian community, contributing to the *de-facto* bi-nationalization of the country (Bieber 2005) - yet not officially equalising the status of the ethnic Albanians to the one of the ethnic Macedonians.

Ethnic quotas are fine, but they function only through party membership (Executive Director of Eurothink - Centre for European Strategies, Skopje, June 2016)

Equitable representation wasn't a tool to give salaries, but a tool to bring the Albanians closer to the institutions... (President of Association for Democratic Initiative -ADI, Skopje, May 2016)

Highlighting the interconnection between different elements in generating ethnopolitics, it's fair to say that what is harmful is not institutionalized ethnicity *per se*, but how it is implemented and used by the ruling elite. Accordingly, as the above quotations show, institutionalized ethnicity becomes dangerous when misused for purposes different than representation and cooperation, as well as when not coupled with a political culture fostering shared values and interests aimed to work for the good of the country – and not only for portions of it.

#### **4.2.2 Bosnia Herzegovina: no Representation without Ethnic Identification**

The Bosnian situation is probably more complicated than the Macedonian one, and not only because of its recent past but, especially, because of its own domestic constitution (DPA, Annex IV).

Being a state without an ethnic majority, Bosnia's 1995 constitution stated that '*Bosniacs, Croats, and Serbs, [are] constituent peoples (along with Others)*'<sup>69</sup>. As seen, this wasn't a novelty for BiH, given that since 1974 the three ethnic groups

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*representation: perceptions of citizens. Report.* Association Community Development Institute - CDI Association of the Units of Local Self-Government of the Republic of Macedonia – ZELS;

<sup>69</sup> Dayton Peace Agreement, Annex IV, Preamble

[http://www.ohr.int/?post\\_type=post&p=63984&lang=en](http://www.ohr.int/?post_type=post&p=63984&lang=en) Accessed 16 July 2016

enjoyed the status of *narod*<sup>70</sup>, meaning constituent nations of Bosnia Herzegovina (Bringa 1993). However, in the new geopolitical scenario - out of the multinational federation and where ethnonational belonging is politicized, manipulated and not counterbalanced by any other supra-ethnic feelings of attachment -, the constitutional emphasis on ethnic belonging (rather than citizenship) constitutes a major deficiency. Precondition for the well-functioning of any plural society is the presence of crosscutting or overlapping memberships (Lijphart 1977); however the Bosnian reality represents a particular case in which its *demos* is not unified and reflected in the Bosnian Herzegovinian citizens but split along ethnic lines. The ‘Bosnian Herzegovinians’ do not constitute a nation and those who identify themselves as such are formally considered ‘Others’ – *Ostali* in BCS<sup>71</sup> language.

Thus, the recognition of the three constituent people – alongside ‘Others’ – coupled with the absence of a non-ethnic nationality and mechanisms promoting its birth, has practically meant that all those who don’t declare/don’t belong to any of the three constitutionally recognized ethnic nations are officially not represented. Indeed, in all the state institutions, but the Constitutional Court, political candidates are elected according to both ethnic and territorial principles, and Bosnia’s law requires them to declare their ethnicity.

In 1995, the republic inherited the rotation presidency mechanism already set up by the Yugoslav authorities in 1974, and replicated after the 1990 elections, thus guaranteeing representation of all the three main groups and no supremacy of anyone over the others. However, if until 1990 the Bosnian Presidency was made up by seven members, representing both the three major groups and the ‘Others’ (Kapidžić 2014), Dayton’s presidency became triple – composed by one Croat and one Bošnjak member elected in the FBiH, and one Serb member elected in the RS. ‘Others’ are excluded from both the state’s Presidency and the House of Peoples – one of the two Parliament’s chambers. The Bosnian state is, indeed, provided with a Parliamentary Assembly composed by the House of Peoples and the House of Representatives; also in this case, representation and decision-making mechanisms are connected to both

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<sup>70</sup> As already specified in the previous chapter, initially the constituent nations of BiH were only Serbs and Croats while, from 1974, also Muslims enjoyed the same status, therefore making BiH the homeland of three constituent nations;

<sup>71</sup> Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian;

ethnonational belonging and territorialized ethnicity<sup>72</sup>. Finally the Constitutional Court<sup>73</sup>, composed by domestic and international members, is the only institution for which an ethnic composition is not prescribed.

The ‘Bosnian Herzegovinians’, thus, have constitutionally and consequently politically and institutionally, a considerable lower status and importance compared to the three ethnic nations’ members - since there is no representation without ethnonational identification.

The status assumed by ethnonational belonging is further stressed not only by the Bosnian ethnofederalism (see Bunce 2004), but also by its close tie with the citizenship policies adopted by the DPA: it guaranteed an Entity citizenship next to the state one, making Bosnia ‘the only post-Yugoslav state whose national citizenship is two-tiered’ (*Džankić* 2015: 73).

Institutions’ shape and mechanisms of equal representation of the main ethnonational groups, although aimed to assure groups equality and share of power are, at the same time, insufficient in driving the system towards a stable political system not dominated by ethnonational collective identities. Moreover, ‘this degree of representation did not [...] provide sufficient safeguards for the protection of non dominant groups’ (Bieber 2004: 241), eventually contributing to promote a fragmented understating of the larger state and its citizenry.

It’s worth to emphasis again that during the SFRY and under the ideological umbrella of Socialism, institutionalized ethnicity reflected in the implementation of the so-called ‘national key’ (see Pearson 2014), made possible the functioning of a multinational federation for more than four decades – even in presence of

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<sup>72</sup> The House of People comprises 15 members (5 Serbs, 5 Croats, 5 Bosniacs) proportionally elected in the two Entities (two-thirds in FBiH plus one-third in RS); decisions are taken with a quorum of 9 members, 3 for each community. The House of Representatives instead comprises 42 members directly and proportionally elected in the two Entities (two-thirds in FBiH plus one-third in RS) and decisions are approved with one-third of the representatives from both the entities; in this case, representatives’ abstention function as a veto, thus causing deadlocks and slowing down the procedures.

<sup>73</sup> The Constitutional Court is a key institution composed by nine members: four appointed by the House of Representatives of the Federation, two by the RS National Assembly, and three appointed by the President of the European Court of Human Rights. There are no ‘ethnic’ conditions about its members’ composition and the Court has proved to be highly functional;

territorialized ethnicity - thanks to its positive emphasis on equality despite differences. On the contrary, under the ideological umbrella of ethnocentrism and nationalism, institutionalized ethnicity and groups' proportional representation acquired a negative connotation, due to the emphasis put on differences despite formal equality.

To conclude, it is fair to say that institutionalized ethnicity does not represent a problem when the system and its ruling elite are committed in promoting and highlighting groups' *equality despite the differences*; it does so, on the contrary, when the system and its ruling elite are promoting and highlighting groups' *differences despite equality* – as it happened to be the case of post-Yugoslav BiH and Macedonia. Therefore, although the DPA and the OFA officially (re)introduced mechanisms and provisions already known to the peoples of Yugoslavia, in the context of ethnocentrism and nationalism, and in the overall absence of mechanisms promoting shared values and the importance of unity despite differences, institutionalized ethnicity has only increased the chances for its own exploitation.

#### **4.3 b) On (Ethnic) political pluralism**

The institutional state's asset, although only one among other variables playing a role in the ethnopolitical loop, it is however the one that can - especially in post-conflict societies - potentially incentivise political parties to build their image along ethnic, rather than civic, lines. Political parties, as a consequence, play a key role: they are the main actors 'vested with the task of legitimating the new regime among the population' (Kacarska, 2008: 54), they are 'the most important mediating institutions between the citizenry and the State' (Lipset 1994: 14). Parties, through popular consensus, structure the government and the state's institutions, hence their performance is a condition for both legitimacy and well functioning of the state as a whole.

In the contexts of institutionalized ethnicity, however, it often happens that - even if possessing the tools to depoliticize and deinstitutionalize ethnicity - political parties may not want to do so, finding more advantaging its exploitation. Accordingly, as Reilly (2004: 4) argued, 'to play the "ethnic card" and campaign along narrow sectarian lines, [...] is often a more effective means of mobilising voter support than campaigning on the basis of issues or ideologies'.

Since the introduction of pluralism in 1990<sup>74</sup> - when the new established political elites was ‘much more likely to be composed of aspirant professional politicians, who intend[ed] to live from and not just for politics’ (Kacarska 2008: 56), most of the political parties composing the political landscapes of both BiH and Macedonia were structured along ethnic lines. Since then, the two republics’ political arenas have not gone through substantial changes and, although multiethnic and non-national parties do exist as well, they have a minor appeal and popular support.

If we look at the current Bosnian and Macedonian political spectrums, we can see they share some general features that can help us to better understand both states’ socio-political scenarios, as well as those ideas about the nations circulating in the society.

- There is no clear-cut distinction between right and left wing parties and their placement in the political spectrum is rather blurred and difficult to identify;
- Ideology is overall loosing its importance: on the one side parties appeal their ethnic masses avoiding cross-ethnic consent while, on the other one, they are also becoming more ‘business oriented’;
- Ethnocentric and nationalist narratives and rhetoric are widely employed;
- Political dialogue between parties is oftentimes articulated in antagonist terms, and two major dichotomies employed are 1) the ‘us and them’, which refers to the inter-group dynamics, and 2) ‘loyal and traitors’, which refers to the same group’s members and concerns the intra-group dynamics;
- Political parties retain their charismatic character, focusing on their leaders’ visibility and popularity (Stojarová, Emerson 2010); political leadership, also, often assumes authoritarian tendencies;
- Ruling parties present themselves, and are collectively seen, as *the* state – therefore there is both an unclear separation between ruling parties and the state more in general (Markovikj, Damjanovski 2015), and a general absence of rule of law;

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<sup>74</sup> See: Casal Bértoa F., 2012. ‘Parties, regime and cleavages: explaining party system institutionalization in East Central Europe. *East European Politics*, 28:4, pp. 452-472; Casal Bértoa F. 2014. ‘Party system and cleavages structure revisited: a sociological explanation of part system institutionalization in East Central Europe’. *Party Politics*, 20:1, pp. 16-36;

- There is a lack of intra-party democracy (Stojarová, Emerson 2010) and ethnonational parties largely cooperate against the multiethnic ones, which remain rather weak;
- When needed, informal and ‘necessity networks of loyal party members [are created] by using clientelistic/patronage modalities of recruitment’ (Markovikj, Damjanovski 2015: 19);

Although we may see and explain some of these features as inherited from the Yugoslav system, it’s however fair to say that, before the 1990s, BiH and Macedonia did not experienced neither democracy and multiparty system, nor they have ever been independent states. Moreover, in both republics’ case, the transition happened in a difficult and polarized context featured by widespread ethnonationalism, so that the composition of the newly introduced multiparty system reflected the surrounding environment.

Since then, although the different communities’ representatives have been ruling together in grand coalitions, monoethnic parties have been separately taking care of their communities, focalizing attentions and efforts on their respective ethnonational groups rather than on the whole citizenry.

#### **4.3.1 Macedonia’s Bi-National Political Pluralism<sup>75</sup>**

After the independence and with the introduction of the multiparty system, also Macedonia saw a politicization of ethnicity - become the main defining characteristic of almost all the political parties on offer. Ethnocentrism and populism became widespread all across the ethnic and political spectrum, affirming themselves as the main ways to mobilize masses.

On the ethnic Macedonian side, SDSM<sup>76</sup> and VMRO-DPMNE dominate the political scene since the 1990s: SDSM was the successor of the League of Communist of

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<sup>75</sup> See: Casal Bértoa F, Taleski D. 2016. ‘Regulating party politics in the Western Balkans: the legal sources of party system development in Macedonia’. *Democratization*, 23:3, pp. 545-567; Sadiku A., Ichevska K., Blazeva A., *Abandoning ethnicity-centred discourse in the government political rhetoric and in institutional policy making*. Skopje: Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities;

Macedonia (LCM) and led the country from 1992 to 1998 (in coalition together with the ethnic Albanian DPA<sup>77</sup>), after the conflict from 2002 to 2006 (in coalition together with the ethnic Albanian DUI<sup>78</sup>) and it's currently on power again together with DUI (2017-).

VMRO-DPMNE, instead, initially under its first leader Ljupčo Georgievski, was strongly anti-communist, nationalist, right-wing, anti-Albanian and opposed to form a coalition government with ethnic Albanian parties; however, it changed its attitude in 1998, when it entered a coalition with the Albanian DPA. VMRO-DPMNE was on power when the 2001 conflict happened and, after that, it lost the elections against SDSM – which, although initially stated ‘it would not enter a coalition with the DUI, which included former commanders and other members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK)’ (Siljanovska-Davkova 2013: 115), eventually it did, allying with DUI's leader Ali Ahmeti - former commander of the NLA.

After some changes internal to the party, Nikola Gruevski became the new VMRO-DPMNE's leader: he won the elections in 2006, 2008, 2011, 2014, becoming Macedonia's Prime Minister from 2006 to 2015. In 2015, due to a deep political crisis culminated with a wiretapping scandal<sup>79</sup>, Gruevski was forced to resign. In the last elections, held in December 2016, SDSM - ethnic Macedonian party in opposition for the last decade - tried to defeat its antagonist by opening also to the ethnic Albanian community. However, scepticism on this ‘opening’ remains:

SDSM is not openly nationalist and it's starting to include some Albanians in the party – which is good. However, this multiethnic turn is only partly sincere, it may be a political strategy (Levica's founder, Skopje, July 2016).

On this purpose, it's worth to say that the political narrative of SDSM (on power with the ethnic Albanian DUI since May 2017) is considerably different compared to the one endorsed by VMRO-DPMNE. SDSM is trying to open also to the other communities living in Macedonia, especially the ethnic Albanians and, contrary to its counterpart VMRO, it's prone to compromise with them in some ‘delicate topics’ –

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<sup>76</sup> *Socijaldemokratski sojuz na Makedonija* – Socialdemocratic Party of Macedonia;

<sup>77</sup> *Partia Demokratike Shqiptare* - Democratic Party of Albanian;

<sup>78</sup> *Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim* - Democratic Union for Integration;

<sup>79</sup> See Introduction;



among which stands the official status of the Albanian language. Issues concerning the Albanian language have always been matter of bitter debate between the two major groups, and VMRO-DPMEN has always been concerned to protect and safeguard the integrity of the ethnic Macedonian nation and, consequently, also the one of its 'ethnic nation-state'. Curiously, indeed, although the President of the Republic, George Ivanov, has recently given the mandate to form a new government to SDSM's leader, Zoran Zaev, he initially refused because – as he stated - he couldn't entrust the mandate to a person or a political party 'who advocate or have in their political program a platform for destroying the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the Republic of Macedonia' (Petkovski and Marichikj 2017).

The platform in question was the so-called 'Tirana Platform'<sup>80</sup>, which articulated a set of demands of the Albanian community - considered non-negotiable in the future government - and, among those, a 'better legal arrangements for the use of the Albanian language in the state' (*ibid*). Therefore, from a VMRO-DPMNE perspective, SDSM leaders and members are compromising the Macedonian national identity and state – reason why they are often labelled as 'traitors'.

For what concerns the ethnic Albanian side, with the creation of DUI in 2002, followers and supporters of other ethnic Albanian parties declined consistently. DUI has become the most influential and supported party among the Albanians and, since its creation, it has *always* been on power – first in a coalition with SDSM (2002-2006), then with VMRO-DPMNE (2006-2016), and currently again with SDSM (2017- ). Next to DUI, DPA remains 'the closest to the definition of a nationalist Albanian catch-all party' (Šedo 2010: 177).

In the last elections (December 2016) two new political parties were formed and attracted the attention: Levica<sup>81</sup>, a young party self-declared '*anti-nationalist and anti-ethnic divisions, struggling for social justice and democratisation*' (Levica's founder, Skopje, July 2016), yet still largely supported by ethnic Macedonians. And the ethnic Albanian party Lëvizja Besa<sup>82</sup>, considered by one of its founders as a

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<sup>80</sup> The 'Tirana Platform' was adopted in January 2017 by the ethnic Albanian parties in Macedonia and whose adoption was facilitated by the Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama;

<sup>81</sup> In English 'Left', constituted in the beginning of 2016 in Skopje;

<sup>82</sup> In English 'Movement Besa', founded in 2014 in Skopje and proposing itself as an alternative to DUI and DPA;

*‘vanguard in Europe since ideologically speaking right wing for what concerns family and religious issues, liberal for what concerns the role of the state and left wing when it comes to social services and welfare* (Besa’s founder and General Secretary, Skopje, July 2017). Besa, contrary to Levica, doesn’t aim to attract supporters from other ethnic communities than the Albanians.

For what concerns the presence of other political parties, the political scenario is featured by some smaller/weaker ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian parties, as well as parties representing minor communities such as the Roma, Turks, Serbs and Bošnjaks.

### **4.3.2 Bosnia’s Three sides**

In terms of ethnic polarization, the Bosnian political spectrum is very similar to the Macedonian one, and ‘parties aligned themselves *against* those which are similar and *with* those which are not’ (Stojarová 2010: 14).

Since the first post-war elections held in 1996, and in spite of brief interruptions, nationalist political parties have remained the most supported and preferred, ‘even when non-nationalist were on offer’ (Bieber 2014: 549).

As Kapidžić (2016: 129) explained, the Bosnian party system ‘is structured into multiple ethnically defined subsystems. We can identify a Croat, Serb, Bosniak, and non-ethnic subsystem whereby the latter two overlap to some degree. [...] Independent of any policy issues, all electoral competition is intra-ethnic with virtually no contest for votes across ethnic cleavages’. Next to the three ‘traditional’ national parties (SDA; SDS, HDZ)<sup>83</sup>, in the years following the war new parties emerged, but they mainly followed the footsteps of their predecessors and ‘each of the three groups tended to split into two leading parties, just as they have in Macedonia’ (Stojarová 2010: 13).

SDA was and remains the leading party among the Bošnjaks and ‘its image is meant to be that of a bošnjak catch-all party’ (Šedo 2010: 92); Bošnjak voters also support SBB<sup>84</sup>, centre-right bošnjak party and, as we shall see, also SDP<sup>85</sup>, successor of the League of Communist.

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<sup>83</sup> See Chapter 3;

<sup>84</sup> *Savez za bolju budućnost BiH* – Union for a Better Future BiH;

HDZ BiH remains the largest and most supported (Croat) party among the Bosnian Croats – together with HDZ-1990, founded in 2006.

SDS, the party founded by Radovan Karadžić in 1990 and until a decade ago the strongest Bosnian Serb party, it's then been obscured by SNSD<sup>86</sup> - dominating the RS since the 2006 elections. Initially, SNSD was a moderate party, among those 'who accepted the DPA and cooperation with the international community' (Šedo 2010: 93); later, instead, both the party and its leader Milorad Dodik<sup>87</sup> became strongly nationalist.

A similar fate characterized SDP, the official successor of the Communist Party. Until recently, SDP was the most relevant post-communist and multiethnic party in BiH and it played an important role in counteracting nationalism<sup>88</sup>. However, as a former SDP's MP<sup>89</sup> stated during our interview, due to recent changes in the political line followed, SDP has progressively conformed to the ethnonationalist environment, narrowing its target into the sole bošnjak, rather than Bosnian, population. The former MP indeed highlighted the similar political evolution of SDP and Dodik's SNSD (although SNSD has never been multiethnic): initially both liberal and moderated while then, after having understood what pays and what doesn't, turned into ethnonationalist.

Beside those main parties, the non-nationalist and multiethnic ones do exist as well: among these, we can mention *Demokratska Fronta*<sup>90</sup> and the young Sarajevo-based *Naša Stranka*<sup>91</sup>. Unfortunately, however, in an ethnically polarized environment, multiethnic parties are often seen and considered weak, worthless to vote – and so

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<sup>85</sup> *Socijaldemokratska Partija BiH* – Social Democratic Party of BiH;

<sup>86</sup> *Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata* - Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, formerly *Stranka nezavisnih socijaldemokrata* - Party of Independent Social Democrats;

<sup>87</sup> Milorad Dodik has been Prime Minister of Republika Srpska from 1998 to 2001 and from 2006 to 2010; since 2010, he is President of Republika Srpska;

<sup>88</sup> In 2000 SDP won the elections and its chairman Zlatko *Lagumdžija* became Prime Minister; in 2006, *Željko Komšić* was elected as Croat member of the Bosnian Presidency (see Stojarová, Emerson 2010);

<sup>89</sup> Interview performed in Sarajevo, March 2017;

<sup>90</sup> In English 'Democratic Front'. It was founded in 2012 by *Željko Komšić* - former SDP member and former Croat member (from 2006 to 2014); of the Bosnian Triple Presidency;

<sup>91</sup> In English: 'Our Party';

they remain; and although they're trying, they're still struggling to get a cross-ethnic (and cross-Entity) support. As parties' member explained during our interview:

We are great at local level and every year we get better [...] but Naša Stranka's voters are mainly young people, middle-class and well educated citizens of Sarajevo (Naša Stranka's Secretariat and party member, Sarajevo, March 2017)

*We are trying to reach people from Bijeljina, Doboj, Banja Luka...but it's too difficult. The main problem is the constitution because, even if you target any individual, then you've to declare your own ethnicity, you have to be something* (Demokratska Fronta, party member, Sarajevo, September 2017)

Despite the presence of many parties in the political scenario, in both BiH and Macedonia, competition is generally structured along ethnonational lines and politicization of ethnicity and ethnicization of politics remain unquestioned. The salience acquired by ethnicity - first with the ideological changes in the 1980s-90s and then with its institutionalization in the context of democracy – induced and induces political parties to build their support upon it, thus making the multiethnic alternatives worthless political options.

Ethnocentrism, nationalism and populism remain winning cards – and they are particularly so in time of electoral campaign, when political speeches oftentimes assume harsh and ethnically connoted tones<sup>92</sup>.

#### **4.4 c) On Ethnocentrism and Nationalism as Dominant Narratives**

Political parties with an ethnonational connotation, in order to become the ruling parties and make their ethnocentric/ethno-nationalist claims plausible and supported, need to gain popular trust and legitimacy. To do so, many are the available strategies but, among the most powerful employed, stand the use of media and the school system – which reflect, and spread, the values circulating in the society and the views

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<sup>92</sup> For the Bosnian case see: Mujkić, Husley 2010. 'Explaining the success of nationalist parties in Bosnia Herzegovina', *Politička Misao*, 47:2, pp. 143-158. For the Macedonian case see: V.V.A.A. 2015. *Analysis of the situation with hate speeches in the republic of Macedonia*. Skopje: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia;

the government wants to diffuse. Additionally, religion and its institutions, particularly in BiH but to some extents also in Macedonia, have played and still play a critical role next to/together with ethnonational political parties in shaping meaning and functions of one's own ethnonational belonging.

The following sections point the attention on some main strategies of 'centrifugal ideologization' (Malešević 2010; 2013) used in the Bosnian and Macedonian societies, showing how state-sponsored ethnic collectivism(s) may succeed in channelling individuals into the 'right box' while compromising the birth of cross-cutting cleavages and shared, supra-ethnonational, identities.

#### **4.4.1 Political Propaganda and Media<sup>93</sup>**

Many have considered Slobodan Milošević, Serbian nationalist leader during the 1990s, the first who officially introduced nationalism in the Yugoslav politics, extensively exploiting the media to spread and poison people's minds with a primordial understating of the nation (see Ivekovic 1999), eventually contributing to foment antagonism between the Yugoslav peoples.

Until the 1990s, the Yugoslav policy of 'Brotherhood and Unity' applied to all the social and political spheres, media included. Medias' owner was, at least formally, the society and, although the LCY was controlling thier work - particularly for what concerned 'ideological issues' (Rusi, Spasovska 2013: 237), media and journalism were considered highly professional.

Today, although in a different way, media remain controlled by political parties and, because of that, they are seen providing biased informations: in both BiH and Macedonia, the main public TV, radio stations and newspapers are tied to the ruling/major parties while, oftentimes, the private ones are owned either by political figures or individuals close to them.

The relation existing between politics and media is thus a very close one, impacting not only the quality of the information provided but also shaping the overarching

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<sup>93</sup> For a complete analysis of media's role during and after Yugoslavia, see: Kolstø P. (ed.), 2009. *Media discourse and Yugoslav conflicts. Representations of self and others*. Surrey: Ashgate

ideology and value system of the country, in turn negatively affecting inter-ethnic relations and feelings towards one's own, and the other, ethnonational groups.

#### ***4.4.1.1 Macedonia's Bipolar System***

In Macedonia media are divided along ethno-linguistic lines, given the different language spoken by the two major communities<sup>94</sup> - ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians. Although this was the case also during the SFRY, progressively has developed a polarized/parallel media system, not only broadcasting in the two languages but also providing the same news in opposed ways, especially when it comes to inter-ethnic relations. Often media give the impression of portraying a double reality in which populism and ethnocentrism foment the 'us and them' rhetoric, deepening the divide.

Despite the considerable amount of TV and radio channels, generally journalism lacks of professionalism (Rusi, Spasovska 2013: 245) and political pressures mirrored in censorship/self-censorship are documented phenomena – till the point that often journalists 'conform' to the rules set by above fearing to lose their jobs. 'As a result, the media are divided into two strong distinct camps, one pro-ruling parties and another pro-opposition parties [...] At the same time, journalists are separated into two groups – "patriots" and "traitors" of the country' (Šopar 2013: 231).

In the last few years, particularly since 2015, the Macedonian political crisis has reached its peak due to 'revelations indicating large-scale and illegal government wiretapping of journalists, corrupt ties between officials and media owners, and an increase in threats and attacks on media workers' (Freedom House 2017)<sup>95</sup>. As a journalist interviewed in Skopje pointed out:

We didn't have a perfect journalism even before, because most of the media were controlled by oligarchs. Before this authoritarian system [the ruling coalition VMRO-DPMNE and DUI], most of the media were protecting the interests of their own oligarchs, but there was a diversity of oligarchs so it was

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<sup>94</sup> Small channels broadcasting in other minorities' languages are also present and the private television Alsat-M provides programs in both Macedonian and Albanian languages;

<sup>95</sup> The report 'Media Freedom' issued by the Freedom House is available at the following link: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2016/macedonia>

more democratic than now – where instead the media are controlled just by one centre. So we went from oligarchy to a centralised system. We were competing, trying to practice real journalism, but then the system changed and many of my colleagues ... we were not really forced but we had to conform to the new system... being obedient journalists, especially when your job depends on them and you cannot get a job as free journalist [...] But the problem is that propaganda is very strong because most of the popular TV stations are [...] government controlled, not simply pro-government. [...] What they do is to construct this atmosphere of government being always right and the opposition being always wrong, the opposition being traitor to the government. So if they cannot convince people that the government is the best, they try to convince that they are all the same, so there is no point to change the politicians (*Nova Makedonija's* journalist, Skopje, March 2016)

In 2016, Macedonia has been ranked among the ‘non free’ countries by the Freedom House’s Report on Media Freedom<sup>96</sup>. Although the ruling coalition has recently changed, a substantial transformations/amelioration of the media sphere is not yet visible. Medias have, overall, become a major tool in the hands of oppositional and ethnonational parties, so that everything is subordinated to politics, ‘everything and everyone is living “from and for” politics, and that all values are defined by the dominance of actual politics. In this process, willingly or not, the media de facto are active players and the citizens are their most generous consumers’ (Šopar 2013: 226).

#### ***4.4.1.2 Bosnia’s Tripolar System***

In BiH the media situation is perhaps more complicated given the country had to go through different transitions and cope with both the (interrelated) heritages of Socialism and the war. The ‘decentralization without democratization’ of the 1970s entailed also the media, progressively dominated by the regional/local ones. It was only in late 1980s that independent media gradually emerged (Hasibović 2013) but the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats ones quickly fell under the nationalist influence of Belgrade and Zagreb respectively. Sarajevo’s *Oslobođenje*, the main newspaper, and RTV Sarajevo, remained multiethnic and with a ‘civic’ orientation,

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<sup>96</sup> See previous footnote;

giving the public informations as much as possible objective. However, three ethnically fragmented public spheres were already in place by 1990.

A former Sarajevo's *Oslobodjenje's* journalist, in the 1980s moved to Belgrade and soon fired because of her ethnicity, described the 'nationalist shift' in the following way:

Until the beginning of the 1980s, I was a political journalist in Sarajevo's *Oslobodjenje*, I was writing about politics and the party, there was no room for creativity. But I was dreaming to go to Belgrade because journalism there was symbol of excellence. [...] But then Serbian medias fell under Milošević's control and many journalists started to serve the party: they were inventing stories - as if the real life's tragedies were not enough. Medias in Serbia and Croatia played a shameful role, they disseminated hate [...]. Then, from military-journalism, they transited to transitional-journalism in the hands of the privates...who do not care about information but only about money and politics. Nowadays journalists are slaves, underpaid, fearing to lose their jobs, they do what they are told to do. (Former *Oslobodjenje's* journalist, December 2016)

Despite the undeniable and massive role media played in the 1992-95 war, the DPA didn't mention any provision in that field and media's administration fell under the Entities' competence, hampering cohesion and harmonization of both legislation and information. In the war aftermath the international community tried to create 'a public service broadcasting system that should replace an ethnically segregated, politically controlled, state broadcasting sector' (Hasibović 2013: 280) but their progressive disengagement in the sector left the Bosnian media under nationalist influences. As Mujkić and Husley (2010: 152) said:

Nationalist politic is characterised by references to events in the past where there was tension and violence between national groups, and by relating those past events to current politics. [...] Essentially, nationalist parties thrive on permanent government crisis, or at least the threat of crisis around election time, as the basis of their legitimacy. [...] Therefore, it is in the interest of nationalist politicians to continue to foster an environment of mistrust and animosity.

The Bosnian media system reflects the overall picture of the society, where *everything* is ethnically fragmented; however, it's fair to note that, according to the most recent



report ‘Freedom of Press’ (Freedom House 2016), BiH – contrary to Macedonia – has been ranked among the ‘partly free’<sup>97</sup> countries.

#### **4.4.2 Indoctrination via (Ethnically Divided) School Systems**

Another instrument crucial for the development of the nation and national consciousness, perhaps the most important, is massive education (Gellner 1983) – always standing at the core of state’s policies.

Back in the Yugoslav time, the educational system was a crucial tool to teach and put in practice the ‘Brotherhood and Unity’ principle: it provided education in minorities’ languages while, at the same time, included pupils in the same classes regardless their ethnic origins, teaching them how to write in both Latinic and Cyrillic and, particularly, stressing how differences were enriching the country and its peoples – rather than diminishing their value. However, with the spread of nationalism since late 1980s, education has probably become the most politicized field, a dangerous and dis-educative tool used for ethnonational indoctrination, re-building of national identities and deepening the divide between the groups, making it (almost) incommensurable.

##### ***4.4.2.1 Macedonia’s Pupils divided in Shifts and Buildings***

Issues related to the educational system, together with the right of being schooled in one’s own mother tongue, have always been matter of debate between the two major communities in Macedonia<sup>98</sup> and, until very recently, inter-ethnic tension have often focused on these two interconnected issues<sup>99</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup> <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2016/bosnia-and-herzegovina>

<sup>98</sup> See: OSCE 2010. *Age-Contact-Perceptions. How schools shape relations between ethnicities*;

<sup>99</sup> Briefly summarizing, when Milošević took power in late 1980s, he shut down the University of Priština opened in 1970, the sole university providing higher education in Albanian language. Macedonian authorities, then, initiated a ‘campaign of differentiation’ (Poulton 2000), also enacting a law (in 1985) concerning secondary school education which resulted in ‘the closure of classes with an insufficient intake of Albanian pupils, and compelling Albanians to attend mixed classes with the instruction in Macedonian (*ibidem*:

While respecting and guaranteeing collective rights and needs, primary and secondary education in Macedonia are largely segregated (Barbieri, Vrgova, Bliznakovski 2013), with pupils either going to different schools or in the same school but in different shifts or floors of the same building. However, the most dangerous education's aspect is perhaps related to the school curricula, which present different and not interconnected versions of the same history: history textbooks represent tools to spread ethnocentric viewpoints and the dominant ideology by re-thinking and re-narrating the past – hence giving historical legitimacy to modern ideas and ideologies. As Stefoska (2013: 260-61) noted, 'in the Republic of Macedonia, the goal of history as a school subject [...] focuses on the construction of the national identity (of Macedonians and Albanians) and teaching the next generation about the history of the nation and the nation-state. Therefore, a large portion of the textbooks' content serves the purpose of legitimizing these two modern phenomena'.

Language represents another critical point, a major gap in the Macedonian society: ethnic Macedonians usually do not learn/speak Albanian, while the vast majority of ethnic Albanians do know/speak Macedonian (mandatory and taught at school). Language is the main obstacle in bridging the two communities, creating communication problems even (perhaps especially) among the younger generations. As Najčevska (2000: 95) explained:

Learning the language of “the other” is perceived as an act of weakness, of surrendering to the “stronger” group and yielding to the imposition of its will and culture. The phenomenon of being forced to learn the other group's language can even be seen as a sort of weapon used to show who is “the boss” in a certain area. [...] Language is not perceived as a means of communication but rather in terms of differentiation and separation.

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129). In 1987, the Macedonian authorities also closed the Faculty of Pedagogy at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje, the sole faculty providing classes in Albanian and Turkish language as well. Then, when ethnic Albanians tried to open a University in Mala Recica, close to the city of Tetovo, violence erupted ending in the arrest of many 'dissidents'. Finally, some progresses have been reached with the signing of the OFA in 2011;

#### ***4.4.2.2 Bosnia's Segregated Education***

The Bosnian educational situation<sup>100</sup> is not much different from the Macedonian one – although more complicated given the war's experience and legacy. The DPA, by creating a loose federation and a widely decentralized state-system, allowed for the official establishment (and maintenance) of an ethnically divided educational system, deeply compromising the achievement of educative goals. The country has not a state-level Ministry of Education but thirteen of them - two at Entity level, ten at cantonal level, and one at district level in Brčko.

Divided education first emerged during the war when, starting with the school year 1992-93, history textbooks and teaching activities were divided into three variants according to the army in control of a given region (Torsti 2013); books for Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs were imported from Croatia and Serbia respectively while the Bosnian ones were a modified version of those previously used (Pašalić-Kreso 2008). Those books, as the ones of the first post-war generations, presented history in a very polarized way, marking the difference between 'us and them'. Starting from 1998, attempts in 'fixing' school books occurred, although initially the agreement to remove objectionable material ended in a 'blackening the text [...] accompanying it with a stamp that read: "the following passages contains material of which the truth has not been established, or that may be offensive or misleading; the material is currently under review"' (Torsti 2013: 215).

Nowadays, students' segregation remains 'endemic' (Perry 2013: 228): children go to different schools, and sometimes this means they have to reach other villages/cities where they can study 'with their own group'; curricula are divided by ethnicity, and are especially so the 'sensitive subjects' of history, geography, language and religion – eventually giving the new generations a deeply divided image of the state and its people. Only a few schools in the major urban centres, like Sarajevo, Tuzla or Zenica

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<sup>100</sup> For more information about the Bosnian education's situation, see: UNICEF 2009, *Divided Schools in Bosnia Herzegovina*; Magill, 2010. *Education and Fragility in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, UNESCO; VV.AA 2012. *Leaving the past behind. The perceptions of youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo: Nansen Dialogue Centre Sarajevo and Saferworld;

are still multiethnic. The project ‘Two schools under one roof’<sup>101</sup>, implemented by OSCE in the FBiH and meant as a temporary solution, is still in place (see Bogdani 2013; Hromadžić 2015; Tomelli 2015).

As the Sarajevo’s professor Pašalić-Kreso wrote (2002), ‘what could not be done in war continues to be attempted in peace by nationalist differentiation of education’.

However, not all the hopes are lost: the district of Brčko, not belonging to any of the two entities, represents the living example that integrated education is *still* possible. Children go to school together, in the same classes, learn both Cyrillic and Latinic, and use different textbooks in order to have a ‘more objective’ picture of the Bosnian reality. ‘Brčko demonstrates that the only obstacle to reform (education or otherwise) is the political will to make it happen’ (Perry 2013: 241).

Despite several attempts in bridging the communities, political parties’ reluctance and resistance has strongly persisted: the educational system remains under the influence of nationalist politics, serving the dominant political elite to maintain the society divided, perpetually forging ethnonational identities in opposition to each other and, finally, maintaining the status quo. ‘To date, efforts to reform education cannot be deemed a success as children from different ethnic backgrounds continue to attend school at different times in different classrooms to be taught a different version of history by different teachers, and fail to learn that they are all citizens of BiH’ (Pašalić-Kreso 2008: 360).

For the purposes of this work, it’s worth to highlight how, in both BiH and Macedonia, some NGOs (among which *Nansen Dialogue Center*) are implementing extra-curricula activities aimed to bridge the communities by involving not only pupils, but also their parents and teachers. However, as I have been told in Sarajevo and Skopje, these cohesive attempts are by no means facilitated by the government’s mediation<sup>102</sup>.

In both Bosnia and Macedonia, thus, school classes are the first place where kids

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<sup>101</sup> ‘According to the ‘Two schools under one roof’ project, Bošnjaks and Croats children living in the FBiH go to school in the same building, which however is divided into two parts, two schools. The two schools have different curricula, classrooms, playgrounds, and teachers who teach in their group’s language, using different textbooks;

<sup>102</sup> Interviews have been performed with the Directors of Nansen Dialogue Center Skopje (May 2016), Nansen Dialogue Center Mostar (September 2016) and Nansen Dialogue Center Sarajevo (February 2017);

learn how incommensurably different they are, till the point that it's better to keep them physically separated. In these encapsulated environments pupils are not helped in developing any sense of unity despite the differences while, instead, are more likely to develop intolerance and fear. The role of school education in forging antagonist ethnonational identities – rather than equal citizens, is thus undeniable, and so is politics' influence – which, thanks to the decentralized system grounded on ethnicity in which it operates, it can use the excuse of the democratic right of any children to be schooled in its own language, culture and so on, to maintain alive a divided society. Ultimately, institutionally legitimized and politically sustained segregated education has become (or remains) a tool to re-educate the masses, to inculcate the dominant ideology.

#### **4.4.3 The (Political) Role of Religion<sup>103</sup>**

In a plural context, religion is one of the elements likely to become an ethnic marker (see Chapter 1); religious institutions, instead, besides their spiritual role in guiding the believers, may also assume a political role next to the political parties, contributing to homogenize masses. In all the former Yugoslav republics, starting from late 1980s and the spread of nationalist ideas about the nation, religion acquired a new social, but especially political, relevance, contributing to strengthen the saliency of ethnonationality and crystallize groups' identities.

##### ***4.4.3.1 The Autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Islamic Community***

In Macedonia<sup>104</sup> religion played/plays a secondary role in shaping inter-ethnic relations and groups' identities, and groups' boundaries (as well as antagonism)

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<sup>103</sup> See also: Ramet, S.P. 2014. *Religion and politics in post-Socialist Central and Southeastern Europe. Challenges since 1989*. London: Palgrave; Velikonja, M. 2003. *Religious separation and political intolerance in Bosnia Herzegovina*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press

<sup>104</sup> See: Zdravkovski A, Morrison K., 2014. 'The Orthodox Churches of Macedonia and Montenegro: the quest for autocephaly' in Ramet, S.P. *Religion and politics in post-Socialist Central and Southeastern Europe. Challenges since 1989*. London: Palgrave

between the two major communities have always been shaped upon other elements – above all the language spoken. As Babuna (2000: 67) explained, ‘the Albanian language in particular gave Albanians the feeling of belonging to the same nation. [...] religion could not play a unifying role in the Albanian community, which was composed of three religions’.

Despite the general trend in the area, in the ethnic Albanian case the ties politics-religion and ethnicity-religion don’t seem to be pronounced, as the Skopje’s *hoxha* affirmed during our interview (Skopje, April 2016). Rather different is, instead, the role and the tie existing between the ethnic Macedonians and their religious institutions. As explained in Chapter 2, the establishment (in 1967) of the Autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church, separated from (however not recognized by) the one of Belgrade, greatly contributed to strengthen the Macedonian nation and national consciousness. In the 1990s, then, a closer tie between religious institutions and politics emerged, and the ethnic Macedonian party VMRO-DPMNE (more notably under its first leader Georgievski<sup>105</sup>) emphasized religion’s importance.

The first Macedonian constitution mentioned only the Orthodox Church, but that wasn’t because people were religious, it was matter of identity. [...] Then VMRO came to power in 1998, it always supported the church and they build the cross on Vodno. [...] Then in 2002 SDSM came to power, but the church was kinda ‘engaged’ with the previous party, but it’s clear...every new government wants to have the church’s sustain, so they also understood was better to have good relations with the church. But you know, even within the church, there are bishops welcoming VMRO, other SDSM, so this also contributed to this ‘engagement’ relation between the church and the state. Then, when Gruevski came to power, the first thing he did was to visit the archbishop, which was a very good sign, a positive sign of the re-established role of the church. It is a good relation, not too close, but not too distant (Member of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, Skopje, April 2016)

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<sup>105</sup> In 2002, the *Millennium Cross*, a 66-metres tall cross, was built on top of the mountain Vodno, in Skopje. It was meant to symbolize 2000 years of Christianity and it was founded by the Macedonian Orthodox church, the government and foreigner donations.

#### ***4.4.3.2 The three Bosnian Religious Communities***

Substantially different is, instead, the Bosnian case. The ties ethnicity-religion and politics-religion happened to be particularly close in BiH, where religion was the main characteristic distinguishing between the three major groups: Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats and Bošnjaks.

By 1990, three different, but equally powerful, ethnic and religious nationalisms invested BiH, and a new order was set in motion by ethnonational parties and ethnicized churches (Perica 2002). By spreading a new ideology grounded on people's ethno-religious origins, and using sophisticated means of fears and suspects diffusion (Sekulić T. 2002), their conjoined actions reshaped not only the political reality but also the social environment, influencing new modes of inter/intra-group interactions and ways of identification. Religion became a major ethnic marker (Conversi 1995; 1999) used to build boundaries between groups, and religious institutions, 'designed as instruments for the survival of ethnic communities' (Perica 2002: 215), gained a leading role next to the national political parties. The ethnic collectivization led to high levels of violence, both ethnic and religious based (see Carmichael 2006; Skrbiš 2005: 458) and eventually religion's meaning narrowed to ethnicity, so that 'ethnic and religious identities collapsed into each other' (Abazović 2014: 39).

All the experts and exponents of religious institutions interviewed in BiH, indeed, acknowledged how, not religion/religious plurality *per se*, but its politicization and ethnicization, contributed to polarize the society, crystallizing even more collective identities.

It's tradition here, in the Balkans, to misuse religion; I don't like it and I do not support priests and imams who use religious spaces for preaching politics (Orthodox representative in MVR, Sarajevo, September 2016)

It's not religion dividing people, it's the political environment. However, religious institutions are not doing enough in contrasting this establishment. [...] Religious leaders don't want to compromise their statuses and positions in the communities...they have their benefits, people support them (Expert in Catholic Church and religion, October 2016)

The religious revival was particularly pronounced in Bosnia because of the war. It was a war against civilians. They thought to be all brothers but then the National Army, that was supposed to protect them, was killing them, serving the interests of Milošević (Director of the Research Institute for the Islamic Tradition of the Bošnjaks, Sarajevo, October 2016)

Eventually, since the 1990s, and in both BiH and Macedonia, religion stopped to be a private affair becoming matter of public identity. Once politicized, it has contributed to strengthen and mark groups' boundaries (particularly in BiH), making any appeal to the nation a claim 'to change the world, to change the way people see themselves, to mobilize loyalties' (Brubaker 2004: 116).

#### **4.5 d) On The State's Economy and Resources' Allocation.**

##### **Where doesn't arrive Ideology, arrive the Money.**

Last but not least, economic deficiencies and particularistic mechanisms of allocation of resources also represent a fertile ground for ethno-politics.

Ethnonational political parties looking for popular support may, in fact, generate the conditions for the establishment of ethnic-based trust relations between them and the ethnic masses, so to create 'ethnically selective' mechanisms of resources' allocation in which ethnonationality becomes a key to access rights and resources.

One of the most dangerous of these 'ethnically selective' modalities is ethnic clientelism, which relies on both the state's poor economic condition and its ethnicized mechanisms of representation. Therefore, recalling Wimmer's thesis (2004) about interactions and compromises between social and political groups, and how these shape inclusion and exclusion mechanisms by using ethnonational belonging as a filter, we can see how the phenomenon of ethnic clientelism is, indeed, not only redefining inclusion-exclusion practices but also meninges and functions of one's own ethnonationality and group's membership.

Clientelism<sup>106</sup> is, in fact, a phenomenon usually defined as 'an informal relationship

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<sup>106</sup> See also: Eisenstadt, S.N., Lamarchand R., 1981. *Political clientelism, patronage and development*, London: Sage Publications; Eisenstadt S.N., Roniger L. 1984. *Patrons, clients and friends. Interpersonal relations and the structure of trust in society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Eisenstadt S.N., Roniger L., 2007. 'Clientelism in Communist



between two actors enjoying asymmetrical socioeconomic power where the patron has the upper hand because he or she controls the kind of resources that his or her clients pursue but often cannot receive otherwise. Thus, it is a system that often establishes a relationship of domination and exploitation that perpetuates the lock on power of resourceful political leaders' (Kitschelt, 2000). Clientelism is thus about personalized dyadic relationships based on loyalty, where patron and client/s may have either a direct or indirect relation, anyway characterized by an asymmetrical but reciprocal exchange of favours. Indeed, it's the patron who dictates the rules and s/he always can revoke the favour. Particularly, 'political clientelism is characterized by a politician who acts as the patron, offering goods, services, jobs, resources, protection, or other variables of value to a (group of) voter(s), in exchange for political support, which in most of the cases, includes the vote itself' (Gallego 2015: 402).

In the Macedonian and Bosnian contexts, therefore, ethnonational political parties looking for popular legitimacy and support have been able to generate the conditions for the formation of ethnic-based trust relations between them and their ethnic masses. Grounded on 'ethnically selective' mechanisms of resources' allocation, clientelistic networks not only prevent the development of other forms of solidarity different from the ethnonational one, but also make groups mere groups of interests and ethnonational belonging a key tool to access and enjoy rights and resources.

As above suggested, where doesn't arrive ideology, arrive the money.

#### **4.5.1 Bosnia and Macedonia: Different Groups, Same Dynamics**

The economic crisis plaguing Western Europe since 2008, has impacted also the already fragile economies of BIH and Macedonia. Their performances are still rather poor and unemployment growing, particularly among the youth.

As shown by the most recent Progress Report (2016) of both the former Yugoslav republics, their economic situation is the following:

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Systems: a comparative perspective', *Studies in Comparative Communism*, XIV:2&3, pp. 233-245; Robinson, N. 2007. 'The political is personal: corruption, clientelism, patronage, informal practices and the dynamics of post-communism', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 59:7, pp. 1217-1224;

**Tab. 2 – FYRO Macedonia Progress Report. Economic Criteria**

<b>Key Economic Figures</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
Gross domestic product per capita (% of EU28 in PPS)	37	n/a
GDP growth (%)	3.5	3.7
Unemployment rate (female; male) (%)	27.7; 28.6	26.7; 25.1
Economic activity rate for persons aged 20–64: proportion of the population aged 20–64 that is economically active (female; male) (%)	70.8	70.2
Current account balance (% of GDP)	-0.8	-1.3
Foreign direct investment (FDI) (% of GDP)	2.4	1.7

Source: The FYRO Macedonia 2016 Report. Available at [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key\\_documents/2016/20161109\\_report\\_the\\_former\\_yugoslav\\_republic\\_of\\_macedonia.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia.pdf)

**Tab. 3 – Bosnia Herzegovina Progress Report. Economic Criteria**

<b>Key Economic Figures</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
Gross domestic product per capita (% of EU28 in PPS)	29	29
GDP growth (%)	1.1	3.0
Unemployment rate (female; male) (%)	31.2 / 25.3	30.9 / 25.9
Economic activity rate for persons aged 20–64: proportion of the population aged 20–64 that is economically active (female; male) (%)	59.2	59.2
Current account balance (% of GDP)	- 7.5	- 5.6
Foreign direct investment (FDI) (% of GDP)	2.6	1.4

Source: Bosnia and Herzegovina 2016 Report. Available [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key\\_documents/2016/20161109\\_report\\_bosnia\\_and\\_herzegovina.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_bosnia_and_herzegovina.pdf)

Additionally, the data presented in the next tables are part of the Freedom House report (2017), ‘Nations in Transit’, which has ranked both BiH and Macedonia among the ‘hybrid regimes or transitional government’. The ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest.

**Tab. 4 - Nations in Transit. Ratings and Averaged Scores – Macedonia**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
National Democratic Governance	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.75	<b>5.00</b>
Electoral Process	3.25	3.50	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.75	<b>4.00</b>
Civil Society	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	<b>3.25</b>
Independent Media	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.50	4.75	4.75	5.00	5.00	5.25	<b>5.25</b>
Local democratic Governance	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	4.00	<b>4.00</b>
Judicial Framework and Independence	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.50	<b>4.75</b>
Corruption	4.50	4.25	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.25	4.25	4.50	<b>4.75</b>
<b>Democracy Score</b>	<b>3.86</b>	<b>3.86</b>	<b>3.79</b>	<b>3.82</b>	<b>3.89</b>	<b>3.93</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>4.07</b>	<b>4.29</b>	<b>4.43</b>

Source: Freedom House, 2017 Report ‘Nations in Transit’. Available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/nations-transit>

**Tab. 5 - Nations in Transit. Ratings and Averaged Scores – Bosnia Herzegovina**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	<b>2017</b>
National Democratic Governance	5.00	5.00	5.25	5.25	5.50	5.50	5.75	5.75	5.75	<b>6.00</b>
Electoral Process	3.00	3.00	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	<b>3.25</b>
Civil Society	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
Independent Media	4.25	4.50	4.50	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.75
Local democratic Governance	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.75
Judicial Framework and Independence	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.50	4.50	<b>4.50</b>
Corruption	4.25	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.75	4.75	4.75	5.00	<b>5.00</b>
<b>Democracy Score</b>	<b>4.11</b>	<b>4.18</b>	<b>4.25</b>	<b>4.32</b>	<b>4.36</b>	<b>4.39</b>	<b>4.43</b>	<b>4.46</b>	<b>4.50</b>	<b>4.54</b>

Source: Freedom House, 2017 Report ‘Nations in Transit’. Available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/nations-transit>

If to poor economic conditions we add a bureaucracy and administration heavily politicized and ethnicized, it cannot be too surprising that, in both BiH and Macedonia, politicians/political parties find useful to promise (but not guarantee!) their ethnic-like benefits entailing public resources (healthcare, housing, education) or job positions (especially in the public sector but also in the private one) (Hicken 2011) at the condition of reciprocate the favour. The benefits patrons usually get from clients are votes and money – sometimes both at the same time.

Ethnic divisions are the main political cleavage and ethnic nationalism remains an important issue for political mobilization. Also, clientelism plays an important role. The prevalence of clientelistic relations and ‘state capture’ as a mode of governance is a result of a long-term accumulation conditioned by legitimization of particularistic practise. This means that public institutions are seen as means of selective rather than ‘equal chance’ provisioning of access to resources and services, and this is being expected (because the public sees the no-one takes responsibility) or tolerated (because it is practical for getting things done). [...] There is a huge difference from one institution to another when it comes to the equitable representation, which indicates that it is up to the political will of the holder of the function, instead being based on a systematic plan and program. The political parties use such situation for political purposes, and they reward the loyal members and activists on the account of merit system. Corruption is a symptom rather than the cause of the ineffectiveness of the institutions. [...] This has contributed to the lost of trust in the system’s institutions. (Programme coordinator of European Policy Institute - EPI, Skopje, August 2016)

If you are not in a party, no chance to have a job. We have just clientelistic parties misusing nationalist rhetoric. (Levica’s founder, Skopje, July 2016)

If you want a state job, you *have* to be in the party...or you pay. I know it’s 9000 BAM to get a job in the Ministry of Law (Naša Stranka’s General Secretariat, Sarajevo, March 2017)

No one cares about ideology here. There is lots of clientelistic voting. Family ties are strong: if your uncle is in the party, you do vote for that party. Uncle will help you. The parties are the state, they do distribute resources (Expert academic, Sarajevo, March 2017)

As emerged from the above quotations it seems that, if on the one hand institutionalized ethnicity, poverty and unemployment might fuel clientelism, on the other hand, as Manzetti and Wilson pointed out (2007: 954), ‘politicians have an interest in perpetuating economic stagnation and preventing the development of redistributive policies on more impersonal, merit-driven bases that escape their control’. On this purpose, while analysing the Bosnian case – however true also for the Macedonian one, Mujkić (2016b: 7) stated that the ruling class:

[...] consists of ethno-political power-entrepreneurs who extract the ‘extra-power-profit’ from their respective communities. Simultaneously, this class fully controls, indeed, captures the state’s public properties (state-owned and formerly socially owned), the primary source of their wealth. This class – regardless of their particular ethnic and ideological loyalties (be they ‘people’s’ or ‘social democratic’ parties, that is) share a common interest, and it is therefore possible to refer to this social grouping as one, uniform body.

Hence, by exploiting in their favour economic deficiencies and democratic mechanisms of allocation of resources, ethnic entrepreneurs leading ethnonational parties have created not only a situation of ‘ethno-capitalism’ (Mujkić 2016b) but also the conditions for people ‘to need’ patrons’ help instead of developing cross-ethnic solidarities based on shared socio-economic interests. In this way ethnonationality, already institutionalized and politicized, becomes even more salient and for both rulers and ruled, turning to be a tool suitable for self-interested mobilisation. In turn, political parties become means for the distribution of resources, decreasing their natural function of people’s representatives and turning the state into a resource of power (Kacarska 2008).

People have learnt that you can do nothing through institutions, but you can do anything through political parties. Whenever they do you a favour, they make it clear – that it’s done because of the party not because of the institutions, so that you know to whom you owe your vote, your loyalty. (Executive Director of Eurothink - Centre for European Strategies, Skopje, June 2016)

The negative outcomes are clearly manifold: not only ethno-clientelism ends to weaken even more democratic institutions, but also compromises the general and

collective view people have of democracy itself. Moreover, the public sector becomes the major ‘employer’, (over)absorbing labour force and negatively impacting not only state budget but also the quality of the services offered (Marolov 2013). As Rouquié (1978: 22) argued:

We shall describe as *authoritarian contexts* those local or regional societies marked by the preponderance of relationships founded upon vertical solidarity, whether based upon economic, social or ethnic sources. When this type of situation is predominant in a nation, it may give rise to a unique political system differing from both the democratic pluralist model, in which consent plays a decisive role, and from authoritarian regimes, where coercion tends to be the decisive factor. But such a system, *at least locally*, has the same features as single-party regimes have with regard to political competition. It is structurally authoritarian, but does not have recourse to institutional authoritarianism.

Curiously, indeed, in Macedonia the coalition VMRO-DPMNE – DUI reigned uncontested for a decade – collapsing only after (and because of) a ‘wiretapping scandal’ revealing that a high number of top officials had engaged in corrupt activities.

[...] survey on public perceptions and experiences of corruption conducted at the beginning of the year found that nearly a third of the population (30.5 percent) had been pressured by corruption and nearly every third citizen had paid a bribe in the past year (29.2 percent). Nearly half of all citizens believe that most civil servants are susceptible to corrupt activities (46 percent). In addition, a majority of citizens surveyed expressed distrust towards the various institutions tasked with tackling corruption’ (Bliznakovski 2017: 12).

In line with the illustration presented by the above report, an OSCE member in Skopje pointed out that:

DUI and VMRO-DPMNE are doing good together because of corruption. For VMRO, DUI is better than a truly Albanian party fighting for the rights of the Albanians – otherwise it will be too demanding, shaking the equilibrium (OSCE member, Skopje, June 2016)



Political clientelism and corruption have become ‘normal’ also in BiH.

Public tolerance for corruption is high, as it has become part of everyday life. Citizens usually identify corruption with political parties, the police, and the health system, and mostly report cases involving employment procedures (Jahić 2017: 14).

Also in this case, and in line with the above report’s description, the data collected through the interviews have stressed the tie existing between political parties, favouritism and ethnonationality’s exploitation.

They are afraid to lose their power – you know, now it so important to have a political sponsor, to be part of the ‘tribe’ (Interview performed with the President of the Jews Community, Sarajevo, September 2016)

Therefore, as Veters (2014: 20) has shown in her study, these relational modalities between state and ethnicized masses ‘not only facilitate citizens’ access to public resources, but also lend continuity and coherence to a fragmented state apparatus’.

#### **4.6 Ethnic Political Elite and ‘*Divide et Impera*’**

Back in the 1950s, the former partisan and Tito’s companion, Milovan Đilas<sup>107</sup>, was writing *The New Class* – which caused him expulsion from the LCY, years of jail, and a life as dissident. Đilas was a Socialist, as Tito was: however, he criticized the totalitarian imprinting Yugoslavia assumed in the first years after its creation and,

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<sup>107</sup> In January 1954 Đilas was expelled from the Central Committee of the party and dismissed from all political functions for his criticism towards Yugoslavia, defined as a ‘totalitarian’ system. In 1954 he resigned from the League of Communists, and appealed for the formation of ‘a new democratic Socialist party’. He was thus brought to trial and given an 18 month suspended prison sentence. In November 1956, Đilas was arrested and sentenced to three years imprisonment. *The New Class* had a great success and was translated into more than 40 languages: however, it cost another seven years imprisonment. In 1961, Đilas was conditionally released, however imprisoned again in 1962 for publishing abroad *Conversations with Stalin*. In December 1966, Đilas was granted amnesty and freed after nine years in jail; he continued as a dissident, living in Belgrade until his death on 20 April 1995;

particularly, ‘this new class, the bureaucracy, or more accurately the political bureaucracy’ (Đilas 1957: 38). The ‘new class’ was the new political elite, gravitating around the Party – its core; and it was made up by ‘those who have special privileges and economic preference because of the administrative monopoly they hold’ (*ibidem*: 39).

Sixty years have now passed and many things changed since Đilas’ *New Class*; however, some others, apparently, have not - as ‘the totalitarian dictatorship of party bureaucracy’ (Đilas 1957: 84).

As the analysis provided by this chapter wanted to show, institutions’ shape, political pluralism, ethnocentrism, groups’ cultural features and economic conditions of the state are *conditions* allowing for, not causes of, ethnopolitics’ birth and consolidation. Indeed, it’s not ethnic quotas *per se* that divide people but those who (mis)use them to gain (more) power; it’s not poverty or economic malaise that create ethnic clientelism, but those who strategically sell false hopes; it’s not religion, media or schools in one’s own language that separate individuals or create fear among them, but those who make these institutions the core of ethnocentric propaganda and indoctrination; and it’s not ethnic political parties’ presence that hampers social cohesion but those who undemocratically eliminate the alternatives making divisions more profitable than unity. It’s the new class, the ethno-political entrepreneurs (Brubaker 2002; Mujkic 2016b) that ‘managed to seize the momentum of a continental ideological paradigm shift and imposed a perception of themselves on the general public as fierce proponents of popular counter-power, that is, as proponents of ‘our national cause’, of themselves as the leaders of the new democratic age’ (Mujkic 2016: 4).

Therefore, political figures and leaders have a major responsibility – since they are those in control of state institutions and means.

Politicians representing the different society’s segments *can* work together for the good of the larger state and its citizenry, and paralysis and immobilism *can* be countered by the concerted action of responsible leaders willing to compromise (Zahar 2005). State functioning and socio-economic progress, indeed, largely depends on elites’ behaviours and ability to cooperate together. However, even if (theoretically) there always are good reasons to cooperate and make the society’s and its citizenry’s good, in some cases these reasons are simply not good enough, and the

political elite may not have the will – and even less interest - in overcoming the boundaries of ethnonational belonging, de-politicizing it.

As some experts in both BiH and Macedonia pointed out:

Ethnic identification is strong and the general impression is that politicians additionally polarize ethnic relations for political purposes. For example, Nikola Gruevski, leader of VMRO-DPMNE, and Ali Ahmeti, leader of DUI, though partners in government, both used/use inflaming ethnonationalist rhetoric in their campaigns for local and parliamentary elections. [...] Overall, political parties dominate social relations. (Programme coordinator of European Policy Institute - EPI, Skopje, August 2016)

When I was working for the HR in Sarajevo I witnessed with my eyes that those politicians are able to discuss among themselves as if they are best friends, but then their political propaganda is ultra nationalist. I'm not even sure if in their hearts they are nationalist. [...] It's easier to govern people when divided. (OSCE member, Skopje, June 2016)

Even issues that do not seem to have much to do with ethnic relations (say taxes, road buildings...) tend to become contested in ethnic terms. So it is difficult to articulate political issues without resorting to ethnicity. This is seriously limiting the scope for developing cross-cutting political cleavages. (Academic expert, August 2016)

Ethnonationality has become the most employed, and most successful, way to mobilize, represent and protect masses. In the name of democratic principles aimed to safeguard one's own identity and culture, divisions – social and political, are so justified.

As a politician and academic in Skopje said during the interview – but by no means confined to the Macedonian reality:

We will live in a divided society forever, accept that. Divided society is a very comfortable living (Academic and SDSM's member, Skopje, April 2016)

In post-conflict and divided societies, political leaders may have an interest in maintain democracy and state institutions weak, because in that way people can rely

on their ethnic groups/parties as safety nets providing security and protection and, eventually, it's through the ethnic groups/parties that state resources and services are distributed and people represented. This reflection partly recalls Brass's (1991) elitist theory (see Chapter 1) according to which is competing ethnonational elites that, under specific circumstances, use cultural similarity to build allegiances and solidarity and cultural difference to foster antagonism. What ethnopolitical leaders need, thus, is that people 'shift the focus of loyalty to the nation or an ethnic community. [...] The result is that individuals ally with their respective ethnic elites, rather than all members of the polity' (Wimmer 2013: 17-19).

What ethnopolitical leaders need is, thus, to eliminate any possible alternative.

#### **4.7 Conclusive remarks.**

##### **Is there a way out?**

The 'way out' is generally considered to be the birth of 'dual but complementary identifications' (Stepan, Linz, Yadav 2011), the so-called 'we feeling' or 'cross-cutting cleavages' (Lijphart 1977) reflected in the de-politicization of ethnicity and thus the overcome of the boundaries of ethnic belonging. However, I found myself wondering if '*is it really that the way out?* Or, more precisely, '*can it be possible that way out?*'

As seen so far, democratic mechanisms of groups' representation, groups' cultural features, political pluralism, school systems, media and economic deficiencies have all been turned into power's tools, exploited by the ruling elite to gain, and maintain, power. Political parties have largely become instruments to get access to state's resources and rights, whose access is however conditioned by one's own ethnonationality – which function as a filter channelling individuals 'into the right path'.

Politicization of culture and ethnicization of reality are the ways to gain people's trust - tying together ethnic masses while, at the same time, deepening the divide between citizens. Ethnic divisions are thus elite-promoted and incremented by ethnically selective mechanisms of representation, distribution of resources, information and education. In the light of what analysed and stated in this chapter, we can follow

Howard (2012: 155-56)) and define both BiH and Macedonia as *ethnocracies*<sup>108</sup> in which ‘*divide et impera*’ has become the way to rule.

What makes an ethnocracy? It is a political system in which political and social organizations are founded on ethnic belonging rather than individual choice. Ethnocracy, in this sense, features: 1) political parties that are based foremost on ethnic interests; 2) ethnic quotas to determine the allocation of key posts; and 3) state institutions, especially in education and the security sector, that are segmented by ethnic group. Ethnocracies are generally parliamentary systems with proportional or semiproportional representation according to ethnic classifications. Contrasting political platforms—e.g., socialist-liberal, secular-religious, left-right, and the like—are of secondary importance to ethnic-group membership. The ethnic bases of political parties are often mandated by law. In ethnocratic regimes, the heads of government are determined first by ethnic affiliation and only then by other means of appointment. [...] Ethnocratic regimes often segment education and the security services by ethnic group as well. [...] Slots in the military and police may also be designated primarily along ethnic lines rather than with a view to experience, merit, or other criteria.

Ethnocracies do not pose problems only concerning the ruling of the country but also foster internal debates over the very nature of the multinational state itself. As stated in the beginning of the chapter, with the territorial and political re-organization of the post-Yugoslav space, many groups found themselves citizens of new states, but in ethno-cultural terms closer to others, then become ethnic kin-states. Contrary to the Western European tradition where nationality and citizenship are considered synonymous, in multinational former-Socialist states ‘national identity is different from and in addition to citizenship [...] It is not necessarily a question of a person's state or place of residence’ (Bringa 1993: 85). Moreover, it's worth to say again that, since the Yugoslav era, a civic understanding of the nations within the single Republics has never been attempted (Adamson, Jović 2004), so that the development of a ‘Bosnian Herzegovinian’ nation including ethnic Serbs, Croats and Bošnjaks or,

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<sup>108</sup> See also: Husley J., Stjepanovic D., 2017. ‘Bosnia and Herzegovina. An archetypical example of ethnocracy’ in Schakel A.H. (eds.). *Regional and national elections in Eastern Europe. Territoriality of the vote in ten countries*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 35-58

similarly, a ‘Macedonian’ nation comprehensive of ethnic Macedonians, Albanians and other groups, have never been encouraged.

Consequently, given the two states’ historical pasts<sup>109</sup> and the more recent political developments, socio-political fragmentation nurtured by the political elite can nothing but fuel a debate over the nature of the multinational state, in turn reflected in ‘fragmented’ feelings of belonging and attachment.

For example, in BiH it’s usually the Bošnjaks the ones who mainly identify with the State of BiH (having them no kin-state) while the ethnic Serbs and Croat mostly direct their loyalties toward their respective territories in BiH and neighboring Serbia and Croatia (Andjelić 2003; Keil 2013; Marko 1989) - showing an ‘asymmetrical’ commitment toward the State (Bieber 2006b: 21). In Macedonia, instead, the identification in terms of ‘Macedonians’ is ethnically connoted and still linked to ethnic nation-state narratives, hence not shared by all the country’s citizens. Moreover, the problematic element of the kin-state ‘applies to members of the Albanians, Turkish or Serb traditional minorities and ethnic communities’ (Spaskovska 2010/11: 16-7).

Therefore, the birth of civic identifications and the development of cross-ethnic solidarities are hampered on many planes and by different elements.

Despite international and domestic cohesive attempts<sup>110</sup> in dismantling ethnic

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<sup>109</sup> See Chapter 2;

<sup>110</sup> In BiH the international community attempted to set in motion mechanisms of multiple identities’ creation, trying to create a civic Bosnian identity by reinforcing/building common values and symbols. Some examples are the creation of a State anthem and flag, together with the abolition of para-state symbols introduced during the war. Of more notable importance has been the Constitutional Court’s decision over the ‘Constituent Peoples of Bosnia Herzegovina’ that tried to untie the ethnicity-territory link by declaring unconstitutional and illegitimate the fact that ‘the constitution of the RS refers to “the state of Serbs” whilst the constitution of the FBiH referred to Croats and Bosniaks as constituent peoples’ (Keil 2013: 160). However, its implementation has been enforced by the OHR in 2002 and wasn’t the spontaneous outcome of political élites’ cooperation. In Macedonia, although the OFA intentionally avoided ethno-territorial partitions of the state, and tried to promote a civic understanding of the country by changing the Constitution’s Preamble and implementing power-sharing, the rhetoric according to which Macedonia is the nation-state of ethnic Macedonians is still present, further hampering its civic understanding;

boundaries and promoting a different (non ethnic) idea of the larger state - where citizens, instead of ethno-national groups, are at its core -, the Bosnian and Macedonians political elites have, so far<sup>111</sup>, found more advantages in the opposite.

Ethnonational parties have employed several strategies to gain popular trust and support while, at the same time, deepening the divide among the groups. As Spaskovska (2010/11: 20-1) argued, ‘with politics having entered every pore of life and party membership having become crucial for obtaining employment in the public sector, political ideology and political culture have been superseded by ethnicity, religion, corruption and populism’.

With these premises, the overcome of the boundaries of ethnonational belonging is rather difficult. Nevertheless, although highly responsible for deepening the divide, the political elite of BiH and Macedonia cannot be blamed as *the sole* guilty: as seen, it’s about a set of historical circumstances, political events and choices, institutional designs and incentives. And masses’ consent.

Indeed, and as we shall see in the next empirical chapters, the ethnopolitical status quo is apparently advantaging everyone – not only politicians: if for the political class the perpetuation of the divide and its political exploitation has become a winning card, functioning as a proxy towards ‘state-sharing’ and not only ‘power-sharing’, it’s fair to assume also masses have their own interests in ‘leaving things as they are’, since a shaking of that fragile equilibrium may lead to a worsening of their socio-economic conditions and positions. If the ‘*divide et impera*’ has become the preferred and more profitable way to do politics, it’s not only because of ethnic oligarchies’ will, but also because of people’s permission. Therefore, without a micro-analysis the extent to which ‘a way out’ is possible, still has to be defined.

In the light of what stated and explored so far, the next two chapters will analyse meanings, functions and usages of ethnonational belonging across two different generations, trying to understand in what extent past and present ‘macro-

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<sup>111</sup> On this purpose, it’s worth to note that, at the time of the writing (June 2017), Macedonia is seeing a new government formed by the coalition SDSM-DUI - where the former has campaigned trying to change its image into multiethnic. Nevertheless, it’s still too early to make any conclusion and see any substantial change in the Macedonian social, political and institutional environments;

environments', and connected family-personal experiences, have penetrated and shaped the family micro-environment - eventually trying to comprehend how individuals and structures relate together making the system functioning.



## CHAPTER 5

### ***'ETHNONATIONALITY HAS ALWAYS MATTERED'.*** **INTER-GENERATIONAL SIMILARITY BETWEEN GROUPS' STATUS** **AND BENEFITS. THE CASE OF SKOPJE.**

The previous analyses have prepared the ground for the empirical investigation exposed in this and the next chapter, respectively exploring families and generations in the contexts of Skopje and Sarajevo. The research results are critically discussed and enriched with extracts of semi-structured interviews performed with members of both the two generations scrutinized in this research.

The first part of the chapter deals with the Yugoslav generation of parents, and the first macro topic presented through the interviews' extracts concerns the state and its institutions - starting from the Yugoslav memories, passing by Macedonia's independence and the 2001 conflict, and finally landing to the current political system and crisis. People were asked about many different issues, ranging from their political opinions and behaviours, their interaction with the state, its bodies and the political parties, to issues more closely related to the family environment and their children. The topic of inter-ethnic relations goes in parallel with the previous ones since, as it will be shown, strictly connected and intertwined with political and institutional dynamics.

The second part of the chapter, in the light of the family environment analysis, deals with the post-Yugoslav children and goes deeper in their lives, finally aiming at understanding meanings and functions of one's own ethnonationality, its possible continuities or changes between the two generations, and the impact macro-factors have played and play in shaping attitudes.

Before proceeding, one remark is due: while performing the research I avoided as much as possible 'groupism' (Brubaker 2002) and I tried not to frame the reality I was studying through the prism of ethnic belonging; however, this happened to be barely possible while analysing the research results. The overshadowing framework emerged from the interviews was characterized by the 'us and them' dichotomy and the (ethnic) collective dimension was generally prevailing over the individual one.

## 5.1 The Yugoslav Generation and Youth's Family Background

The final sample in the context of Skopje was composed by 13 families, and a total amount of 38 individuals – 24 parents belonging to the ‘Yugoslav generation’ and 14 youth belonging to the ‘post-Yugoslav’ generation – have been interviewed.

Among these 13 families, 8 of them were (and identified themselves as) ethnic Macedonians, 4 ethnic Albanians and 1 ethnic Roma. Most of the families interviewed were monoethnic while 3 of them were mixed between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Serbs.

The people included in the sample identified themselves in ethnonational terms, saying they were Macedonians, Albanians living in Macedonia and Roma living in Macedonia. Therefore, while quoting the interviews, their ethnonational identification is putted on brackets. There was no case of ‘alternative’ identities or ways of identification.

For what concerns the parents enclosed in this sample, they were all living in, and have been raised in, Skopje. Only one ethnic Albanian mother was originally from Prishtina, (where she met her husband, ethnic Albanian from Skopje, in the second half of the 1970s and then moved together to Skopje).

The triad mother-father-children formed the largest part of the families interviewed; only in two cases I performed interviews only with mothers and children<sup>112</sup>.

All the parents interviewed were born between 1952 and 1965 while their children between 1985 and 1990.

Most of the parents interviewed were currently employed, a couple of them were retired, three mothers were housewives (one for each ethnic community considered) and one father hadn't a stable job.

All the parents interviewed completed their high school studies and most of them, regardless ethnic origins, continued to study either for some specialization or for their BA. None of the ethnic Macedonian interviewed spoke the Albanian language while, both the ethnic Albanian and the ethnic Roma did spoke Macedonian in addition to their own mother languages. 6 parents (4 ethnic Macedonians and 2 ethnic Albanian)

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<sup>112</sup> In one case parents divorced when kids were little and the family interviewed was composed by mother and daughter; in the second case, the father was working abroad for some months, so the impossibility of getting in touch with him;

were rather fluent in English, while all the other interviews have been performed using their children as translators.

For what concerns their religious origins, almost all of the ethnic Macedonians said to be traditionally Orthodox, the ethnic Albanian were traditionally Muslims and the Roma family was Geova Witness; only one ethnic Macedonian family (both mother and father) declared to be atheist. None of the parents interviewed was practicing religion.

Finally, the families enclosed in the final sample have been reached via snowball sampling starting from the younger generation's members, their children - more easily approachable given the age proximity with the researcher. Because of the methodological choices adopted in this work and the small size of the sample, the research results below presented do not have any statistical relevance and cannot be generalized to the entire Macedonian population.

### **5.1.1 Remembering and Forgetting Yugoslavia**

The parents enclosed in the sample were all born and raised in Yugoslavia; therefore memories and considerations about that time and country have been the interviews' starting point.

The Yugoslav time and society were, regardless the ethnonationality of the respondents, generally acknowledged as a florid and positive period of their lives, where anyone's socio-economic conditions were better than nowadays. The majority of the respondents emphasized the advantages of that system in terms of job opportunities, free and good quality of education, free health system and, especially, freedom of movement. The Yugoslav society has been described as: free, healthy, secure, ordered, (more) equal and featured by mutual respect.

*I have always had a national identity - I am Makedonska. [...] But in Yugoslavia people were equal, it was a liberal system, each of us had a national identity but we were part of Yugoslavia...people could express themselves, there were differences but there also was respect (Kostadin's mother, age 60, ethnic Macedonian, April 2016)*

*Everyone had a job, house, everything. Yugoslavia was better than today, even*

*for us Albanians. [...] When you were going to the doctor they were looking at you normally* (Florina's father, age 60, ethnic Albanian, August 2016)

*It is a pity the younger generations don't know the meaning of Yugoslavia and how life was. When I was in Belgrade I was a student and life was very nice. That time cannot be repeated anymore* (Zurija's father, age 54, ethnic Roma, May 2016)

*I think Yugoslavia was a more democratic system than nowadays* (Florina's mother, age 56, ethnic Albanian, August 2016)

Yugoslavia generally left a positive memory in the parents' mind, however their attitude towards it was rather detached and none of them said to be 'Yugonostalgic' – a term, as we shall see, more frequently occurring in the Bosnian context. When asked, the great majority of them (except for a couple of people) said not to miss that system. Although they did not criticize it, they framed the new system - slowly transiting towards democracy and capitalism and hoping for European Union integration - in terms of progress. Macedonia, indeed, was the sole Yugoslav republic transiting to the new system without being involved in a war and, in 2005, the prospect of EU integration definitely marked a 'moving beyond'.

The parents interviewed were, in fact, objectively acknowledging the 'more prosperous' living conditions of the Yugoslav time however somehow taking the distance from it – as if it was synonymous of backwardness, opposite to the current step forwards. However, I found the reasons for that attitude diverging between the two major groups, yet in both cases connected with the political events that took place in the region since the 1980s, and especially since Macedonia's independence. The prospect of EU integration was never mentioned during the interviews and the benefits of the capitalist economy only in a couple of cases. It was the late 1980s' and 1990s' events that shaped not only parents' political opinions and attitudes but also their perspectives towards the Yugoslav past - hence making clear that the deeper reasons for that 'closing the door with the past' were actually rooted in the past itself.

### ***5.1.1.1 Collective Memories: Macedonia towards the Independence***

The Macedonian independence, as already illustrated in the previous chapters, was experienced rather differently among the ethnic Macedonians and Albanians: if Macedonians, generally, saw independence as their final step towards full recognition as a nation and state, for the ethnic Albanians it symbolized a step backward, since they found themselves declassified to a minority in democracy.

For what concerns the ethnic Macedonian families interviewed, their rather cold attitude towards Yugoslavia may be explained by their feelings toward the Macedonian independence - characterized by a certain euphoria, especially in the early 1990s, but still clearly present in their discourses and vivid in their memories.

*We realized independence was something necessary, a continuation of the normal way of living. [...] In that period people, meaning the Macedonian nation, for the first time realized the necessity of having its own nation-state. In the first years [after independence] politics focused on national issues and in building the Macedonian nation state. (Mario's father, age 59, ethnic Macedonian, May 2016)*

*We did the referendum, it was successful, people were very happy. I remember, with my older son – he was 8 months -, we all went in the city center to celebrate (Mario's mother, age 51, ethnic Macedonian, May 2016)*

*Now we have progress, we cannot compare that period with nowadays. (Ilija's mother, age 55, ethnic Serb, March 2016)*

*Ethnic groups and politics go together...Goli Otok was full of Macedonian patriots (Marija's father, age 57, ethnic Macedonian, May 2016)*

Rather different were, instead, the feelings of the ethnic Albanians. As they explained during our conversations, the Macedonian independence and its 'constitutional nationalism (Hayden 1992) were solely the culmination of already existing turmoil in the region, as the ones happening in Kosovo since 1981 and involving also ethnic Albanians in Macedonia. In fact, half of the ethnic Albanian fathers in the sample took part in the Kosovo's riots (1981) while one of them was 'politically' involved for

the unification of all the Albanians of the region – the so-called Great Albania.

*During Yugoslavia I was not involved in politics – at least not directly like getting paid and being a politician. I was involved for the Albanian cause to realize the Albanian idea of creating and getting together all the Albanians of the region, instead of being separated in six countries. I was trying to work for the good of the Albanians. It was an unofficial way of doing politics...that's why in 1984 - because of these activities that I did against the government - I got imprisoned. (Rudina and Kastriot's father, age 62, ethnic Albanian, April 2016)*

*If you were protesting and simply asking for your rights, you were labelled as nationalist or irredentist, hence against the system and persecuted [...] Even if you were not engaged, you were pushed by the system. Even if you were not into politics, then politics found you. It was difficult to remain neutral. (Lura's father, age 58, ethnic Albanian, September 2016)*

Not surprisingly, no ethnic Albanian interviewed voted in favour of Macedonia's independence during the 1991 referendum. After what happened in/to Kosovo, and after having seen their rights taken back (also) in Macedonia, disappointment among the Albanian community prevailed, and there could barely be a good narrative about Yugoslavia.

*When Macedonia became independent, they started to discriminate us. When there was Yugoslavia...maybe just a little bit. But after independence, they got the support from Serbia, Bulgaria, Russia. They don't like us (Florina's father, age 60, ethnic Albanian, August, 2016)*

The two main communities have experienced the period 1981-1991 rather differently, and its memory is still vivid and emotionally connoted. These different memories have, in turn, shaped their attitudes towards the past, the present and the future: in the Macedonian case, the past was acknowledged as good but not the best, since the best was/is their (nation)state's independence. While in the ethnic Albanian case, although the past was seen as rather fair in terms of opportunities, it was acknowledged as the base for further discriminations eventually confirming the ethnic Albanian community's 'subordinated-to-the-majority' status, marked by the Macedonian

independence.

### 5.1.2 The Fluctuating Path of Inter-Ethnic Relations

Not surprisingly, macro dynamics also penetrated the micro-world, shaping inter-group relations. The ‘quality’ of the interactions between the two major groups followed a fluctuating path, and we can identify three main periods: relaxed but superficial during Yugoslavia; tense and distant from the 1980s, but especially with the independence, until after the 2001 conflict; and currently slowly going back to normality – with ‘normality’ meaning rather superficial but relaxed, however featured by both sides’ collective frustrations and dissatisfactions.

#### *a) Brotherhood and Unity?*

For what concerns the Yugoslav time, the families interviewed acknowledged how relations between groups were not tense but, at the same time, distant and featured by minor inter-ethnic contacts.

*Inter-ethnic relations were good but artificial. [...] I knew some Macedonians, they were ok for coffee but I didn't hang out with them* (Durim's father, age 52, ethnic Albanian, July 2016)

*Inter-ethnic relations in Yugoslavia were forcedly close.* (Lura's father, age 58, ethnic Albanian, September 2016)

*During Yugoslavia Albanian people were not educated and did only physical works. Maybe for us Macedonians they were second-class citizens...we did not speak with each other very much, there was separation.* (Bojana's mother, age 60, ethnic Macedonian, March 2016)

*We have never mixed with Albanians, we have always been separated. When I say 'we' [...] I mean Macedonians and Serbs. [...] Albanians did not do the same things we did, they stayed home with their families [...] I don't have anything to say to them* (Ilijas' mother, age 55, ethnic Serb, March 2016)

The above quotations show how, even within the framework of ‘Brotherhood and Unity’, the boundary line between the two main groups was already clearly demarcated. According to the ethnic Macedonian respondents, the main difference and reason for these little contacts was cultural – given the ethnic Albanians were traditionally more family oriented, doing physical jobs and less educated than the Macedonians.

According to the ethnic Albanians, instead, the reason was less cultural and more institutional and political - since, despite ‘Brotherhood and Unity’, Albanians were not as equal as the ethnic Macedonians.

*There always was a difference between Albanians and Macedonians. [...] In one sense I felt discriminated, like a second-class (Rudina and Kastriot’s mother, age 55, ethnic Albanian, April 2016)*

*In Socialist Yugoslavia, Macedonians were more powerful than Albanians [...]. Albanians in Macedonia lived better than Albanians in Albania but worse than Macedonians, Serbs and Croats. Albanians were the last to gain some benefit. But it was after Tito died and Milošević came to power that for us the situation got worse (Lura’s father, age 58, ethnic Albanian, September 2016)*

Inter-ethnic distance during Yugoslavia was thus attributed to both cultural and politico-institutional reasons and differences, however always framed in oppositional terms and described as antagonism between *these two* groups.

Curiously, in fact, during the interviews parents were asked about ‘relations between groups’ – not relations between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians; however, their answer did not even mention relations and interactions with the other groups living in Skopje, as Turks, Roma and so on.

To better understand the rootedness of the ‘us and them’ dichotomy, we should emphasize that ethnic Macedonians were not only in net numerical majority but also enjoyed ‘a different treatment’ in virtue of their ‘constituent’ status in what, furthermore, was generally perceived to be *their own* republic. Although it is true that from 1974 also ethnic Albanians (and Turks as well) had been constitutionally recognized with the same status of the ethnic majority, they were still seen as one of the country’s minorities.



Ethnic-based majority-minority dynamics will then become more visible with the Yugoslav collapse, when both ethnicity and the size of the groups acquired a new and crucial importance, shaping groups' claims, frustrations and resentments.

*b) The 1991-2001 Decade and (Ethnic) Collective Frustrations*

The period that goes from immediately before Macedonia's independence to after the 2001 conflict was described by the respondents as rather tense and generally framed through the prism of antagonism between the ethnic collectivities.

The parents interviewed have generally described the events characterizing that decade in terms of competition over the socio-political status the groups occupied and wished to occupy in the Macedonian republic. The signing of the OFA, therefore, was overall looked with resentment by the ethnic Macedonians while with (partial) satisfaction by the ethnic Albanians.

*The people from the Albanian nationality were not satisfied with the situation, they started asking for more rights, they thought that they were oppressed as a minority...[...] after that, our government started to give them rights but they were not satisfied until 2001 – you know, the conflict. [...] I think now they have their rights (Stefan's mother, age 51, ethnic Macedonian, May 2016)*

*With the OFA now there is a percentage of Albanians that have to be employed – but they are not employed because of their qualifications but because of the agreement (Marija's father, age 57, ethnic Macedonian, May 2016)*

*I don't have a high opinion for the Albanians, the Šiptars<sup>113</sup> [...] I don't trust them; they are working to take our liberties and rights in order to progress their own agenda, like Great Albania or sort of federalism (Stefan's father, age 56, ethnic Serb, May 2016)*

While the ethnic Albanians' opinions were:

*We all supported the conflict. The conflict was not against the Macedonians but against the government. After the conflict they signed the OFA [...] DUI is the*

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<sup>113</sup> The term šiptar/shqiptar is a pejorative term used to refer to Albanians in a negative way;

*party stemming from the war, they did more than anyone else for the Albanians*  
(Durim's father, age 52, ethnic Albanian, July 206)

*Before 2001 Albanians did not exist basically. After the OFA the situation got better and we are employed in the state.* (Lura's mother, age 57, ethnic Albanian, September 2016)

The debates and claims featuring the decade 1991-2001, detached even more already superficial inter-ethnic relations. The OFA, seen as an undesired compromise by the ethnic majority, and as a step forward by the other groups, institutionalized an already existing antipathy (partly ideologically minimized during Yugoslavia) and mainly connected to the status the groups occupied in the larger state.

Politico-institutional dynamics intertwined with cultural differences, and rotating around the two larger groups, have thus confirmed the saliency of one's own ethnonational belonging and rooted even more the 'us and them' narrative – widely present in both the ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians parents' interviews.

Ethnonationality, as deducible from the interviews, not only defines collective and opposite group identities but it also sets the rules of a game played at institutional level - where competition and antagonism are articulated in terms of ethnic groups' institutional representation.

### *c) Back to Normality*

In the years after the conflict and the signing of the OFA, slowly inter-ethnic relations went back to normality – meaning distance without tensions.

Ethnic Albanians and other smaller groups got more collective rights and, thanks to the establishment of ethnic quotas to be achieved in the public administration, also got a higher level of representation in the state's bodies. However, according to the interviews, both groups (still) feel to be discriminated - although in a different way.

According to the ethnic Macedonians, discrimination against them is institutional and related to the OFA's provisions in matter of groups' representation in the state bodies.

As a woman stated: '*Now Macedonians are the poor people and Albanians the rich ones*'. (Filip's mother, age 60, ethnic Macedonian, March 2016). While, for the ethnic Albanians, institutional discrimination is slowly getting better while the social one not

yet.

*I am a teacher, I work together with Macedonians. Some of them are very good persons but many are nationalist. [...] The Director, she's Macedonian, she is not correct, she's discriminating me in many ways. She's from VMRO, she's bad woman. She thinks she's god. (Florina's mother, age 56, ethnic Albanian, August 2016)*

*When I changed my job - two years ago, here in Skopje, from one institution to another one - there was this woman...she was already there, I was new, and when she understood I was Albanian she said 'I am Albanophobic'. [...] There were cases in which she wanted to provoke me...if there were Albanian clients coming, she was going out saying 'bleah' disgusted by them, and she was then asking 'Do I also smell now??' (Rudina and Kastriot's Mother, age 55, ethnic Albanian, April 2016)*

No ethnic Macedonian interviewed has ever been discriminated by an ethnic Albanian – at least not in Skopje. Indeed, also ethnicity-based discrimination vary according to the already mentioned majority-minority dynamics. As an interviewee stated:

*We, Albanians, we always try to be educated with them, but they are a little bit against us. The Macedonians have more pressures and problems in cities like Bitola, Prilep and Vlese because in these cities you've a small number of Albanians so they [the Macedonians] have the luxury to be more aggressive. But in cities where you've more Albanians, the Macedonians are always quite, and there are better relations (Rudina and Kastriot's father, age 62, ethnic Albanian, April 2016)*

For what concerns the Roma family included in the sample, the interviewees explained how the situation – in general terms never been easy for the Roma population - got worse when ethnonationality started to matter more, in the 1990s.

*We are Roma, we are not normal people, we are discriminated in every way. [...] First of all because we don't have a country; second because we are tanned, our colour. And then because they say we are gypsy and not Roma. During Yugoslavia there was a sort of discrimination, but way less than now (Zurija's mother, age 51, ethnic Roma, May 2016)*

*With the OFA Albanians and Roma got more rights, we have these percentages...but the hatred between people is bigger. It is a fact that there is discrimination in Macedonia [...] I am discriminated because I'm a Roma – and we are discriminated everywhere. (Zurija's father, age 53, ethnic Roma, May 2016)*

As the respondents explained, inter-ethnic relations are now calm but this absence of tensions is mainly due to an increased distance between groups. A clear example of it, is the 'post-conflict' ethnic composition of some of Skopje's neighbourhoods as a consequence of widespread distrust, and even fear.

*Before 2001 many Albanians lived in Aerodrom and many Macedonians lived in Čair. Then, after the conflict, they switched: Albanians moved to Čair and Macedonians to Aerodrom. They say 'for safety reasons' (Durim's mother, age 51, ethnic Albanian, July 2016)*

*In Čair, at that time, there were more Macedonians, we were mixed. But then things started to change [...] maybe it's because of politics. Macedonians in Čair feared that the whole neighbourhood was becoming Albanian (Marija's mother, age 59, ethnic Macedonian, May 2016)*

The neighbourhoods mentioned by the interviewers, namely Aerodrom and Čair are, nowadays, respectively a (predominantly) ethnic Macedonian and an ethnic Albanian neighbourhoods. But they are far from being the sole to be almost completely ethnically homogeneous; also, there is a Skopje's municipality called Šuto Orizari<sup>114</sup> where Roma people compose the majority - the most isolated and discriminated group of all.

This kind of 'naturally emerged' ethnic segregation – although institutionally sustained - if on the one hand has prevented inter-ethnic violence, on the other one it did so by deepening the divide between the communities, making Skopje a divided

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<sup>114</sup> Created after the 1963 Skopje earthquake to relocate the Roma who lost their house, Šuto Orizari remains the only municipality in Macedonia with a Romani majority. In 2002, they represented almost 80% of the population, which also included small numbers of ethnic Albanians and ethnic Macedonians. Šuto Orizari is the only local administrative unit in the world to have adopted Romani as an official language;

city.

*Skopje is divided in left and right side of the river* (Solza's father, age 61, April 2016)

### **5.1.3 Political Attitudes and Political Opinions**

As emerged so far, political and institutional dynamics had a considerable impact on parents' lives, perspectives, opinions and inter-ethnic relations as well. Therefore it's interesting to see what do they think about politics, which are the parties they support the most and for which reasons and, finally, how do they interact with them and the state.

All the parents interviewed explained how, during Yugoslavia, there was no need to be interested in politics; the country was healthy and people were not thinking of politics.

*It was not interesting. When you have good salaries, winter holidays, summer holidays, the possibility to visit any country...no one cared about where the money came from* (Mario's mother, age 56, ethnic Macedonian, May 2016)

They all declared that it was in the late 1980s and with the SFRY collapse that they started to follow and, in some cases participate in, politics. Nowadays, all the parents interviewed follow politics mainly by listening to TV news and, as they declared, *'politics is very bad'*.

#### **5.1.3.1 Political Parties**

As explained in Chapter 4, the Macedonian political spectrum is composed by four major political parties – two for each major ethnic community.

All the ethnic Albanian parents included in the sample were DUI supporters and most of them also party members; and only one family, extremely disappointed by DUI, was mentioning the newly born Besa as a possible option for the next elections.

The overwhelming support for DUI may be explained by the fact that the party emerged from the 2001 conflict - a conflict in which 'freedom fighters' were

struggling for the rights of the Albanian community -, so immediately gaining popular legitimacy; in turn, popular legitimacy and trust became electoral support, assuring DUI power since 2002. Over the years, DUI has not only decreased the support for other ethnic Albanian parties, but it has concretely improved its community's socio-political status, and particularly in terms of representation in the state's institutions.

Ethnic Macedonians parents were, instead, for the vast majority SDSM supporters (none of them party member); only one family said to favour VMRO-DPMNE and only one mother said to prefer the newly born Levica. The Roma family was, instead, neither supporting any political party nor voting during elections – contrary to all the other parents interviewed, which regularly vote during elections.

In respect to parents' political attitudes, it's worth to highlight that the interviews have been conducted in a highly tense period, during the 'Colourful Revolution' and in electoral campaign: at that time (2016), VMRO was under public accused for money laundry, corruption and non transparent employment in the state institutions - therefore, to openly say to support VMRO was by many seen as shameful. It's thus plausible to assume some of the ethnic Macedonians interviewees were VMRO supporters but they either did not want to say it openly or, given the political crisis, they changed their minds favouring the Macedonian opposition party, SDSM.

What emerged during the interviews, regardless the party parents said to support and vote for, was a general disappointment with their political representatives. All the major political parties (both ethnic Macedonians and Albanians, and both ruling and in opposition) have been described as populist and, some more some less, nationalist, the main responsible for both the institutional malfunctioning and the divide between the ethnic communities.

*Populism and nationalism are mainstream and very bad for multiethnic societies. There is not real hate between the communities, but there is confusion – which is fuelled by nationalism spread by those same parties who are supposed to improve the society (Lura's father, age 58, ethnic Albanian, September 2016)*

*The most influential parties, both Macedonians and Albanians, are trying to divide the society between the two biggest ethnicities. All of them are playing the same game, also the opposition. (Kostadin's father, age 62, ethnic Macedonian, April 2016)*

*I don't follow politics and not even the news. They do not portray reality, media are controlled so its just a bla bla bla (Durim's mother, age 51, ethnic Albanian, July 2016)*

*Now [everything] is politicized, it is politics dividing people (Zurija's mother, age 50, ethnic Roma, May 2016)*

The recent political crisis (that was essentially about huge scandals of corruption, money laundry, non transparent employment procedures, wiretapping) did affect parents' trust towards the state: no one considered the state to be democratic and it's been described as *fascist, authoritarian, populist, nationalist* and even *dictatorial*. Most of the interviewed also did not trust their institutions, considered to be filled by '*incompetent and unskilled*' people hired by the political parties in order to maintain power.

*Clientelism is their baby, and they rule in that frame – all of them. Doesn't matter VMRO, SDSM, DUI or DPA: all of them are playing that game with clientelism, all the time, and since the beginning (Kostadin's father, age 62, ethnic Macedonian, April 2016)*

*Now the governmental institutions are not independent from the party; the institution where I work in, it should be independent but it's not. The control is established via employment. They employ their own people. Sometimes we have opposed that situation but it's rare. There is pressure [...] basically the government is dictating how to write the reports. [...] If you don't respect their indications, either you go to jail – happened to some journalists, or you are fired. Simple. (Solza's mother, age 58, ethnic Macedonian, April 2016)*

A sizeable number of the parents interviewed was employed in some Ministry or public institutions, nevertheless they all remarked it was not because of some 'help'.

### **5.1.3.2 Clientelism: between frustrations and status elevation**

The 'clientelism' issue widely emerged during the interviews. As explained in both Chapter 1 and Chapter 4, clientelism encompasses a wider range of services, ranging

from access to public health, mediation with the bureaucracy and employment in the public institutions.

*If you go to the doctor, he will first look at your pocket – to put his hand inside and ask for money. It's true, everybody knows that. (Florina's mother, age 56, ethnic Albanian, August 2016)*

However, it was the issue of employment in the public institutions the one that emerged the most during the interviews.

All the parents asked, regardless ethnonationality, personally knew someone (colleagues, friends, relatives and so on) hired via political parties (generally the ruling ones, hence VMRO and DUI at the time of the interviews), so confirming the practice has become (or it's always been) 'normal'.

*Once corruption was to send to someone a cow, some meat or a can of cheese, this kind of presents. After Yugoslavia dissolved, then corruption spread everywhere. [...] To get employed here, either you have 4-5000€ to pay someone – a lot of people do that, or to be very beautiful (Rudina and Kastirov's mother, age 55, ethnic Albanian, April 2016)*

Shedding light on the 'new role' of political parties in 'supplying their supporters with favours and befits', only one father clearly 'explained the mechanism' by expressing his disappointment towards his party (in that case DUI) - because, as he said, 'despite his loyalty he never got a single denar'. In another case, although not stated directly by the parents but by their children, both the parents had been employed thanks to the 'mediation' of their ethnonational political party - DUI.

*I have four daughters! Many times I gave them the documents to find a job for my daughter but I always receive bad answers. [...] My daughter finished faculty and they couldn't find her a job. [...] Or I must give 5000€ to somebody in the party [...] As soon as the party was created I got the party membership but in all these years I didn't get not even a single denar from DUI (Florina's father, age 60, ethnic Albanian, August, 2016)*

*My mom and dad have been employed by DUI so my mom now says 'they gave*



me the job, I have been waiting for 20 years and they gave it to me, so I respect them'. *When I was, last summer, 2 months without job because I left the previous one, my mom was like 'why don't you accept it? We can talk to this person and they can find you a job'*. (Rudina, age 27, ethnic Albanian, March 2016)

However, many ethnic Macedonian interviewees, if on the one hand expressed their concerns for these illegal practices, on the other one let emerge a sense of collective frustration related to the decreased ethnic Macedonian supremacy in the state institutions - consequently reflected in the improved institutional representation of other communities, above all, the ethnic Albanians.

*With the OFA now there is a percentage of Albanians that have to be employed – but they are not employed because of their qualifications but because of the agreement* (Marija's father, age 57, ethnic Macedonian, May 2016)

*Now Macedonians are the poor people and Albanians the rich people.* (Filip's mother, age 60, ethnic Macedonian, March 2016)

*Ethnic discriminations have always been an excuse for people that cannot progress in their jobs...to use the ethnic excuse, the ethnic background. They are not hard workers [...] they do not want to work and they say 'it is because I'm Albanian'* (Ilijas' mother, age 55, ethnic Serb, March 2016)

The ethnic Macedonians' major concern was, thus, mainly about the increased presence of ethnic Albanians in the state bodies - hired to fulfil ethnic quotas regardless their personal skills, than to the illegal character of the practice and the strategic use of clientelism by the political parties. As explained in Chapter 3, the independent state of Macedonia was initially articulated in ethnonational terms, so aiming at strengthening and protecting the Macedonian identity. Their status as dominant group had not only to be understood in ethnic, rather than civic, terms, but also confirmed by their hegemonic presence in all the spheres of the socio-political life, thus reflected in the administrative, political, cultural and religious ones – and so it was until before the OFA. Therefore, with the changes introduced in 2001 in matter of institutional representation, the ethnic nation-state's dream came to an end, and the state and its institutions have become 'more ethnically diverse'.

Groups' feelings towards independence and the then OFA provisions have already been scrutinized<sup>115</sup>; and it's in the light of these political and groups' dynamics and related feelings that behaviours and attitudes towards clientelistic practices should be understood.

What emerged in the interviews with the older generation is, thus, a very much present rivalry between the two main groups, where reality – social and political - is framed in terms of ethnic-collective antagonism and competition. The state - its institutions and bodies, is the battlefield, and ethnonational political parties - recruiting their ethnic-likes so to fatten the state apparatus, are those pretending to calm down collective frustrations.

*The number of Albanians employed in the state is still not fulfilled (Durim's father, age 52, ethnic Albanian, July 2016)*

*I was respecting very much DUI and especially Ali Ahmeti because he was coming from the war. Then I changed my mind because he promised us many things but, at the end, he did nothing for us. (Florina's mother, age 56, ethnic Albanian, August 2016)*

I found, therefore, a certain ambivalence towards ethnic clientelistic practices: if on the one side the parents interviewed recognize clientelism is negatively affecting the state's functioning and the services offered, on the other side the competition between the two ethnonational groups was articulated in terms of institutional representation – which, as it seems, largely function via ethnonational parties' mediation.

Ethnonationality, thus, has very relevant functions: not only it delimits the boundaries between the communities, defining their identities; but, more importantly, it is a proxy towards better/worse socio-political statuses and, consequently, it is related to issues pertaining the very state's ownership and identity.

The rhetoric emerged from the interviews with the older generation was that, in some circumstances, 'the end justifies the means'; even if not properly legal, those

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<sup>115</sup> Further quotations on the issue of groups' representation in the state institutions and the OFA provisions have already been discussed and mentioned in the section "2. *The 1991-2001 Decade and (Ethnic) Collective Frustrations*";

clientelistic practices are seen as a collateral effect of an otherwise just and superior aim: on the one side – the ethnic Albanian side, a sort of ‘social repayment’ because of previously suffered discriminations while, on the other side – the ethnic Macedonian one, as a way to re-establish their dominant role in the hierarchy, so to show who’s the owner of the state.

Of course, this interpretation of ethnic-clientelism and ethnonationality’s functions has to be read in the light of an institutional dis-functioning and economic malaise that, together with political ethnocentrism, constitute the macro environment in which people live in.

#### **5.1.4 Parents and Children. What do they discuss at Home? The parents’ perspective**

##### ***5.1.4.1 Politics***

Parents, regardless their origins, were generally not used to discuss politics with their children. As emerged from the interviews, politics was overall considered something bad, not worth to talk about it. Political talks at home were confined to commenting TV news or some general event. Deeper political discussions were mostly avoided.

Ethnic Macedonian parents, overall, said to have had just vague conversations with their children about the 2001 conflict, and even about their Yugoslav past. On this topic, what they told them was merely some anecdote about how relaxed life was and how easily they could travel.

*I told him about the security in that society and the passport issue. Sometimes I compare my youth time with the one of my son and I am sorry for him, because he is more interested in politics than how I was (Filip’s mother, age 56, ethnic Macedonian, March 2016)*

Slightly similar was the case of the ethnic Albanian families, which did not talk much about Yugoslavia but, on the contrary, much more about ‘Albanian issues’. The Roma family, finally, was never interested into politics and demonstrated to have a rather neutral attitude towards the main events that took place in the republic since the 1980s; therefore, also in this case, no political discussions at home.

Parents said they never tried neither to involve their children into politics/political activities nor to influence their political opinions.

Only in a few cases politics was something ordinary at home, and parents and children were used to critically discuss political issues since children's young age.

In one case, the father (ethnic Macedonian) served the JNA<sup>116</sup> for his whole life, so the family travelled a lot and lived in different Yugoslav cities – like Sarajevo and Belgrade; therefore, politics was part of their everyday life. In another ethnic Macedonian case, parents started to discuss politics more frequently since when the crisis in Macedonia started (2015), but this because their children were becoming more interest on the topic. Finally, in other two cases, (ethnic Albanians) fathers were deeply involved in political activities since when in their 20ies (as seen, some were involved in the 1980s' riots taking place in Priština) so that politics could not remain out of the house's walls.

#### ***5.1.4.2 Ethnicity and inter-groups relations***

Regardless the superficially close character of inter-ethnic contacts, parents said to have educated their children according to the Yugoslav tradition – meaning not to care about people's ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. They taught their children the only worth distinction was between 'good and bad' people.

*We were used to go to Ohrid for holiday when they were kids and my son, once, did not want to paly with Albanian kids, saying they were šiptari. So I had to explain him that it's not matter of ethnicity, people are people [...] It's very important how parents raise their children, I taught them to treat everyone equally, regardless ethnicity and religion (Zurija's father, age 54, May 2016)*

However, in the vast majority of the ethnic Macedonian families, contacts with ethnic Albanians or other groups were and are basically absent. Macedonian parents, except for a couple of persons, did/do not have any relation with, or friend belonging to, other groups. Hence their kids have never been used 'to mix' in the family environment and during their childhoods. Accordingly, as previously mentioned, most of the ethnic Macedonian parents said that, even in the Yugoslav time, their groups of

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<sup>116</sup> *Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija* – Yugoslav National Army;

friends were rather homogenous. At the present day, some perhaps know a few ethnic Albanians, Serbs or Bosnians but only superficially and in most of the cases because of their jobs; some others not even superficially.

*Ah now I remember! I know one Albanian girl...she's the wife of some cousin.  
She's normal, nice girl (Filip's mother, age 56, ethnic Macedonian, March 2016)*

Children, regardless their ethnicity, have been taught not to distinguish between ethnicities but, at the same time, they have for the largest part grown up in monoethnic family environments, and so was the composition of their classrooms until, in the best-case scenario, the end of the high school (see afterwards).

Compared to the ethnic Macedonians, the Albanian families, although never mixed with other groups in terms of marriage, emerged to have more frequent and closer contacts with members of other groups; and their kids - although attending monoethnic schools (exactly as the ethnic Macedonian pupils) have grown up in a slightly more mixed environment. This, once again, is related to the size of the groups and the majority-minority dynamics taking place in the society.

#### *5.1.4.2.1 Would you be happy if...?*

During our conversations, the parents interviewed were rather worried to present a good image of their families, trying to be as diplomatic as possible in their statements, and not falling into 'more extreme' considerations. Nevertheless, non-verbal communication is also very powerful in conveying informations, and sometimes I had the feeling verbal and non-verbal communications were not matching.

All the parents interviewed said ethnicity, for them *personally*, did not and doesn't matter. Regarding their children's education, they said they had never advised them, neither when little nor nowadays, to avoid certain people because of their ethnicity/religion and taught them to distinguish people only between 'good and bad. However, a certain level of antipathy between the groups clearly emerged during the interviews; sometimes it was more pronounced or clearly stated, sometimes betrayed by their facial expressions or politely hidden.

Therefore, I provocatively but kindly asked parents about their reaction before the possibility of their children being involved in a mixed marriage.

All the parents interviewed – mothers and father -, belonging to any of the group, were not happy with that possibility. Some tried to formulate their answers in a more diplomatic way, emphasizing the importance of love however barely hiding their disappointment. A sizeable part of them, instead, was firmly and clearly against.

*Mmm I don't know...if they love each other...but I am aware, one day, that may be a problem for their family* (Stefan's mother, age 51, ethnic Macedonian, May 2016)

*Eh, I never thought about something like that* (Bojana's mother, age 60, ethnic Macedonian, March 2016)

*I try to be liberal but I think my person has a little worm inside, and I may feel a bit disappointed* (Solza's father, age 61, ethnic Macedonian, April 2016)

*I do respect anyone, from any nation and religion. But when it comes to marriage I don't agree with my daughters getting married with someone else. [...] He has to be Albanian, not Muslim, but Albanian. [...] I am not ok with taking as husband a Muslim from Turkey or Arabia* (Florina's mother, age 56, ethnic Albanian, August 2016)

*No no no. If they want to marry a Macedonian girl is not ok. No Slavs here. No Macedonians, no Serbian, no Greeks. No. This doesn't happen in my community. We have hated each other for such a long time, still needs time* (Durim's father, age 52, ethnic Albanian, July 2016)

Parents' rather negative answers were, in most of the cases, about the possibility of a mixed marriage between Macedonians and Albanians. Ethnic Macedonians, generally, were fine with a mixed marriage with someone of the same religious tradition (Christian Orthodox); while ethnic Albanians, instead, were favouring marriages with members of the same nation – not religion, confirming the little importance religion always had for the Albanian nation.

The answers provided by the parents' generation confirm an already well established reality in the Macedonian society, where inter-ethnic relations were and remain superficially good, and where the 'mixing' generally doesn't penetrate the more

intimate sphere of the personal life.

Ethnonationality's importance, thus, has remained constant over time: sustained by macro-elements such as institutions and political parties, it remains and confirm itself to be a powerful element de-limiting groups' boundaries and limiting social interactions. Therefore, although the system and its apparatus have changed, they did it in a way that did not require people a re-adjustment to new conditions.

## **5.2 The Post-Yugoslav Generation.**

### **Young Adults in Transition**

The young post-Yugoslavs enclosed in the sample were 13, and in only one case both brother and sister have been interviewed, being both born between 1985 and 1990.

7 of them were ethnic Macedonians, 5 ethnic Albanians and 1 ethnic Roma.

As in their parents' case, ways of identification were exclusively ethnonational so, while quoting them, I put on bracket their self-declared ethnonationality.

More than half of the young adults interviewed were currently employed, the others were unemployed and, among these, one boy was finishing its university studies. All of them, but one boy, studied at the university and had at least a BA. Two girls, one ethnic Albanian and one ethnic Macedonian, studied abroad for their MA.

All the respondents were living at home with heir parents.

None of the ethnic Macedonian interviewed spoke the Albanian language while, both the ethnic Albanians and the Roma did spoke Macedonian in addition to their own mother languages. All of them, however, were fluent in English.

The vast majority of the young adults interviewed was not, at the time of the interviews, member of any political party or involved in any political activity - except for the Roma girl, member of one Roma party as well as member of the City Council of Skopje, and one ethnic Macedonian boy member of *Protestiram*<sup>117</sup>, the organization involved in the protests going on in Skopje at that time.

For what concerned their religious origins, all the ethnic Macedonians were Orthodox by tradition but the largest part of them preferred the term 'agnostic', while one girl was atheist. The ethnic Albanians were all Muslims by tradition except for one boy, declared atheist. The Roma girl also declared to be agnostic, although her family was

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<sup>117</sup> See: <http://protestiram.info/>

Geova Witness. None of the young adults interviewed, except for one ethnic Albanian girl, was practicing religion.

### **5.2.1 From Childhood to Adulthood: Understanding Youth's Social Life**

In order to understand if and how relevant is ethnonationality in youth's lives, which meanings do they attribute to it, and how/if they use it in some particular contexts or occasions, we should first reconstruct their micro-environments according to their own perspective. In the light of the interviews performed with their parents, the following sections deal with the young adults' families and social circles, as well as their political opinions and modalities of interactions with political representatives.

#### **5.2.1.1 School and Friends**

All the young adults interviewed went to primary and secondary school in Skopje - and all of them in almost monoethnic schools and classrooms<sup>118</sup>. Ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians never mixed in the same classroom while other minor communities did - as, for instance, Roma or Turks.

*I was the only Roma in my classroom. [...] My teacher - you know, they do these ethnic counting of the pupils, to see how many Macedonians, how many other ethnicities and so on; well, when the person in charge came in our classroom, my teacher was like 'they are all Macedonians' and I said 'no, no wait I'm not Macedonian, I'm roma'. And they were like 'oh really?! When did roma people start to go to school?' (Zurija, age 30, ethnic Roma, April 2016)*

*In Macedonia school is always pure Albanians or pure Macedonians. At school we learn Albanian language since we are kids. Macedonians have separate classrooms (Rudina, age 27, ethnic Albanian, March 2016)*

*I remember every year, at the beginning of the year, they were asking us, to*

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<sup>118</sup> One ethnic Albanian girl went to a Macedonian International high school where, however, she said the majority of the students were ethnic Macedonians; nevertheless, she had a higher opportunity to mingle with students of different ethnic backgrounds;



*declare our ethnicity. They were doing some statistics [...] I remember in my primary and secondary there were maybe one Serb and one Vlach. No Albanians and no Muslims at all (Mario, age 25, ethnic Macedonian, April 2016)*

As seen in Chapter 4, education in Macedonia is segregated – which means students either go to different ‘ethnic’ schools, or the same school building provides education for both the communities but in different classrooms/floors/shifts. In any case, until the end of high school, students are not used to mix with each other.

While describing this segregated reality, many of the young interviewees critically acknowledged the dangerous potential of the educational system, pointing the attention on the role ruling political parties have in fostering ethnonational division for political purposes.

*I will tell you something: in Orce Nikolov there was a school - Nikola Karev - and it was the same school with two different names, the Albanian part and the Macedonian part. They were together but functioning in two different shifts, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Now its only Macedonian and the Albanian have another school in the Albanian part of the city. You see? Political issues and parties, the politicians, are doing this. They are dividing us. (Florina, age 26, ethnic Albanian, July 2016)*

*[...] like the high school Nikola Karev - from the morning until noon Macedonian people going to school, and then after noon Albanians and Turkish. So you see, this is also one strategy to divide people. (Solza, age 28, ethnic Macedonian, March 2016)*

These quotations go in the direction of what stated in the previous chapter about ethnopolitics, thus confirming the use of the educational system for political and nationalist purposes.

For what concerned, instead, friendship relations and groups of friends, these emerged slightly more mixed – but not for the ethnic Macedonians, whose friendship relations were mostly confined to the in-group.

*I don't have Albanian friends. Never had – neither in school nor in university. [...] I met some Albanians during my work, now...but they are all very well*

*educated and mostly living abroad* (Bojana, age 29, ethnic Macedonian, March 2016)

*Now I'm communicating with this Albanian girl and...I didn't expect her to be different but...she's as anybody else. This is my first communication with an Albanian girl – I have never spoken to an Albanian girl before* (Filip, age 28, ethnic Macedonian, February 2016)

Although these two last quotations may sound rather extreme, they are far from portraying isolated realities: ethnic Macedonians youth, even when knowing someone belonging to a different group, described those people as acquaintances, not as friends.

Rather different was, instead, the case of the non-ethnic Macedonians young adults, whose groups of friends were considerably more mixed.

*My closest friends are a Serbian, a Bosnian and an Albanian* (Zurija, age 30, ethnic Roma, April 2016)

*I have lots of Macedonian friends, Bosnians also. Turks I know some* (Rudina, age 27, ethnic Albanian, March 2016)

These situations may be understood both in terms of majority-minority dynamics, as well as in the light of the influence other variables exert on youth's modalities, and opportunities, of interaction in the society (i.e. youth's family environments, school classes and the ethnic composition of the Skopje's neighbourhoods).

### **5.2.2 Inter-Ethnic Relations: 'We don't bother each other, that's all'**

As in the case of their parents, inter-ethnic relations between the different groups composing the society of Skopje emerged to be rather distant. Youth do not mix much, and the groups have been described as living rather different and separated lives.

*I can say inter-ethnic relations are quite calm but still the division is very obvious and deep: there is peace but we are not living, cooperating together.*

*There are no friendships, not even love relations. They live in their side, we live in ours. We don't bother each other, that's all (Mario, age 25, ethnic Macedonian, April 2016)*

*There are some inter-ethnic problems [...] but I think relations are not that bad, they are a bit cold. Both the sides do not want to engage that much in building some kind of good relation with each other (Kostadin, age 25, ethnic Macedonian, April 2016)*

As the young respondents said, a considerable source of distance between the groups is connected to widespread stereotypes and prejudices. As they clarified, there are some rooted popular says connected to both the 'low cultural status' of the ethnic Albanians, and the 'attitude of superiority' ethnic Macedonians have towards the others. As the interviewees explained, sometimes these say/jokes and prejudices are learned at home, from their families and relatives.

*For my parents Serbs are the same shit as us; Bosnians are cheerful and loving people, Montenegrins are lazy but they are also Serbs who do not want to say they are Serbs [...] and Albanians...this is very fascist to say but 'they know their place in society' ...You sense it? It's like if they do not know anymore where is their place in society and ask for rights. Their place is below us, out of the city, on the mountains [...] it's sad but it's true, I've heard that, and I don't agree with that (Filip, age 28, ethnic Macedonian, February 2016)*

*Macedonians have a joke about Albanians. Because they lived in the mountains for many years, they were conducting incest...so we have jokes about that, because many – I don't want to sound racist – but many of them do not look properly. So you get to notice an Albanian from far away (Ilijas, age 26 ethnic Macedonian, March 2016)*

*My sister had a conversation with a professor once, and she said that Albanians come from the mountains...whaaaat?? A professor said that? You still hear these things. (Lura, age 27, ethnic Albanian, August 2016)*

*If you go to Aerodrom, no Albanians. If you go there, you have to go with a gun [laughs]. I'm kidding but...no seriously, I'm being honest, if you go there you*

*have to go with something because you can be beaten up by the Macedonians*  
(Florina, age 26, ethnic Albanian, July 2016)

*A Macedonian in Ćair would be treated like a king because of our hospitality. He would be a guest and no one will touch him. But they don't do the same with us* (Durim, age 25, ethnic Albanian, July 2016)

It's worth to clarify that, when mentioning those jokes/says, the interviewees were pointing the attention on the backwardness of those who believe in these same jokes, taking the distance from that attitude.

None of the interviewees, as they said, has ever been personally discriminated or threatened by members of other groups.

Overall, what emerged from the interviews with the young adults in matter of inter-ethnic relations is not much different from what emerged in the interviews with their parents. Contacts between the two larger groups are scarce and superficial, and the divide fuelled by mistrust and negative prejudices already rooted in the larger society. Nevertheless, as the young interviewees pointed out, the ethnic divisions featuring the school system as well as the city of Skopje do not help them in making inter-ethnic friendships and in crossing the borders of ethnonational belonging.

*You can find Albanians that never crossed the Stone Bridge alone - because, unfortunately, we call it 'the other side', in a way it separates us. But I also found Macedonians that have never been in Ćair* (Kastriot, age 25, ethnic Albanian, April 2016)

*I've attended an international University in Avtokomanda - International Balkan University - and we had a lot of international students. I had a colleague - she is Macedonian, living there in Avtokomanda where there are only Macedonians and no Albanians. And she was like, in primary and secondary schools, only with Macedonians. So when she came to university and she met a lot of Albanians, Turks...she was surprised and now her best friend is a Turkish and she's mixed with Albanians, Turkish... She went in a lot of projects where there are different people and she's so happy and all the time she's saying 'thanks god that I came here and I saw that there is not only Macedonians, because I wasn't seeing*

people except for Macedonians'. *And she now has a lot of Albanian friends, and she's so happy about that.* (Florina, age 26, ethnic Albanian, July 2016)

The only place in Skopje that emerged to be (to some extent) 'ethnically mixed' was the old bazaar – where all the young interviewees are used to go when they want to have fun.

*The city is separated in two parts: the Albanian one, which is actually more multicultural and it's in the northern part of the river, and the Macedonian one which is in the southern part. But it's not a clear line, people can move. [...] A few years back, maybe 5 or 6 years ago, there was almost no place where young people from different ethnic groups could mix. [...] But today is not like this anymore. When I go out in the old town, I see most of the places are visited by Albanians, Macedonians and Turks as well [...]. But still, even today, we know which place is Macedonian and which one is not* (Ilijas, age 26, ethnic Macedonian, March 2016)

Once again, the 'ethnic-mix' emerged to be superficial, and because of two main reasons: first, it is confined to a delimited area of the city of Skopje and, secondly, although people from different backgrounds are physically present in the same area, contacts and interactions between them remain confined to the in-group.

### **5.2.3 Political Attitudes and Political Opinions**

When asked about their political orientations, often the young adults interviewed couldn't not answer in ideological terms – positioning themselves on the left-right continuum, and I have sometimes been asked to explain what 'values and ideas' corresponded to the right and the left respectively. Generally, the distinction they were making was between ruling and oppositional parties – in most of the cases taking the distance from the former.

At the time of the interviews, the 'collapsing' ruling coalition was made by the ethnic Macedonian VMRO-DPMNE and the ethnic Albanian DUI, with Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, leader of VMRO-DPMNE. The political crisis was at its peak and the wiretapping scandal (the so-called 'bombs', revealed in February 2015), triggered the then 'Colourful Revolution' (in April 2016) – massive everyday protests mainly

held in Skopje against the government. The ‘bombs’ revealed facts about electoral frauds, corruption and money laundry - particularly (but not exclusively) connected to the massive public investments made for ‘Skopje 2014’<sup>119</sup>. The political situation was shaking, and the precarious Macedonia’s equilibrium was going to break down.

As a consequence, some of the youth interviewed started to be interested into politics exactly because of the political crisis, following with attention what was going on, and many also participating to the on-going ‘Colourful Revolution’. Some others, instead, gave up with politics.

*I really wasn’t interested into politics; I was turning to the other side when my parents were listening to politics in TV...until when the Prime Minister Gruevski presented the project Skopje 2014. When I saw it, I was like ‘Oh my god! What’s happening?!’, and this is when I started to listen what they are talking about, listen to news and other people’s opinions (Solza, age 28, ethnic Macedonian 2016)*

*Before the political crisis I wasn’t interested. We don’t have this culture, we don’t know our rights maybe, we’re just talking about everyday politics but we are not familiar with that (Marija, age 28, ethnic Macedonian, May 2016)*

*I was used to be interested previously [...], thinking that the country was moving towards the Europe’s direction and things forward to the accession process [...] Then, I don’t know, things slow down and, ever since then, it’s just stagnation – nothing is changing, it’s the same people, the same messages being spread to*

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<sup>119</sup> The project ‘Skopje 2014’, ideated by Nikola Gruevski (Prime Minister and leader of VMRO) foresaw the building of tens of statues of both ancient Macedonian figures and other Macedonia’s historical figures and heroes, new buildings in neo-classical and baroque style, the re-naming of streets and other places after ancient Macedonians figures (as the airport, the stadium etc.) and so on. The projected resulted quite controvert for many reasons, not only for the non-transparent investments but also because of the conveyed nationalist narrative according to which the modern ethnic Macedonians are direct descendants of the Ancient Macedonians of Alexander the Great (see Saveski, Sadiku, *The Radical Right in Macedonia* (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2012; Vangeli 2011. ‘Nation building ancient Macedonian style: the origins and the effects of the so-called antiquization in Macedonia’. *Nationality Papers*, 39:1, pp. 13-32);

*people. I stopped reading news years ago. [...] I got so much used to live in this type of society that I don't even pay attention to anything anymore* (Bojana, age 29, ethnic Macedonian, march 2016)

All the interviewees, regardless their ethnonationality of belonging and without distinguishing between 'theirs and other groups' parties', were disappointed by the political class, and expressed their concerns for the state's malfunctioning as well as for the country's non-democratic conditions. Politics was described as *ethnocentric*, *populist* and *nationalist*.

Political parties, as the youth explained, work only through nationalist platforms and multi-ethnic or non-nationalist parties barely find any support. Nationalism and ethnocentrism, in an already polarized society, are the winning cards. On this purpose, the ruling coalition VMRO-DPMNE - DUI, on power from 2006 to 2016, was described as follow:

*They are pragmatist. Whenever they feel the necessity they resent themselves using the discourse of underdogs 'we are the suppressed ones, we need to rise' and that's when the underdog wants to mobilize people. Also they have this logic that is institutions: 'we are the ruling party, every conflict, every problem in society will go through our institutions – which work perfectly since we are the ruling parties – so don't worry, everything is ok'. This is when they want to address the electorate, to give them the feeling of assurance. 'Just vote for us again, we have everything under control'* (Filip, age 28, ethnic Macedonian, February 2016)

*VMRO-DPMNE is very nationalist party and all the time they do spread nationalism, even if they say they don't. DUI is very similar. [...] They use nationalist tools to make people vote for them – because in the Balkans people are very patriotic. [...] One example is what happened last month: the Albanian party DUI put an eagle flag in a square in one of the neighbourhood, in Čair. They put the eagle flag and their people were happy, saying 'You see what they have done?! They have put our flag in Skopje!' But then you have the reaction of VMRO: 'you put the eagle flag so now we put a cross!' And that's so stupid because they don't think about developing economy, education [...], they just give a bad energy to the people with these signs* (Rudina, age 27, ethnic Albanian, March 2016)

*VMRO and DUI are nationalist. Nationalist rhetoric works. Ever since 2002, which is the first election after the conflict, all the parties run with a nationalist platform. DUI had a war, it didn't have to prove its nationalism. [...] Then in 2002-06 many reforms were taken, perhaps also privatizations were devastating; many families lost their jobs. So many Macedonians had the feeling that they were losing their jobs because of SDSM [that was on power at that time] and because of the Albanians, because now they were employed in the public administration. [...] Then you have VMRO that, since 2006...I don't remember any of its campaigns that wasn't nationalist. (Lura, age 27, ethnic Albanian, August 2016)*

The ruling parties (VMRO and DUI at the time of the interviews), by using nationalism and ethnocentrism, alongside misusing institutional provisions enacted with the OFA, have been able to gain masses support by exploiting people's anger and frustrations. By promising a better future to their respective peoples, they have maintained power. Collective frustrations and distance have, thus, been nurtured by the ruling parties themselves in order to maintain in place a fragile equilibrium featuring what I've previously defined 'Divide et Impera' (see Chapter 4).

*Although it's not official we live in a sort of federation. Western Macedonia and the institutions there, are mainly run by DU. You have the majority of the people working there that are Albanians, and for a Macedonian is very hard to go throughout the institutions because not everybody speaks Macedonian. Then you have Eastern Macedonia and Skopje that is pro-Macedonians, and if you're Albanian you have problems with your language. Economy is the same: VMRO has several companies which are favoured when doing business – private companies; and DUI also has its own private companies which are favoured in western Macedonia. So you can see two separate words, they only join up when there are elections, when there are some important issues. For example, when there is an economical crisis, and the wellbeing of DUI and VMRO is threatened – and that's the moment to have ethnic tensions [...]. They use this nationalist rhetoric in order to control the population. (Stefan, age 26, ethnic Macedonian, April 2016)*

*They are playing with elections, with people in the electoral lists that were not existing, just to gain votes. They are not interested in what people think, they are*



*just interested in what their people think – people from their parties. [...] There is not a government elected by the people, it's elected by criminal activities. Also they stole all the major media houses to present only the informations they want to present – which is creating an image that is not real (Solza, age 28, ethnic Macedonian, April 2016)*

*You know the separation center-bazar? The politicians did that! We are separated because politicians are influencing us. For example, if the Macedonian government would have given us more opportunities and would have built more good things in the Albanian part, that would have increased the cooperation between us – between Albanians and Macedonians, it would have increased the willingness to cooperate with each other, to live more peacefully. But no, politicians are separating us. [...] It's because of their personal interests, so simple. (Florina, age 26, ethnic Albanian, July 2016)*

*The OFA allowed them to put more people in the public administration. It should be a good thing but the sad truth is that the bigger parties are using it as a way to gain people support for their parties (Zurija, age 30, ethnic Roma, April 2016)*

As the youth explained, political parties and their leaders have a huge influence on people's lives thanks to some strategies implemented 'to tie their ethnic masses'. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the use of media is one of the most powerful.

*People in this country are verily easily served with lies. Most of our medias are owned by the ruling parties, so in the rural parts of Macedonia, where people maybe do not have internet, they all watch TV – which is held either by VMRO or DUI. They always blame the opposition, any single time. I think people in my country don't know actually know what is democracy and how it should function (Ilijas, age 26, ethnic Macedonian, March 2016)*

*Media are very polarized, they're instruments inside of the ruling parties, they're actually working on deepening cleavages in the society. You can see most of the media reporting with hatred, or not open hatred but reporting how we are deprived from them [the ethnic Albanian community], how we are discriminated by them, and they're – maybe not openly – but they're creating a*

*public opinion to fit within this divisions and clashes that the ruling elites are producing (Mario, age 25, ethnic Macedonian, May 2016)*

*Most of the medias are pro-government medias. The biggest national TVs are supporting the government. There are a few non-governmental medias that are telling the truth but they are very little, just a few of them (Zurija, age 30, ethnic Roma, April 2016)*

Given their opinions and explanations on the current social and political situation, the young adults interviewed said not to trust their state's institutions, filled with and by corruption and clientelism, nor the(ir) political representatives. The interviewees happened to share the same opinions and had very similar perceptions - and regardless their ethnonational origins and backgrounds. Overall, politics emerged to be a main issue of concern, pervading youth's lives in many different ways.

#### **5.2.4 Young Adults on Clientelism**

While discussing politics and political preferences, the young adults largely pointed the attention on the issues of clientelism and corruption, both concerning the interviewees and, in some cases, even involving them directly. As in the case of their parents, the phenomenon of clientelism was reduced to the sole issue of public employment and no other 'favour' was mentioned. Once again, this was probably due to the wiretapping scandal exploded in 2015, which brought the public attention on the 'political parties' mediated employment procedures'.

Almost all of the young adults interviewed knew someone employed in the public administration via political parties and they all knew the 'mechanism' – meaning, how to get and pay back the favour.

*If you are close to them, they will tell you, they are no ashamed. Usually they say it's normal, everyone does it. They do activities for the party...this person I know, she was working for a governmental institution and simultaneously for the party – going to meetings, gathering other people that will vote for the party. They bring them members. She doesn't like VMRO, it's just because of the job. (Marija, age 28, ethnic Macedonian, May 2016)*

*I know that if I accept it, I have to do whatever they want. You are in trap, you really are. You have to do whatever they say, you can't decide what to do in your job, you have to vote for them, you have to attach posters for them when elections come, you have to share everything on Facebook. You are DUI.* (Rudina, age 27, ethnic Albanian, March 2016)

Many explained that, if in the last decade (with VMRO and DUI on power) the ‘thing has gone too far’, those practices are not confined neither to those parties nor to the current moment. Clientelism was seen as a very well rooted phenomenon in the country, and scepticism for the future remains together with a veil of mistrusts towards the other political parties – opposition included.

*This country, its fundament, is clientelistic.* (Filip, age 28, ethnic Macedonian, February 2016)

*SDSM is very active now, as I can see, they are also putting in their program points about Albanians [...]. I hope something will change, but even if it does, I'm not expecting something big. It will be just new people* (Kastriot, age 25, , April 2016)

*I think that since when VMRO is in charge many people have been hired but I also think that there are people hired by the other parties as well. It's a cultural thing. Maybe it has gone too far with VMRO because they have been on power for too long and they have created a big network [...]. I'm scared if in the future SDSM comes to govern Macedonia, then the trend will continue and, as I said, it will be just a new façade* (Kostadin, age 25, ethnic Macedonian, April 2016)

*DUI has given work to 20.000 families, also to people that stays home and gets paid and doesn't need to go to work. So people are afraid to lose their jobs and will keep on voting for them* (Durim, age 25, ethnic Albanian, July 2016)

Youth mainly described clientelistic practices as tools created and exploited by the main political parties in order to maintain their power positions at the expenses of the state functioning and society's wellbeing. From this perspective, as argued by Wimmer (2004) and pointed out by the interviewees, political parties see their constituencies as mere ‘ethnic groups of interests’, (poor) people that can easily be

manipulated and bribed.

*In Šuto Orizari it's mainly Roma people living there, it's kinda ghetto actually. For the elections, you can see bribing from all the political parties...giving money, giving food, or even forcing them to go to vote. We are talking about a population that is really poor, mainly surviving from the social welfare, so in time of elections they get promises that cannot be respected (Zurija, age 30, ethnic Roma, April 2016)*

*People have been promised with a job, and then they vote for them. So they [political parties] are not really taking care of services - but you know, people are poor, they need a job, so basically that's the only promise worth to give (Lura, age 27, ethnic Albanian, , August 2016)*

While discussing reasons and motivations behind people's involvement in these 'networks', youth have widely pointed the attention on dimensions that did not emerge during the conversations with their parents. If the older generation, predominantly if not solely, pointed the attention on the group dimension – framing and explaining clientelistic practices in terms of the socio-political statuses occupied by the ethnonational groups, the interviews with the youth furnished a different picture, focusing on the individual dimension and shedding light on the reasons – above all economical - behind the individuals' involvement into those practice. In the youth's case, thus, clientelistic practices were described as power strategies based on the political exploitation of citizens' economic insecurities so to assure the dominant parties with a certain degree of electoral support.

The youth, less familiar with the political issues of the 1990s – time in which they were too young to understand and be interested into politics – did not frame and explain clientelistic practices in terms of ideological/national struggles, status elevation/decay of their own ethnonational groups or collective frustrations. Rather, in terms of bad politics and individuals' need of survival.

*In the last couple of years no one voted for them because liked the political ideology. Mostly they did it because they needed something to survive. (Bojana, age 29, ethnic Macedonian, March 2016)*

This different way of understanding, framing and describing the same practice compared to their parents represents an interesting generational difference: because of their different life experiences, parents were largely seeing the clientelism's collective outcome – meaning, the increased/decreased institutional representation of one group at the expenses of another one. It was the ethnic group dimension the dominant one in their explanations.

Their children, instead, less familiar and probably less emotionally attached to 'old national struggles', were describing ethnic clientelism as a political strategy employed by ruling parties to gain and maintain power by exploiting economic malaise in order to 'push' people into particularistic networks.

#### ***5.2.4.1 Young Adults and Employment via Ethnonational Political Parties***

The majority of the youth interviewed was regularly employed, and only a few were jobless (one boy was finishing his university studies).

In the vast majority of the cases, they were employed either in the private sector or in some NGO, while two of them in governmental institutions. Among these latter, one boy said he got employed thanks to DUI's mediation while, another young ethnic Albanian adult in the sample had a previous experience of working thanks (and for) DUI.

No ethnic Macedonian in the sample had any direct experience of employment with a Macedonian political party. Nevertheless, I managed to interview two ethnic Macedonian boys that are currently employed by VMRO and accepted to give me an interview – however denying the possibility of meeting their parents.

In what follows are briefly presented four different cases of employment via political party. The aim is to show, from youth's perspective, which may be the possible reasons behind 'getting involved into favouritism practices' and, particularly, which is – if any - the role of one's own ethnonationality. Although different, the four cases below presented all have one thing in common: the involvement of the youth's close relatives – their parents.

##### **1) Family Prestige: *'They had to pay the favour back'***

*I got my job thanks to DUI. I called someone, that someone called someone else.*

*My grandfather was rich and helped the party a lot in its beginning. So now they gave me back the favour. DUI doesn't work with the party card, just money. You give them 500 – 1000€ and you get the job. If you are employed by the party, you cannot say or show anything against it. They would say 'thank you we don't need you anymore'. (Durim, age 25, ethnic Albanian, July 2016)*

## 2) Family Connections and Unemployment

*I am ashamed but I've to say it... I've been working two years in the municipality of Čair - where I live - as part time photographer. Because we are from Kičevo, the hometown of the leader of DUI and we're supposed to be with his party, where everybody think and look at us as 'ah you're from Kičevo, you're DUI'. In two years I got two campaigns with them. [...] After high school I met the director and the major and then some of their people checked if I'm a good guy or a bad guy - but I look as a DUI guy since we are from Kičevo. They asked if I wanted to work for them, I said yes, I was in university and I was like 'wow, cool'.*

*Then I got a new job, a new company was opening, a private company, I applied there and I got the job, and I left the municipality...it was the final moment that I could escape from them, because I started not to like that job, I wasn't comfortable.*

*They were surprised and even pissed off on me like 'what are you doing? Are you stupid? My god you're leaving a state job, you're making the biggest mistake of your life' – because everyone here is fighting to get a state job. But not me, not me anymore, I don't want to have a state job in Macedonia. But young people want to get employed. As a gift from the OFA we have to work there, take 200 euro and wow we're happy. So they were like 'wow you are leaving this job, you could get better, you could become a minister' – because now everybody is becoming minister. I just quitted. (Kastriot, age 25, ethnic Albanian, April 2016)*

## 3) Lack of Opportunities and Family Consent: 'When you live in a place far away from the city...you don't have many options'

*Yes...ok. I am a member of the party. VMRO. I also got a job from them. [...] I was filling like more patriotic, but they used me, you know? I was small and I*

*didn't understand that. It was 2006, I was something between 16 and 18 years old and I started to go to the party meetings, stuff for the youth, I was in that group. Later I understood... [...] They have the party for the youth, I was going to meetings, we were discussing the problems of our place, it was good, I wanted to contribute somehow to the good of my village. It was both in Skopje and in my village. It was ok at the beginning, but then they were using me: 'you must go there, you must do that, you must'. [...] It's not a good job but if my income collapses I will be...I live by myself, it'll be a problem. [...] They are first telling you 'you must', so if you don't, they will take other actions – they will say 'you are losing your job'. The biggest percentage of the people who are going to meetings are obliged and there are many who will again vote for them just because of that, people are afraid. [...] When you live in a place that is far away from the city...you don't have many options [...].*

*[My parents] They were initially more or less against...but now – which I cannot understand – they are ok and more supporting VMRO, I'm arguing with my mother all the times, trying to open her eyes [...] But she is watching television. The only information that she's receiving is from television. They cannot see the real situation; media is the biggest problem, it's very brainwashing. (Anonymous, age 26, ethnic Macedonian, May 2016)*

#### 4) Family Heritage and Ideology: 'I come from a hard-core patriotic family'

*I come from a hard-core patriotic family. My father passed away, but he was used to say that he did not like Yugoslavia because there was no state, there was no meritocracy at work, and VMRO people were imprisoned by the system because it was a nationalist party so banned. My parents are anti-communist: if the system was really good - as they were used to say - it would not have collapsed. VMRO-DPMNE was the first party for the independence of Macedonia. Macedonians, we never want to surrender, and VMRO is in the genes of the Macedonian people. I joined the party in 2006, at the age of 14. [...] I'm the youngest in the party, I was President of \*\*\*, then Vice, I'm now \*\*\* of VMRO in the Municipality, I'm the youngest \*\*\* (I didn't succeed because of gender balance, but I will try again with the new elections).*

*I work in the Ministry of \*\*\* [...] We win because we satisfy our people. And if we work in the state institutions is only because from there we can better satisfy the needs of our people. [...] There is this thing about corruption: prove it! Let's*

*face the justice, what the court will say, but prove it! Also in Italy, Falcone proved the tie between mafia and the state, so it's ok, but demonstrate it! We are corrupted and we steal? Prove it! [...] Macedonia is not facing a huge economic crisis exactly because we invested in new buildings, and when you invest in this way, you also create job opportunities: that's how we employ and that's why Macedonia is succeeding in postponing the economic crisis (Anonymous, age 24, ethnic Macedonian, July 2016)*

The four examples, not exhaustive of the social reality, do however give a good insight of youth's reality, showing not only why some of them engage in certain practices but also what's the role played by their families, their social and economical circumstances, and their ethnonationality as well.

For what concerns the family, parents have clearly a huge influence: in none of the cases the practice was condemned nor prevented; on the contrary, it was accepted and even encouraged and supported. In two out of four cases parents/family were directly involved in the clientelistic practice while in the other two only indirectly, supporting their children's choice.

Life circumstances also did play a role: in half of the cases the young boys, after having finished their studies, exploited family connections and the political party to obtain a stable public job. In one case was, instead, matter of 'lack of alternatives' given that rural places often do not offer much recreational and cultural activities for the youth. Finally, it was only in the last case that ideology and family tradition mattered more than economic and social circumstances.

Last but not least, ethnonationality. Its 'ideological' importance did emerged only in one case while, in all the others, ethnonationality simply and silently channelled the young adults into the right path, functioning as a filter in a state unofficially divided into two major ethnic communities and functioning according to ethnicized mechanism of representation and redistribution of resources - so confirming that, according to 'who you are', you know which door you have to knock.

### **5.2.5 Parents and Children. What do they discuss at Home? The Youth's Perspective**

Concerning their family environments, the youth confirmed their parents' answers



and descriptions. Politics is not much debated, mostly confined to comments while watching TV news, and only in a few cases it was an ordinary matter of debate. Generally children's political opinion are not very diverse to the ones of their parents, although their perspectives are sometimes slightly different given their different ages and life's experiences. In some cases, the youth interviewed said to have very different opinions compared to their parents:

*You will see, they are conservative. [...] My father is conservative; he's probably also racist. My father still hates Albanians, my mother doesn't. I donno why he hates Albanians. [...] We don't speak in detail about things; it's more preaching, never conversations (Stefan, age 26, ethnic Macedonian, April 2016)*

*Our political opinions are not close, not at all. We agree very rarely. Their opinion is that this country has to be ruled in this way, and this party in charge, VMRO, is doing that. They trust them – while I think the opposite. This kind of politics is very decadent for us (Ilijas, age 26, ethnic Macedonian, March 2016)*

*We have very different ideas. My parents like the changes VMRO is doing [...]. That situation with the protest, my father thinks they want to destroy our country, the forces from outside (Marija, age 28, ethnic Macedonian, May 2016)*

Besides those cases of major disagreement, the two generations interviewed emerged as rather aligned.

Parents, as the youth said, have always been rather 'liberal' in their education, letting them doing their own experiences and, despite personal opinions, never prohibiting them hanging out with people of different ethnicities or religions. Parents have sometimes advised their children to be careful when going in some areas of the city – as any parent would do.

Finally, although the younger generation has, sometimes, described their parents as having a different perception or different ideas on certain issues, the family environment has resulted featured by a rather consistent degree of similarity and alignment with 'the new system'.

Concerning this last point, the interviews with the older generation did show parents are overall aligned with the new system and are oriented towards the future: no one was 'Yugonostalgic' and the vast majority of them had (regardless ethnonational

belonging) a rather cold attitude towards the Yugoslav past.

*I don't know how really better was back then, it sounds surreal. Probably was a populist method as well (Solza, age 28, ethnic Macedonian, March 2016)*

*My dad was a lot more Yugonostalgic than her. My mom not at all. I think that mostly because my mom works in this pharmacy company [...] they needed to adjust to the changing environment [...] she followed the trends were happening in the world and than she started living in this world. My dad didn't succeeded in this capitalist world, he always wanted to go back. [...] I only have partial informations about it [Yugoslavia]. I was very much born in this new world [...] In high school there were these people who were listening to Yugo rock but I was never part of anything like that. I've never listening to that kind of music, I don't even know ... for example, there are people that today still listen to Serbian music and talk about Yugo actors. I don't know any of them. [...] I don't know what Ekaterina Velika is. (Bojana, age 29, ethnic Macedonian, March 2016)*

Regardless the ethnonational backgrounds, and because of the reasons specified in the section about Yugoslavia in the beginning of the chapter, parents did not talk much about Yugoslavia with their children – which, from their side, generally did not ask too much, they were not really interested in that topic. I found shocking and surprising that, sometimes, it was only during the interviews that children were discovering facts about their parents' 'previous life'. Yugoslavia was thus part of a far past, 'another world', and the nostalgia for it generally understood as the symptomatic effect of a failed adaptation to the new system.

The younger generation, born during the years of the transition and completely socialized in the 'new world', have in fact demonstrated to have a rather superficial knowledge and detached opinion about 'that world'. And their parents, for the largest part better satisfied with, and well adapted to, the changed system, have raised their children accordingly.

### **5.3 Conclusive Reflections.**

#### **Yugoslav Parents and the Post-Yugoslav Children.**

##### **Understanding Ethnonational Belonging across the Two Generations**

The chapter has investigated meanings and functions of ethnonationality across two different generations living together in the same family, and it has tried to assess the impact macro-factors have had/have on individuals belonging to different generations, so to identify possible inter-generational dis-continuities and dis-similarities.

According to the general hypothesis stated in the *Introduction*, the family scenario characterizing the findings in the context of Skopje is one of Adjustment, where both generations are aligned with the new system and there is no generational conflict given their adjustment to the new conditions. However, this inter-generational ‘continuity’ is only superficially due to a linear transmission parents-children; rather, it is largely due to a continuity in the macro-features of the context which have allowed for an overall unaltered maintenance of the social reality. Therefore, more than inter-generational continuity, we should better talk about inter-generational similarity allowed by the persistence of certain context’s features.

##### **5.3.1 Continuity and Changes: understanding the Yugoslav generation and the Family environment**

The macro-environment’s features, although changed with the collapse of Yugoslavia, had the effect of sustaining and even reinforcing already existing patterns of behaviours set up along ethnonational lines.

As seen, during the Yugoslav decades, despite the official policy of ‘Brotherhood and Unity’, ethnonationality did matter and it did it in both the social and political-institutional spheres. Ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians, as well as other smaller groups, occupied different social and political positions that, in turn, tailored the kind of relations established between the different groups.

Nevertheless, the ideological framework set up by the Socialist system and based on (formal) equality among the groups, kept collective frustrations and tensions away – or, at least, put them under the carpet for a while. As the interviewees said, ethnonationality has always mattered, channelling relations described as ‘good but superficial’ or ‘superficially close’.

It was with the events of the 1980s and 1990s that things started to change and antagonism came to the surface. A new reality was built upon previously existing but ideologically veiled ethnic cleavages, and ethnonationalism gave a voice to pre-existing collective frustrations freeing the divisive potential of ethnonational belonging.

As the interviews showed, the ethnic Macedonians' euphoria for the new state was reflected in the ethnic Albanians' frustration and dissatisfaction. Nevertheless, the SFRY collapse and the establishment of the Macedonian independent state, on the one side motivated (although in a different way) both groups' 'cold attitude' towards the Yugoslav system while, on the other side, they produced a concatenation of events eventually culminated in the 2001 conflict and the signing of the OFA, cementing the 'us and them' dichotomy.

Finally, the words of the older generation have shown how the introduction of the consociational model of democracy/ethnic power-sharing happened with the OFA, changed once again the cards on the table. The interviews with the parents' generation have illustrated both the ethnic Macedonians' feeling of frustration and the ethnic Albanians' feeling of partial satisfaction, given their status got better especially in terms of institutional representation. This last point resulted to be a very sensitive one during the interviews, not only highlighting how political-institutional issues have impacted the micro-world but also how the cemented 'institutional rivalry' between the two groups has resulted in an emphasized importance of ethnonationality itself.

Accordingly, groups' institutional representation was collectively understood as synonymous of groups' status – either elevation or decay - and groups' status in the larger society has always been matter of concern and debate between the two groups, and since the Yugoslav past. Nevertheless, it has been with the OFA that the issue reached the next level. The interviews have, in fact, shown the connection existing between groups' status in the larger state and related feelings, institutional representation grounded on ethnonational belongings and clientelistic practices. Accordingly, clientelism has been explained through the prisms of ethnic collectivism and framed exclusively in terms of ethnic groups' status and related collective outcomes. Favouritism practices were understood, by the majority group's respondents as a discrimination towards them and their 'supremacy in decay' while, by the other group, as an unfortunate outcome of an however step forward in matter of status elevation.

Finally, the ethnic Roma family included in the sample generally had a neutral attitude towards any social and political dynamic taking place in the republic, and since the Yugoslav past. All the major events characterizing the recent history of Macedonia have been gravitating around the two larger groups while the other communities have not played a determining role – thus their passivity.

This was further witnessed by the kind of answers received during the interviews: when asked about politics or inter-ethnic relations, the respondents were always referring to ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians – not even mentioning other smaller communities such as Roma, Turks, Vlachs and so on.

Concluding, if we want to be precise in the analysis about the Yugoslav generation of parents, there has actually been no alignment in strict sense, only continuity with the Yugoslav past. Macedonia was, already back in Yugoslavia, not featured by close inter-ethnic relations and majority/minority dynamics connected to the socio-political status the groups occupied, and wished to occupy, in the larger society have always characterized interactions and socio-political issues. The new system, meaning independent Macedonia, is certainly a different kind of polity compared to the previous one, but again based on the same cleavages and issues. The difference is only in the official/institutional way these cleavages and issues are articulated and managed.

This consideration also open for a reflection concerning the ethno-political system already analysed in Chapter 4: in the light of the findings above presented, the multiparty system can't but overlap social cleavages based on ethnicity and give strength to ethnocentrism and nationalism. Ethnonational political parties in Macedonia, in fact, do not play on the ground of 'cultural contamination' – meaning, they don't preach or sell protection from culturally different others, but they sell protection in terms of institutional representation. Groups' dignity and status are connected to their representation in the state bodies. So what is harmful is not others' religion or traditions, but *their* presence in the state institutions at the expenses of *our* people. So the battlefield is the state itself, and the deeper issue is about the nature of the state – if mono, bi or multinational.

The double narrative according to which '*this is our state/ this is also our state*', although never directly stated, was a *fil rouge* in all the interviews performed with the old generation, the lenses through which understand both groups' self-victimization and frustrations. Consequently, this made clear a shared feeling of belonging still has

to be created, and so is a civic common identification untied from ethnonationality - being the identity of the state itself understood differently between the communities. In turn, and understandably, ways of identification emerged to be articulated exclusively in ethnonational terms - also being the term 'Macedonian' ethnically connoted and hampering the possibility for other communities to identify themselves in that way.

Concluding, although the system has changed, it did not produce a drastic transformation demanding a 're-alignment' of the older generation; it changed in a way allowing previous distances to become even more pronounced, stressing the saliency of ethnonationality at both social and above all politico-institutional level.

The parents interviewed, socialized in Yugoslavia but in a republic resembling an ethnic nation-state and in which majority-minority dynamics always had a relevance, have therefore maintained a rather constant attachment towards their own ethnonational group and attitude towards the others. Given the changes Macedonia has gone through, it's thus not surprising the older generation interviewed had the tendency to explain and frame events and phenomena in terms of ethnic collectivities struggling for recognition and status elevation. Ethnonationality, already important and connected to group's socio-political status, so has remained - channelling social and political interactions and shedding light on a fundamental disagreement over the nature of the Macedonian state.

### **5.3.2 Inter-generational apparent Continuity and Generational Differences**

The younger and the older generation emerged to be very similar to each other, and we could think of a perfect inter-generational continuity. Both the two generations are aligned with the new system and no nostalgia from the past is hindering the alignment process.

However, since the purpose of this work is to assess inter-generational discontinuities and macro-influences on the meanings and functions of one's own ethnonational belonging, the kind of continuity emerged from the interviews is a continuity entailing the surrounding macro environment that, in turn, has allowed for a inter-generational similarity - not properly an inter-generational transmission and continuity.

This doesn't mean parents did not have any influence on their offspring – far from

that. But the modalities in which ethnonationality is understood, framed and used across the two generations are rather different although the final outcome is the same. Both the generations are aligned with the new system – but in two different points and dimensions.

As already analysed, parents, which lived the transition and the struggles for statehood and national recognition, had the tendency to frame/explain socio-political phenomena in the light of the 1991-2001 events – so they were aligned (or stuck) to *that* point of the transition and the group/ethnic collective dimension was the prevailing one in their discourses.

Their children, who instead did not live any transition or national struggle, took for granted the divisions existing because grown up and socialized in a very ethnically polarized environment. Therefore, their socio-political realities have been explained and framed in the light of the current ethnopolitics, pointing the attention on the political and economical factors allowing for, and perpetuating, the divide. In terms of behaviours, we can safely say that the features of the context have largely allowed for a certain degree of similarity between the two generations, and despite generational differences in the meanings attributed to one's own ethnonationality.

This generational similarity is, in fact, clear at a more superficial-behavioural level.

If we look at the kind of social interactions and the social distance separating the groups, the 'us and them' dichotomy was largely used by both the two generations, clearly marking the boundary line between the communities. As mentioned, other communities different than ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians were usually not mentioned and by none of the two generations.

The younger generation has generally grown up in rather monoethnic social environments that, overall, have precluded them the possibility of making inter-ethnic friendships. As emerged from the interviews, the family environment was never ethnically mixed, and so was the school environment at least until the end of the high school. Consequently, rather monoethnic were also their groups of friends; and only, in the case of the smaller groups (and in virtue of their being in minority) these were slightly more mixed than in the ethnic Macedonian case.

Besides superficial inter-generational similarities, the inner substance – so meanings and function of one's won ethnonationality - emerged to be rather different.

The young adults surveyed framed inter-group distance pointing the attention on different, external, factors - such as bad governance, economic deficiencies, domain

of national political parties and ethnocentric narratives. So, if the older generation framed reality mainly through the lenses of ethnic collectivism, and furnished explanations based on groups' struggles for status elevation were the prevailing ones, their children framed reality through the lenses of individualism, where ethnic collective divisions were depicted as politically created for power purposes however leading people to adapt to the rules set by above.

This represents a huge generational difference, which testimony how the events featuring the 1980s and 1990s deeply shaped the parents' ways of conceiving ethnonationality and belongings, the groups composing the larger state and the state itself; and how this way of signifying ethnonationality has however not been transmitted by one generation to the other one.

This different way of signifying ethnonationality was particularly evident while discussing groups' institutional representation and connected clientelistic practices: if the older generation let emerge a sense of collective frustration on the one side, and a sense of 'final upgrading' on the other one, youth have generally pointed the attention on political strategies connected to poor economic conditions, emphasizing how people – regardless ethnonational origins – get involved in certain dynamics for mere survival.

In turn, this opens for a further reflection on the role of political parties – not simply representatives of the groups but proxies towards collective rights (more emphasized by the older generation) and social benefits (more emphasized by the younger generation). Rights and benefits are, in fact, generally not redistributed to the individuals in quality of state citizens but to individuals in quality of ethnic group's members. So, if for the older generation ethnonationality was strictly connected to group's status and representation, for the younger generation it was comparable to 'a skill' spendable to obtain benefits.

This doesn't mean the youth did not demonstrate any attachment towards their own groups: they did it. But contrary to their parents, the youth had a more 'complex' view of the reality. In turn, the different meanings attributed to ethnonationality by parents and children also highlighted their different perceptions over the very nature of the state and its identity more in general.

The double narrative '*this is our state/ this is also our state*', although never directly stated, was always present in the old generations' interviews but absent in the younger generation's ones. Consequently, parents' focus on the group dimension and issues



related to groups' representation in the state bodies thus revealed a major disagreement over the nature of the state – if mono, bi or multinational, thus 'justifying' in that sense the dichotomy 'us and them'. Their children, more oriented towards the individual dimension and focused on other factors different from groups' struggles for recognition and status' upgrading, indirectly pointed the attention on the *multi-national* nature of their state and the need for building cohesion – hampered, as they said, by political and economical issues exploited by the (ethnic) political class. Thus, youth's tendency in widely using the 'us and them' dichotomy is explained by the deeply rooted divisions featuring their macro-social environment: youth saw the need for steps forwards aimed at bridging closer the two communities but, at the same time, they felt hampered by a surrounding that, as they often pointed out, it's not working for the wellbeing of the society but for deepening its divisions.

In both generations' case, ethnonational origins sharply define the boundaries of everyone's community, so making people's identities crystallized: Macedonians are the 'ethnic Macedonians', Albanians are ethnic Albanians with a Macedonian passport, Roma are Roma with a Macedonian passport.

*I can't say I feel Macedonian. But yes, I'm citizen of Macedonia, I was born here, of course I feel at home. But you are defined by your ethnic groups, we always say we are Albanian even though we live here – and I told you, we have always been here (Rudina, age 27, ethnic Albanian, March 2016)*

*In legal terms, when you go out from the country, you are a Macedonian but if they ask me I say I'm Roma (Zurija, age 30, ethnic Roma, April 2016)*

Regardless the generation and the group of belonging, ethnonationality helps framing reality, it defines the patterns of behaviours in the larger society and channels interactions – both between the groups and between them and the state/parties.

Once again, for what concerns meanings and functions of ethnonationality and the two generations' alignment with the new system, the apparent inter-generational continuity emerged is due to a certain degree of continuity in the macro-features of the Macedonian society more than to a linear transmission parents-children. As shown, ethnonationality is differently conceptualized, and serves different purposes, according to the generation surveyed.

## CHAPTER 6

### ***‘ETHNONATIONALITY HAS NEVER MATTERED’.***

#### **INTER-GENERATIONAL CONTINUITY BETWEEN COSMOPOLITANISM AND SURVIVAL. THE CASE OF SARAJEVO.**

This chapter is devoted to the family and inter-generational analysis in the context of Sarajevo. As done in the previous chapter about Skopje, the research results presented are critically discussed first analysing the older generation’s experiences and opinions and then the ones of the younger generation, so to reconstruct the family environment, possibly detecting inter-generational dis-continuities.

The first part of this chapter deals with the Yugoslav generation of parents, presenting the data gathered among 20 people between fathers and mothers (12 families). The first macro topic presented through the interviews’ extracts concerns, once again, the state and its institutions – beginning with the Yugoslav memories, passing by the conflict and arriving at the current political situation. As for the Macedonian case study, the parents’ generation was asked about many different issues, ranging from their political opinions and behaviours, their interaction with the state, its bodies and the political parties, to issues more closely related to the family environment and their children. The topic of inter-ethnic relations goes in parallel with the previous ones since, as it will be shown, connected and intertwined with historical-political events and dynamics.

The second part of the chapter, in the light of the family’s environment analysis, deals with the post-Yugoslav generation of children and goes deeper in their lives, finally aiming at understanding meanings and functions of one’s own ethnonationality, its possible continuities or changes between the two generations and the impact macro-factors have played and paly in shaping individual and generational attitudes.

As said in the previous chapter, while performing the research I avoided as much as possible ‘groupism’ and I tried not to frame the reality I was studying through the prism of ethnic belonging. Accordingly, and contrary to the Macedonian case study, in the Bosnian context the collective dimension did not emerge to be dominant, and the research findings are, thus, not presented according to the ethnonationality of the

respondents.

### **6.1 The Yugoslav Generation and Youth's Family Backgrounds**

In the context of Sarajevo the final sample was composed by 12 families, and a total amount of 33 individuals – 20 belonging to the ‘Yugoslav generation’ of parents and 13 belonging to the ‘post-Yugoslav’ generation of children – have been interviewed. Among these 12 families, there were 2 cases of marriage between people with different ethno-religious origins: one was between a Serbo-Croat woman and a Croat man (both from Bosnia), and one between a Serbian Muslim and a Bosnian Serb. However, as it will be soon illustrated, to retrace the ‘origins’ (and so the feelings of attachment and ways of identifications) of the families and individuals composing the Bosnian sample has not been easy as for the Macedonian case: many of the parents interviewed were not born in Sarajevo but in other cities/villages of Bosnia; many of them, in the course of their lives and for different reasons (studies, work, war), moved from city to city – yet always maintaining ties with the capital city, Sarajevo. Particularly because of the war, indeed, it’s estimated that every second person in BiH was displaced, either internally or forced to move abroad<sup>120</sup>. At the time of the interviews, 3 families (only the parents) were living in Republika Srpska but Sarajevo was the city where their children grown up and currently live.

The triad mother-father-children formed most of the families interviewed except for in a few cases, where I performed interviews only with mothers and children - being fathers passed away during the conflict. Only in one case the family was composed by father and children. As already explained in the *Introduction*, I didn’t consider this ‘lack’ as a research’s weakness: on the contrary, given the reason why, in all the cases except one, these families were composed by a single parent, I considered it as a feature of the Bosnian context and especially of the post-Yugoslav generation enclosed in the sample - an element that could potentially influence family’s members’ perceptions of ethnonational belonging, even leading towards more radicalized positions.

As for the previous case study, the parents interviewed were born between 1951 and

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<sup>120</sup> See VV.AA. 2015, *Youth Study Bosnia and Herzegovina 2014*, Sarajevo: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung;

1964 while their children between 1985 and 1990.

Half of the parents included in the sample were currently employed while, the others, were retired and two mothers were housewives.

All the parents interviewed completed their high school studies and more than half of them continued until obtaining at least a BA. None of the parents interviewed knew English, so the interviews have been performed using their children as translator.

For what concerns their religious origins, three fourths of the parents included in the sample said to be Catholic, Orthodox or Muslims 'by tradition', hence not practicing, while only a few were practicing – although not regularly. The remnants were atheist.

Finally, the families enclosed in the final sample have been reached via snowball sampling starting from the younger generation's members, their children - more easily approachable given the age proximity with the researcher. Because of the methodological choices adopted in this work and the small size of the sample, the research results below presented do not have any statistical relevance and cannot be generalized to the entire Bosnian population.

### **6.1.1 Brief Premise before a long Analysis. Parents' Ethno-territorial origins, Yugoslav Melting-Pot and Identity Issues**

To retrace the origins of belonging of the people and families enclosed in the Bosnian sample has not been easy, and the Bosnian context emerged to be – from an identity and belonging point of view - more complicated than the Macedonian one.

In BiH, groups' boundaries and collective identities are well and sharply defined from a political and institutional point of view but not exactly from an individual one. Life experiences often characterized by moving within Bosnia and Yugoslavia itself, alongside with territorially-scattered family ties, have made people's ways of identification and feelings of attachment difficult to define. Additionally, the identity's politicization started in late 1980s (and continuing nowadays) had a big impact on many of them, either producing exclusive ethnonational/ethno-territorial feelings of belonging and attachment or, on the contrary, civic 'alternative' ways of identification completely untied from ethnonational backgrounds.

Without entering now in the details of politics' and institutions' role in shaping people ways of identification, the following quotations aim at illustrating how 'the complexity of life' is reflected in 'the complexity of identity' – meaning that,

regardless what their constitution and political parties say, people clearly have multiple identities and, for some more than others, it's really hard to say once for all 'who they are'. For this reason, while quoting the interviewees their self-declared identity is put between brackets and, when possible, also the ethnic origins.

*I was born in that part of the country that nowadays is Republika Srpska*  
(Nihad's mother, age 54, self-identified Bošnjak, August 2016)

*There are no Bosnian Herzegovinians here, we are not allowed to be that. Serbs, Croats and Bošnjaks do not allow us. We are in extinction. They are all against this 'Bosnian Herzegovinians'. When I travel, I'm a Bosnian but I'm back home they say I'm a bošnjak* (Mirela and Osman's father, age 64, ethnic bošnjak, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian, November 2016)

*I wasn't born in Sarajevo but I lived there most of my life. I moved to Istočno Sarajevo with the war, it was 1992. It was dangerous, we had to move. I still work in Sarajevo, but I live in Istočno. Let's say I don't miss Sarajevo...* (Ivan's father, age 58, self-identified Serb from RS, September 2016)

*During Yugoslavia I was a Yugoslav because I am from a mixed marriage – my father was a Serb and my mother a Croat. I have two sisters, one was Yugoslav and atheist, the other one says she's Serb because she's married with a Serb guy. Me myself, I now say I'm Croat because I'm married with a Croat. I was born in Sarajevo* (Teodora's mother, age 52, ethnic Serbo-Croat, self-identified Croat, October 2016)

*I was proud of being a Yugoslav. But when asked, I was saying I was from Serbia because I was born there. But I'm a Muslim from Serbia married with an Orthodox Serb from Bosnia. What can I say?* (Nina's mother, age 55, ethnic Serbian Muslim, no self-identified, December 2016)

*I'm Sarajevan. Sarajevo in the first place. Not only Bosnian but Sarajevan.*  
(Ana's father, age 59, ethnic Serb, self-identified Sarajevan, September 2016)

These quotations show what in the literature is defined 'fluidity': identity is something in constant evolution, difficult to define and measure, created by many

intertwined factors and clearly varying according to the contexts and even political regimes.

The kind of identities emerged during the interviews performed in Sarajevo represent not only a difference with the Macedonian context but a milestone when it comes to understanding inter-generational dis-continuities in the meanings and usages of one's own ethnonationality.

### 6.1.2 Yugoslavia Mon Amour

Yugoslavia is, once again, the point of departure of the older generation's analysis. Parents' past experiences are below reconstructed, trying to retrace the evolution of ethnonationality from an individual perspective.

Yugoslavia emerged to be deeply rooted in the hearts of all the parents interviewed. Their attitude towards that country, system and society was radically different compared to the one emerged during the interviews with the Macedonians. Not only Yugoslavia was acknowledged as a good and better system compared to the current one, but was missed by all the older generation's respondents, and regardless any ethno-cultural difference.

*I have wonderful memories of that time. That country supported me and my dreams (Samid's mother, age 63, self-identified Bošnjak, April 2017)*

*Oh yes, I'm very Yugonostalgic. [...] In Yugoslavia we were all breathing the same air [...] What I miss is freedom: there was only one political party, yes...but we could do anything we wanted (Darjana's father, age 58, self-identified Croat from BiH, August 2016)*

*I'm sure we had the best political establishment of all the world, that political system was the best. I travelled twice the globe, I visited lots of countries. [...] Now we have lost everything. I'm very Yugonostalgic, very much. It's something I would like to be again, it was wonderful. I'm sorry my children are so young, they can't remember and it's not usual for us to talk about that period. Such memories are not good for our hearts. I'm very sorry (Ana's father, age 59, ethnic Serb, self-identified Sarajevan, September 2016)*

As the parents explained, the Yugoslav system and society not only were offering people good opportunities in matter of job, education, health care and freedom of movement, but equality was a pillar of the entire system. The Bosnian parents have largely emphasized this last point – real equality and brotherhood among all the people living in BiH – for example by saying that *‘Brotherhood was real. We were all the same’* (Mirela and Osman’s mother, age 62, ethnic Bošnjak, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian, October 2016); *‘No one was rich and no one was poor. We were all the same’* (Dajana’s mother, age 57, ethnic Serb, self-identified woman, October 2016); and *‘We really lived like that. Same schools, same classes. We didn’t know ‘who was who’, we didn’t talk about nations. It was normal to work, eat together; to visit someone and we didn’t have any problem. It was then...that they destroyed the country’* (Ana’s mother, age 55, ethnic Muslim-Serb, self-identified Sarajevan, September 2016).

As these interviews’ fragments illustrate, the concept of nostalgia does include a different set of emotions and things to be nostalgic for: not only higher economic and educational standards or the possibility to travel, but especially good relations among people and pride of being Yugoslav citizens.

*I’m more attached to my previous life than to many other things. I am a Yugoslav. I want everyone to be equal as it was before. I want to go to Kosovo and not looked bad because I’m Serb. [...] I am not nostalgic, that was my life.*  
(Nina’s father, age 65, ethnic Serb, self-identified Yugoslav, December 2016)

*What I regret is being proud of being a Yugoslav. It meant something* (Nihad’s father, age 55, self-identified bošnjak, August 2016)

These last two points, interconnected with each other, point the attention on the post-1990s’ importance of ethnonationality and re-defined concept of citizenship, downgraded and surpassed by ethnonational belonging. Therefore it’s in the light of these reflections that we should frame the older generation’s attitude towards Yugoslavia and their nostalgia: regardless their ethnonational origins, self-declared identities, personal experiences and places of residence, all the parents interviewed consistently preferred the previous system and this because it was assuring equality

and a good life climate, where people were living together and ethnonationality did not matter – at least in ordinary people’s lives.

Although someone might say, as emerged in the Macedonian context, that the so-called Yugonostalgia is a phenomenon connected to a failed adjustment to the new system, the Bosnian case is more complicated and, as it will be shown, so are the concept of ‘adjustment to the new conditions’ and the one of ‘Yugonostalgia’.

### **6.1.2.1 The war**

The parents’ positive attitude towards Yugoslavia may be understood and explained also as a consequence of what happened to them and to Bosnia more in general. The war.

The war destroyed not only Yugoslavia but Bosnia and people’s lives as well. Many had to move to other cities - in Bosnia, in other republics, or even abroad – then coming back home once the conflict was ended, but oftentimes re-settling in a different area given the new ethno-territorial composition of the country. Many lost not only their homes, but also their beloved ones.

*What I miss from Yugoslavia is my husband (Samira’s mother, age 52, self-identified bošnjak, September 2016)*

The parents interviewed *have never been asked* about the war. However, the issue inevitably came up during the interviews and, some of them, shared some anecdotes of that time. Particularly interesting in this respect were the conversations with the ethnic Serbs fathers – some fought in the JNA, defending Sarajevo, some other for ‘another Yugoslavia’. However, and regardless the side they were fighting for, they all expressed their feelings of attachment for Yugoslavia and that positive life climate.

*I didn’t move to Banka Luka or anywhere else after the war because I wasn’t influenced by that propaganda. This is my country, more mine than what is for Izetbegović and Karadžić. [...] I will never move from here. I believe, I hope, in the future of the normal people, those who just want to live normally (Nina’s father, age 65, ethnic Serb, self-identified Yugoslav, December 2016)*

*I was born in Serbia, I’m a Serb. And I lived in Sarajevo, it’s little bit strange.*



*I'm not living in RS. I joined the army but the Bosnian army, not the RS army during the war. It is strange, I know. But in big cities, it was normal. It was normal for me, because of my education and my family. All my family stayed here. Ana was born at the beginning of the war. (Ana's father, age 59, ethnic Serb, self-identified Sarajevan, September 2016)*

*Yugoslavia was much better than what we have now. We were all equal citizens everybody was, in practice, a middle-class citizen. We couldn't afford much luxury but we had much more than what we can afford now. I can't really consider myself as Yugonostalgic – in the sense that I struggled for another Yugoslavia, I have never liked the idea of Bosnia being independent, nor the way Yugoslavia dissolved. [...] When people were living together, even if they were declaring themselves by nationality, actually we were all feeling Yugoslavs. [...] Now it's like this because war broke up and the connections we had will never come back. People will never be connected as they were. [...] Bosnia is not my homeland anymore; I don't consider it as my country. I do identify my homeland the Republika Srpska. (Dejan's father, age 58, ethnic Serb, self-identified Serb from RS, October 2016)*

*The only reason is the war. We didn't choose the war, people did not want neither war nor these bad relations. I would love to live again in the old system. (Ivan's father, age 58, ethnic Serb, self-identified Serb from RS, September 2016)*

The war clearly emerged to be not only a tragic event that destroyed everything, but also a sort of 'point of no return': it damaged so deeply people and their lives that, according to some, to go back to *that* normality is (almost) impossible.

*Brotherhood was real because we were educated like that: at school we were taught we were all the same, all equal, and no one paid attention to ethnicity or religion. Ethnic identity was never being brought up. [...] Now instead is the opposite as a consequence of the war, people were in a hard-core conflict. Today everyone is teaching their children with these 'new values' meaning ethnicity and religion [...] Now either you're x or y. The cause was the war. I belong to the Serbian nation. I'm Serb from RS and orthodox by tradition, and I speak Serbian language. About Bosnia...I don't identify myself with the state, at*

*all, I just have those citizenship and documents but I do identify myself with RS and I see Serbia as homeland for all the Serbian people.* (Dejan's mother, age 55, self-identified Serb from RS, October 2016)

Many parents, while conducting the interviews, were visibly emotionally involved: especially some fathers got angry while talking about nationalism and the current political situation, others had to light a cigarette and breath deeply; others again couldn't finish their sentences.

It's worth to stress that none of the parents interviewed ever named (or blamed) other groups for what happened to the country – or, at least, they didn't do it during our conversations. On the contrary, politics and politicians were. In fact, instead of marking the borders between ethnonational groups, the dichotomy 'us and them' was referring to us – ordinary people, and them – the nationalist political class.

Despite their current places of residence, origins or self-identifications, all the parents interviewed agreed that politics was and is the cause and the source of the Bosnian problems.

### **6.1.3 Inter-Ethnic Relations**

Before scrutinizing the role (nationalist) politics had in BiH, and parents' political opinions and attitudes, it's worth to have a closer look to the kind of inter-ethnic relations that existed/exist in the Sarajevan reality.

Social contacts and inter-ethnic relations have been described as good and very close until the war and all over the country while, nowadays, generally colder and featured by some degree of suspect, however still 'normal' in the context of Sarajevo.

As an interviewee pointed out, before the conflict and the rise of nationalism, *'when you met someone new, and his or her name was ...whatever, nobody would notice if s/he was Serb, Croat, Muslim, Jew, Gypsy. National identity was not important at all, it was something personal. [...] It's a private thing* (Ana's father, age 59, ethnic Serb, self-identified Sarajevan, September 2016). Although recognizing ethnonationality has acquired a new importance also at social level, the parents pointed out that, generally, ordinary people do not have problems with each other and are trying to maintain good relations with anybody in their everyday lives. On the contrary, they argued, it's politics and propaganda spreading hate and mistrust that, in certain

contexts more than in others, succeed in negatively affecting social relations.

*If people would be left alone, without politicians, things would go faster. It's politicians making everything difficult. Everyday life is not tense as they say in public. If people would be left alone, reconciliation would be much better. I know there are people poisoned by these nationalisms...but that's the result of politicians' work* (Nina's mother, age 55, ethnic Serbian Muslim, no self-identified, December 2016)

*Most of the people have maintained the same relations with friends but you see something different if you watch TV. I don't see relations have changed that much among normal people. [...]. Without TV we wouldn't even know we have inter-ethnic problems. [...]. Without TV, no one would have any problem* (Ana's mother, age 55, ethnic Serb, self-identified Sarajevan, September 2016)

Parents largely pointed the attention on how political propaganda, spread through politicized/ethnicized media, is deepening divisions created by politics itself. As some respondents said: '*Nationalism is profit. [...] It is the way to win*' (Mirela and Osman's father, age 62, ethnic bošnjak, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian, November 2016); and again: '*Politics and media are to blame. They poison and manipulate people. [...] Media are branches of the parties*'. (Samid's father, age 60, self-identified bošnjak, March 2016).

In line with the arguments exposed in Chapter 4 about the ethnopolitical strategies used to gain and maintain masses' support, the use of media for political and ideological purposes was widely stressed by the parents interviewed – till the point that, as some argued, without TV people wouldn't even know there are inter-ethnic problems.

#### **6.1.4 Political Attitudes and Political Opinions**

At the time of the interviews, none of the parents interviewed was part of any political party. A couple, meaning wife and husband, had been members of SDP for almost twenty years, however recently leaving the party because of its 'nationalist turn'<sup>121</sup>.

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<sup>121</sup> See Chapter 4;

*After the war, in 1996, I entered in SDP. I was even more active than in the Communist party. [...] Now its 10 years I quitted, I left SDP because I saw the party is not doing what it's supposed to do; the party was a leftist party, then went close to the centre and then to the nationalist, making deals with them. (Mirela and Osman's mother, age 64, ethnic bošnjak, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian, October 2016)*

*I'm not anymore in politics since 2001. I was president of SDP in Kladanj. I quit because also SDP is going to be a nationalist party, they gave up their principles. (Mirela and Osman's father, age 62, ethnic bošnjak, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian, November 2016)*

All the parents interviewed, except for a couple of them, did/do vote during elections. The most supported parties were SDP, Naša Stranka and Demokratska Fronta – a SDP's rib; one family and one father, currently living in the RS, were instead supporting Dodik's Serbian nationalist party, SNSD.

Besides the party voted for, the parents were all aligned on one issue: they largely disdained the Bosnian politics and politicians, considered self-interested power-seeking individuals profiting from institutional and social divisions, and not working for the people's good. The respondents largely portrayed their political class as follow:

*The main goal was to divide people according to ethno-religious beliefs. They started with propaganda, saying we were not equal. [...] The consequences are visible now: young people is twenty years that are listening how much we hate each other, how much we are different and unequal, they are learning to hate. [...] The people who let Yugoslavia fall apart are still alive and they're poisoning groups. That's why there are still people who hate each other. They make such propaganda. Normal people don't hate anyone (Nina's father, age 66, ethnic Serb, self-identified Yugoslav, December 2016)*

*They act like small countries. It's not good for anyone. None of them is trying to re-organizing the system because for them is convenient. (Mirela and Osman's mother, age 62, ethnic Bošnjak, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian, October 2016)*

*The current political situation is awful because of the three parties, which are dividing us according to nationality. There is a strong propaganda; they talk only for their people, not for the people of Bosnia. [...] Bosnia is a weak country that needs a strong change, a change at the top - but it's very hard. There are many opportunities for Bosnia but no one wants to realize and implement them. It's been twenty years and we still have the same parties at the top of Bosnia and the same economic situation* (Teodora's mother, age 52, ethnic Serbo-Croat, self-identified Croat, October 2016)

*I think they sit together and agree on what to do next to divide people, put them against each other* (Nina's mother, age 55, ethnic Serbian Muslim, not self-identified, December 2016)

Politicians, as some explained, *'are lying, no exceptions* (Ana's father, age 59, ethnic Serb, self-identified Sarajevan, September 2016). Also, the political elite has been accused of

*They don't want unity in BiH. Politicians in Banja Luka are deliberately helping the politicians in Sarajevo by saying things the others don't want to hear – so they create these situations where they can fight. And that's how they help each other to stay in power, and maybe they don't even mean what they say. But that creates divisions among people.* (Ana's mother, age 55, ethnic Serb, self-identified Sarajevan, September 2016)

In this way, the political class has created the conditions for people to support them while, at the same time, damaging even more the country and the citizenry. Many, therefore, have lost the hope that anything good might come from the political establishment.

As one interviewee said: *'in the 1990s, when the war ended, I was optimistic, it couldn't get worse than that, only better. But now [...] I'm more pessimist and I don't see anything good.* (Dejan's father, age 58, self-identified Serb from RS, October 2016).

#### 6.1.4.1 'Nije Država' - *It's not a Country*

To this picture has to be added also the role played by the Dayton Peace Agreement, generally recognized as the only solution back in 1995, but a huge obstacle nowadays. As some interviewees explained:

*This Dayton system is really horrendous, inefficient for everyone, and everybody knows that. I think of Bosnia as a temporary state, in the future it will fall apart as happened to Yugoslavia'. (Dejan's father, age 58, self-identified Serb from RS, October 2016).*

*Division in entities was the only solution to stop the war; RS is based on genocide [...] they try to make propaganda for the return of Serbs living in FBiH...it's a political ethnic cleansing (Adnan's mother, age 63, ethnic bošnjak, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian and Sarajevan, September 2016)*

Most of the parents interviewed expressed their resentment towards the division between Federation of BiH and Republika Srpska, stating – regardless ethnonational backgrounds and current place of residence – that the unity existing in Yugoslavia was definitely better than the current fragmentation. As one father said: *'I would like to see Bosnia again one country, practically we have two countries in one'*. (Teodora's father, age 60, ethnic Croat, self-identified Croat from FBiH, October 2016).

What eventually the parents interviewed pointed out is that Bosnia has become a 'non country', and they all agreed that it's not people, but politicians (and international forces as well), that are hampering any sort of cohesion.

*Bosnia is not a united country. Political leaders do not allow people to change anything. It's politics, not people the problem. They divide people, that's the only reason why they are in power (Adnan's mother, age 63, ethnic Bošnjak, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian and Sarajevan, September 2016)*

*I don't consider it as a state. We are an experiment. Bosnia is a protectorate. We've democracy's structures but we are a protectorate. Europe sees us as a state but inside...no, we are not. That's Dayton's result...the worst decision they*

*could take. They divided people, they made us believe, they made believe the politicians and the RS that they were a state inside the state. [...]They shouldn't have divided us, Bosnia had to remain united, as it was. (Darjana's father, age 58, self-identified Croat, August 2016)*

*The chaos we have now is the product of democracy. The new generations will never see the democracy we had in Yugoslavia. The West made us believe we live in a democratic country but we still have the HR [High Representative]....that kind of influences. All this is not democracy. Although it wasn't properly democracy, it was better than now. Democratic elements were present in our Socialism. (Nina's father, age 65, ethnic Serb, self-identified Yugoslav, December 2016)*

These quotations point the attention on how the ethnonational divisions plaguing BiH are more politico-institutional than social. Regardless their ethnonational origins, the parents interviewed recognized that an institutional asset favoured by the internationals on the one hand, and ethnopolitical entrepreneurs taking advantage of it on the other one, are blocking any possibility for step forwards and social cohesion – which, when existing, remains confined to a more superficial level.

Accordingly, when it comes to divisions and ethnonationality's importance, the conversations with the parents made clear a two-level distinction: social-contextual and politico-institutional. As they said, at individual level, ordinary people still do not pay attention to others' origins, they do not avoid 'certain' people nor 'certain' places or territories (or, at least, this happens to be the general trend in the urban areas). All the parents interviewed said that, even nowadays, they all still have friends belonging to other groups and, in their everyday life, they try their best to retain and preserve that tradition of good neighbouring relations, the so-called *komšilik*.

But.

But when it comes to political and institutional issues, ethnonationality – meaning the safeguard of the group's interests – does matter. However, in most of the cases, the importance given to ethnonationality (and the consequent support for ethnonational parties) is more due to practical and pragmatic reasons than to a spontaneous and deeply rooted attachment to 'the nation'.

### 6.1.5 The Politics of Fear

The interviewees have all been asked why, according to them, the largest part of the Bosnian population – even when complaining for the bad economic and political situation plaguing the country – do (still) vote for nationalist parties, the most supported since 1996.

Their answers may be summarized in one word: fear.

As the interviewees explained, the politics of fear encompasses both the collective and individual dimensions of one's own existence. Accordingly, there is the fear of being ruled by others (collective dimension) and the fear of not surviving in a poor country (individual dimension): in both cases fear of loosing that illusionary protection national parties are ably offering to *their* people.

*Here the problem is to survive, people are not interested in elections. [...] People vote nationalist because of fear to be dominated by someone else: a Muslim will think of Sarajevo, a Croat of Mostar and a Serb of Banja Luka. It's an equilibrium based on fear. Even if there are multinational parties, these are systematically eliminated by the nationalist ones. (Dajana's mother, age 57, ethnic Serb, self-identified woman, October 2016)*

*People do still believe nationalists because it's now twenty years that politicians are doing that constantly: they want people to be scared, make them believe that – if they don't vote for them – another party will come and will destroy their groups and identity. One day this will end, the economical situation is worse day after day, it's so bad that people will open their eyes (Nina's mother, age 55, ethnic Serbian Muslim, no self-identified, December 2016)*

One important issue these quotations reveal is that nationalism – in all its forms – is *now* matter of survival. Nationalism is now setting the rule of the game, a game where survival – individual and collective – is at stake.

#### 6.1.5.1 Surviving Insecurities via Ethnic Clientelism

As emerged in the case of Macedonia, one among the potential reasons why people do vote and support nationalist parties is connected to the possible gain of benefits and



the ‘ethnicized’ mechanisms of resources’ allocation dominating the ethnopolitical setting. However, contrary to the previous case study, where the older generation’s members largely framed and connected the issue to groups’ statuses and struggles for representation in the state bodies, the interviews performed with the Bosnian parents revealed a rather different way of framing and describing the phenomenon. None of them, in fact, spoke about ethnic quotas, nations’ representation in the state bodies or groups’ status in the larger society; the only issues emerged was people’s need to survive.

*It’s the handicap of the modern democracies here...that you’ve to be in a party if you want to gain something. The trend to be in the political parties to accomplish something is a bad thing for democracy, it’s devaluating the institutions of democracy itself. People join political parties for job reasons... to simply be able to survive. If you’re in the public administration then everything is easier...you have easier access to services like health and education, you’ve good chances also your doctor is member of your same party, then you jump the queue...everything is connected. If you work in the public administration everything is easier. (Samid’s father, age 60, self-identified Bošnjak, March 2017)*

*Every party leader has some relation with other people, employs his own family, gives flats to his people... privatized companies are owned by them, as well as media...or they are in the higher positions - like Telekom, energy companies... (Adnan’s mother, age 63, ethnic Bošnjak, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian and Sarajevan, September 2016)*

*Clientelism and nepotism are becoming part of our culture unfortunately. [...] I know many who ‘found their luck’ by doing these kinds of things...it’s a systematic problem (Nihad’s mother, age 54, self-identified Bošnjak, August 2016)*

Among the parents interviewed only a few of them directly knew people involved in these clientelistic practices and, about the mechanism of ‘how to get the favour and pay it back’, they were mainly guessing that either people have to pay someone in the political party or do something for the party itself; nevertheless, their answers were

rather vague.

On this topic it's important to note that, while describing clientelistic practices, all the parents interviewed framed the issue in terms of bad and manipulative politics constraining ordinary, poor, people – once again highlighting how the dichotomy 'us and them' differentiate between people and political elite, more than between ethnic groups. Indeed, the interviewees never mentioned issues related to the groups' institutional representation nor 'blamed' some particular ethnonational group for the state malfunctioning.

The instrumental mobilization of one's own ethnonational belonging has thus emerged as a key to literally survive in a deeply ethnically fragmented society: besides job opportunities, parents mentioned also favours concerning medical services and education, pointing the attention on the all-encompassing ethnonationality's ability in opening doors.

Regardless their ethnonational backgrounds, ways of self-identification or territorial ties, the parents interviewed were basically saying the same things and seeing reality from the same point of view, using the dichotomy 'us and them' to distinguish between normal (poor) people and (rich) nationalist politicians, finally making clear how ethnonationality's salience and divisions based on it are definitely more politically instigated/initiated than inherently social.

## **6.1.6 Parents and Children. What do they discuss at Home? The parents' perspective**

### ***6.1.6.1 Politics***

As the previous sections let emerge, parents' rather negative opinion of their country's politics was reflected in lack of trust in their state institutions and political representatives as well. As a consequence, also in the context of Sarajevo politics is not really matter of debate at home. Parents do comment TV news with their children but, generally, political discussions are avoided and politics considered too bad to be worth of discussions.

*No politics at home, no point to talk about politics. My aim was to educate my kids to be good and strong persons, not to initiate them to politics (Teodora's*

father, age 60, ethnic Croat, self-identified Croat from FBiH, October 2016)

Contrary to the parents enclosed in the Macedonian sample, the Bosnian parents have widely told their children about the Yugoslav system and society while, understandably, considerably less about the war – whose memory is still hurting. Also in the Bosnian case, parents never tried neither to influence their children's political opinions nor to involve them into politics/political activities.

*I never involved them into politics. Actually, me and my wife – that we were both in politics after war – we are very sorry we had to leave them alone so often* (Mirela and Osman's father, age 64, ethnic Bošnjak, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian, November 2016)

#### **6.1.6.2 Ethnicity and Inter-group relations**

The Bosnian parents included in this sample emerged to have educated their children according to the 'Brotherhood's values' – as they were referring to, and regardless their personal experiences or ethnonational backgrounds.

*I was teaching my kids according to the brotherhood's values but then I became more pessimist.* (Dejan's father, age 58, ethnic Serb, self-identified Serb from RS, October 2016)

Parent have all grown up in an environment that, at the moment, we could define ethnically mixed but that, back in Yugoslavia, was simply the normality. People were used not to know, and not to care about, other's ethno-religious origins and so they have tried to educate their children.

*My daughter went to Catholic gymnasium here in Sarajevo and neither my husband nor me are catholic. She is singing in the quire and once per year singing in the church. And we are proud of her.* (Nina's mother, age 55, ethnic Serbian Muslim, no self-identified, December 2016)

Good inter-ethnic relations or, more appropriately, good relations among people emerged very important: not only a value to be preserved and transmitted, but also the

antidote against nationalism and ethnocentrism, the only way not to be pervaded by fear. Parents have told their children that anyone suffered and no matter the ethnic group of alleged belonging, and that bad people may be found anywhere and in any group.

#### *6.1.6.2.1 Would you be happy if...?*

In the Macedonian context parents had been asked about their opinion before the possibility of their children being involved in a mixed marriage – and the reason was that, during the interviews, a certain degree of inter-group hostility did emerge despite they said not to discriminate following ethnic criteria.

In the Bosnian context parents have been asked with the same question but because of the opposite reason: they never mentioned other groups during the conversations, and only emphasized how bad ethnonational separations are. Moreover, as shown at the beginning of the chapter, some of the parents interviewed were coming from mixed backgrounds themselves, and they all have grown up in ethnically mixed environments.

Parents' answers before the possibility of their children being involved in a mixed marriage have, indeed, been rather neutral: some were expressing their preference for an in-groups marriage due to 'common traditions', however (almost) no one denied the possibility of a mixed-marriage involving their children.

*For me it's the same. Maybe it's easier for him to live with someone from the same group (Nihad's mother, age 54, self-identified Bošnjak, August 2016)*

*I'm not responsible of my children's happiness. I would prefer a Croat but if that's not the case, what can I do...it's their choice (Darjana's father, age 58, self-identified Croat, August 2016)*

*If my son want to have a girlfriend from another group I won't have anything against it...as far as she's not a nationalist (Adnan's mother, age 63, ethnic Bošnjak, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian and Sarajevan, September 2016)*

Only one father was, instead, against that possibility.

*I've never advised my children to avoid some people or not to hang out with someone because of religion or ethnicity. But if they want to get married with someone else...no, I don't want. In Bosnia this thing is not possible anymore because of the dividing between people. Out of the borders of Bosnia is possible, but not inside. So if it's Italian or German it's ok, but not a Croat or Bošnjak (Ivan's father, age 58, ethnic Serb, self-identified Serbs from RS, September 2016)*

This last quotation, however, shows that this father was not against a mixed marriage because of ideological reasons connected to the preservation of national, religious or traditional issues but, apparently, because of the socio-political dynamics existing between the three Bosnian peoples at the present moment.

In the light of what exposed so far, it is reasonable to say that the maintenance of good inter-ethnic relations among people still represents a value to be preserved; however, due to the general circumstances, its practical implementation is often confined to a more superficial level and everyday interactions while, when it comes to the more intimate sphere, people do prefer not to mix anymore.

## **6.2 The Post-Yugoslav Generation.**

### **Young Adults in Transition**

The young post-Yugoslavs enclosed in the sample were 13, and in only one case both brother and sister have been interviewed, being both born between 1985 and 1990.

Half of the young adults interviewed were currently employed, the others were unemployed and finishing their university studies. All of them studied at the university and had at least a BA; only one girl had a study experience abroad, while all the others were enrolled and finishing their studies at the University of Sarajevo.

The majority of them was living at home with their parents while, a few, alone or sharing flats with friends/colleagues in Sarajevo.

None of the young adults interviewed was, and has ever been, member of any political party or involved in any political activity - except for one girl that joined SDP for some time.

For what concerned religious issues, the majority of the interviewees were agnostic or Catholics/Orthodox/Muslims by tradition – though not practicing; one girl was practicing her religion (Islam) and a few declared to be atheist.

Many of the young adults interviewed did not declare themselves in ethnonational terms: as said in their parents' case, identities are well defined from a political and institutional point of view but not from an individual one. Family ties scattered all over the country, connections/absence of connections with religion, political opinions and life experiences made their identities difficult to define and delimitate one for all.

*I'm ethnically Serb but I'm from Bosnia Herzegovina, it's a different thing. I'm Bosnian (Ivan, age 25, ethnic Serb, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian, September 2016)*

*I do have Serbian citizenship but I'm not Serb. I spent almost all of my life in Sarajevo but I don't consider myself as Sarajevan, I don't consider myself as Serbian too because I don't have contacts with Serbia [...]. I'm Muslim, but by tradition, it's a cultural thing. (Samid, age 30, self-identified Bošnjak, March 2016)*

*Here people don't feel the same. Some feel more Serbian or Croatian citizens than Bosnian [...] Me personally, I feel Sarajka (Darjana, age 25, ethnic Croat, self-identified Sarajevan, August 2016)*

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*I'm Bosnian Herzegovinian, I belong to 'others'. I'm not a constituent people of this country but it's ok if this implies not to pick side. To me, there are two sides: those who care about this country, and those who don't. [...] My family had lots of problem in war because of religion...I'm not Muslim and I'm not orthodox, but I do celebrate Christmas and Bajram. I cannot say I'm Serbian, although mom is from Serbia, but she's Muslim, and dad is Serb but from Bosnia. I'm from here. I'm not atheist, I do believe in one god but I'm not belonging to any religion. I do celebrate everything; I'm richer with this family background. That's why I'd never identify myself as Muslim or Serb but always as Bosnian Herzegovinian. (Nina, age 27, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian, November 2016)*

*I feel I don't belong to anything. It's a bad feeling, it's like I'm not close to anything. As s\*\*\*\*y country as it is, still Bosnia is my country...even though I'm ethnically Serb. I live my life as a minority, I'm Serb yes, part of one constituent people but I don't identify myself as that right-wing-hard core-nationalist Serbs. I'm a minority in Republika Srpska because I'm leftist and I'm a minority in Sarajevo because I'm Serb. I feel like an intruder. I don't find myself not even among the Serb. Also, I should be an orthodox since I'm Serb...but again, I'm not. I don't believe in god, never been to a church. [...] Everywhere I go, I just feel to be the black sheep (Dejan, age 25, ethnic Serb, not self-identified, October 2016)*

Therefore, as in their parents' case, while quoting the interviews their first and most important self-declared identity is put on brackets and, when possible, also their ethnonational origin.

### **6.2.1 From Childhood to Adulthood: Understanding Youth's Social Life**

Although Bosnia Herzegovina is commonly seen as a divided society where everything is, indeed, ethnically divided, the generation included in this sample – partly because of their ages and partly because living in Sarajevo – had the chance to grow up in a rather mixed environment where segregation was not (yet) an integral part of their lives. The young adults interviewed, as it will be illustrated afterwards, were often comparing themselves and their experiences with the ones of the 'new generations' – those born in late 1990s/early 2000s. The young adults included in this sample are part of the 'in between' generation – that generation that was the first person experiencing the transition, where the system, their parents and lives, were trying to find their place in the new socio-political asset.

They have grown up surrounded by nationalisms coming from all the sides but, thanks to the persistence of common spaces and their parents' teachings and attitudes, they succeeded in not living encapsulated in monoethnic environments.

#### **6.2.1.1 School and Friends**

Given their ages, many of the youth in the sample went to primary school during the

war and, some, not in Sarajevo given the siege. Their childhoods and school experiences are rather different compared to the one of the Macedonian youth which, although a conflict happened also in that case, it was confined to only some areas of the country and didn't involve the city of Skopje.

*I remember in 1994, when I was going to school during war, the teacher taught us that our country was Croatia, our capital Zagreb and our president Tudjman. I'm from Kišeljak, 30km from Sarajevo. But now things at school have changed...you have three curricula but still it's all about Bosnia. (Teodora, age 28, ethnic Croat, self-identified Croat from BiH, October 2016)*

*In my primary, here in Sarajevo, there were perhaps twenty kids. Most of them were Bošnjaks, some Croats and a few Serbs. It was mixed. In high school the same. (Nihad, age 25, ethnic Bošnjak, self-identified Sarajevan and Bosnian Herzegovinian, August 2016)*

*During elementary here in Sarajevo they were all Bošnjaks and I was the only Croat. But I never felt that people were looking at me or treating me differently, not at all. I immediately met people and made new friendships. In high school, I attended the Catholic Center here in Sarajevo...the name is misleading: we were totally mixed in my classroom (Darjana, age 25, ethnic Croat, self-identified Sarajevan, August 2016)*

*[...] the teacher of religion, she was teaching Islam and she asked me with whom I was living at home. [...] but I used the wrong word to say dad...I said 'tata' but in the 'Muslim way' they say 'baba'. So then the teacher said me 'you can say you don't have babo, because he didn't teach you properly' (Mirela, age 30, ethnic Bošnjak, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian, October 2016)*

Despite some cases of 'less ethnically diverse' classrooms and clear nationalist indoctrination, the young adults interviewed have been able not to remain confined in the boundaries of their ethnonational belonging - as set up by the changing institution and political structure of that time.

All of them had, since childhood, groups of friends composed by people belonging to any group, and none of them said (contrary to what emerged in Skopje) not to have ever met or spoken with someone belonging to a different group.



*Of course I know people of other groups, it's a ridiculous question (Nihad, age 25, ethnic Bošnjak, self-identified Sarajevan and Bosnian Herzegovinian, August 2016)*

*Well, of course I have friends of other groups. It would be very difficult not to (Ana, age 26, ethnic Serb, self-identified Sarajevan, August 2016)*

This is largely due to the fact that, contrary to the Skopje's reality, in Sarajevo the distance between the different communities has traditionally been much shorter. Moreover, when we refer to Sarajevo in the wartime, we should keep in mind that the experience of the siege helped and made possible the development of very special dynamics of solidarity among people.

*We staid here to defend Sarajevo, not Bosnia (Ana's father, age 59, ethnic Serb, self-identified Sarajevan, September 2016)*

The role played by the city of Sarajevo and her special features are central while understanding inter-ethnic contacts and reconstructing ethnonationality's meanings and functions across generations. As the reader has probably noticed, some interviewees, belonging to both the generations, did identify themselves exclusively as Sarajevan.

### **6.2.2 The Sarajevans, the Bosnians Herzegovinians and Inter-ethnic relations**

If Bosnia Herzegovina was nicknamed 'Little Yugoslavia', then Sarajevo was its symbolical reality.

Sarajevo, a city highly mixed from an ethno-religious point of view and where both the secular character of the religious faiths and its inhabitants permitted a very peaceful living together, was the symbol of the Bosnian groups' coexistence; the place in which any group, religion and identity was respected, and where this respect for the differences allowed for the building of truly positive inter-group relations.

*Sarajevo is the best part of interethnic relation because we are actually the most mixed part of the entire country. In Sarajevo you can't see that much nationalism*

*because here there are Serbs, Bošnjaks, Croats, so there are not much problems, hate speeches and nationalism. Sure, things happen. But the worst thing is the other parts of Bosnia because of the smaller cities, the ones that are on the border with Republika Srpska - those are the worst parts because there are constant conflicts, problems, there's always gonna be problems on the border between Republika Srpska and Federation. (Adnan, age 28, ethnic Bošnjak, self-identified Sarajevan and Bosnian Herzegovinian, August 2016)*

*I don't think there is any problem. People who remained in the city are people. Many Serbs left and those who remained are highly valued and appreciated by the locals because they went through the siege. I don't think there is rejection at personal level (Samid, age 30, self-identified Bošnjak, March 2016)*

Sarajevo has been, by the interviewees of both generations, considered to be a very special place. For this reason, as seen, members of both the generations interviewed identified themselves exclusively as 'Sarajevan', avoiding any ethnonational/ethno-territorial form of identification. This 'alternative' identity not only symbolizes attachment towards the city: more precisely, it does towards what the city means. The 'Sarajevan' identity emerged to be a cosmopolitan identity that doesn't deny the existence of ethnonational groups and identities, on the contrary, it includes all of them. Similarly, the identification as 'Bosnian Herzegovinian' emerged to be not only featured by a sense of attachment towards the country, place of birth of almost all of the interviewees, but also in this case was meant to include and symbolize the country's plurality.

*I'm Bosnian Herzegovinian, I belong to 'others'. I'm not a constituent people of this country but it's ok if this implies not to pick side. (Nina, age 27, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian, November 2016)*

Like the 'cosmopolitan idea' circulating in the anti-nationalist discourses in the 1990s (Jansen 2008), the Sarajevan and the Bosnian Herzegovinian identities were, during the interviews, meant to be in opposition to hegemonizing nationalisms and ethnonational/ethno-territorial divisions, taking the distance from identity's politicization and individuals' categorization (Touquet 2015).

*As soon as you go to Mostar, even before entering the city, you see the flag of Croatia; and if you go to Banja Luka there is the Serbian flags or graffiti. Personally, when I see those things, I'm really sorry [...]. In Sarajevo no, nationalism is not evident. Because in Sarajevo you have people from any group and coming from all over; while if you live always in the same place and you never move, it's hard to think differently (Darjana, age 25, ethnic Croat, self-identified Sarajevan, August 2016)*

However, on the one side the identification as Bosnian Herzegovinian was, for different reasons (for example, and as seen, the belief of BiH as 'a non country'), not straightforward and often surpassed in importance by ethnonational and ethno-territorial feelings of attachments; while, on the other side, beside her positive legacy, Sarajevo carries with her also the heritage of the siege – so the inhabitants not only have developed particular forms of inter-group solidarity, but also of discrimination. As emerged in some of the interviews, those who remained in the city during the siege, to defend her (and this is particularly referred to the ethnic Serbs who decided to remain), are considered 'loyal' while, those who left or decided to join 'the other side' are generally considered 'traitors' (of Sarajevo, more than traitors of BiH). If we add the fact that, because of and after the war and the country's new ethno-territorial composition, the city has become a bošnjak majority city<sup>122</sup>, we can understand that the life of people belonging to groups now in minority may not always be easy.

*I lived my life as a minority. A Serb in Sarajevo. A Serb in Political Sciences in Sarajevo. Sometimes it's hard but it's just how it is. [...] In these four years in Political Sciences no one said me something explicitly, to offend me. But there were few situations and few people, ultra nationalist SDA professors, talking a lot about war and against Serbs. Once in the amphitheatre of Political Science the prof. \*\*\*\* was talking about Serbs, calling them Četniks ...which what the f\*\*\* it is an offense. In my 3<sup>rd</sup> year I've been physically attacked by a bošnjak colleague. He was teasing me everyday, pronouncing my surname purposely wrong, discriminating me because I'm Serb. One day I was fed up and I said him*

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<sup>122</sup> See *Popis Stanovništva, Domaćinstava i Stanova u Bosni i Hercegovini, 2013. Rezultati Popisa. Census of the Population, Households and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013. Final Results*. Agencija za Statistiku Bosne i Hercegovine. Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sarajevo, Juni 2016;

*to stop, to go f\*\*k himself. He said ‘why are you here? Why don’t you go to Banja Luka with your people?’ and I was trying to save the solvable, I didn’t want to be kicked out from the university...he came and slapped me on my face, I was confused, What the f\*\*\* is going on, the guy slapped me! And I slapped him back to defend myself. Colleagues then jumped in and two-three took me, two-three took him to divide us. I didn’t do anything later, didn’t say anything to anyone. I’m just happy he failed the year and I didn’t, so now I graduated on time. (Dejan, age 25, ethnic Serb, no self-identified, October 2016)*

Also an informant, a Serb woman coming from a very religious family and still part of the Orthodox church of Sarajevo, described her life changes as follow:

*My father was an orthodox priest and if there was some problem you could call police. There was order, it was a system...not like now. My father says it was better before [...] My personal experience is the one of the 1980s, and the system was liberal. Both mom and dad came from religious families, they were believers, and we’ve never had a problem [...] Now in Sarajevo we are a minority. There are some administrative obstacles for us – and I guess it is the same with Muslims and Croats where they are in minority. They don’t want you here, they want you to give up, to not have children here. It’s not easy to be a minority. [...] I’m not optimist. The easiest way, here, is to leave. (Orthodox representative in MVR, Sarajevo, September 2016)*

The two situations above described do not depict isolated cases pertaining to Sarajevo’s reality but unpleasant situations that may happen to anyone and anywhere in the country. More generally, they show different aspects of the same problem – institutionalized nationalism, according to which people are institutionally and politically supposed to stay in *their* own side of the country, with *their own* people, and where *their own* parties will take care of them. As a consequence, people actually and often do prefer to move/live where their own ethnonational groups is in majority. Therefore, more than inherently social, the divisive potential of ethnonational origins is political and institutional - although deeply social are its consequences.

### 6.2.3 Political Attitudes and Political Opinions

The young adults interviewed, as in the Macedonian case study, when asked about how did they profile themselves according to the right-left continuum, had some difficulty in understanding those categories and positioning themselves. Accordingly, the interviewees generally said to be 'liberal' and anti-nationalist, clearly distancing themselves from the conservative and right-wing parties currently on power in BiH. Despite their disappointment, the vast majority of the young respondents were voting during elections and the parties voted for were generally Naša Stranka and SDP. None of them was supporting, or ever supported, a nationalist party.

As for the Macedonian case, also the Bosnian young adults were very critical toward their political class, described to be responsible for the widespread nationalism all over the country, its divisions – social and political, and economic malfunctioning.

*People are manipulated by the parties. The three parties are actually cooperating in keeping the status quo, it's the same situation since twenty years. [...] Politics uses nationalism to divide people. They need to keep the machine working and without divisions the system would collapse (Mirela, age 30, ethnic Bošnjak, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian, October 2016)*

*We still have cold war. War without weapons (Teodora, age 28, self-identified Croat from BiH, October 2016)*

*Those who are leading these parties have strong instruments, by provoking people and build some kind of hatred. These parties are based on hatred and xenophobia and people are not able to see this actual situation, because many are not well educated and can't have a proper image of everything. The political program is not important, what is really important is public presence of the people presenting the parties - so what do they say, to whom, hatred towards other groups, populism. The populism is an instrument in the hands of current leaders (Nihad, age 25, ethnic bošnjak, self-identified Sarajevan and Bosnian Herzegovinian, August 2016)*

*Dodik says 'we' are the people. He wants to rule RS and he knows the only way is to lead people in the wrong way, in a nationalist way - because most of people*

*in Bosnia and RS are from rural areas, and that's the only way to address them. Most of the people yes, really believe in Dodik – at least the 70% believes him. Inter-ethnic relations are not bad, but I think in the future will be worse because not just Dodik but also Bakir and the Croatian side. They all think about arguing among them, that's why I think relations will be worse. Politicians still come back to the 1990s because it's the only way, the way to divide people again. It's the way to stay in power...well I think its not, but according to Bakir and Dodik it's the way to rule the country (Ivan, age 25, ethnic Serb, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian, September 2016)*

'Bakir and Dodik' are, respectively, the bošnjak member of the tripartite Bosnian Presidency and the President of Republika Srpska; and they are generally identified as the two main Bosnian leaders representing the two entities of BiH. Given the politicized overlap between ethno-cultural and ethno-territorial divisions, the youth pointed out how vital is, for the political class, to keep alive and nurture social divisions across ethnonational line. Cohesion between people, decreased importance of ethnonational identities' and territorialized feelings of attachments would on the contrary destroy that ethnopolitical system the political class has so committedly build up in these twenty years.

The young interviewees largely pointed the attention on the strategies used by the political elite in making and perpetuating the divide while gaining support in terms of votes - and eventually power. In line with the arguments presented in Chapter 4 about the ethnopolitical lop, the interviewees mentioned all the three key strategies ethnopolitical entrepreneurs may employ to gain and maintain people's support: namely, the manipulation of media and the school system, as well as the establishment of ethnic-clientelistic networks.

*Politicians are trying to divide people, especially youth. They are making fights in public discussions, saying ugly and nasty things in TV. And people fight...some believe them. Maybe a fight start in the tram for a chair and ends up discussing about Dodik and Bakir...but it's media that manipulate information: when something good happens, no one talks about it...so it looks like everyone hates each other and the majority fight, but its not true. (Nina, age 27, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian, November 2016)*

*The new generations, those in their 20ies, are indoctrinated by the education system and the media; young people are more vulnerable and more divided, they are growing up in homogeneous areas, especially in the rural areas. Without knowing each other you develop fear, and fear lead to hate, and hate to war* (Mirela, age 30, ethnic Bošnjak, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian, October 2016),

*Each party has its own propaganda: if you watch the news from Sarajevo it's half an hour of 'Serbs that are trying to distress again, they're trying to do this...'; then you turn the channel over the TV based in Banja Luka and they spend another half an hour talking about Sarajevo, 'Muslims are doing that, they want to make us leave our home' and so on. So if you spend the entire life believing that the devil lives in Banja Luka or Sarajevo it's going to be difficult to accept that there are also normal people living in both sides.* (Ana, age 26, ethnic Serb, self-identified Sarajevan, August 2016)

*The problem in Bosnia is not people. It's the political elite. Politicians are there for their personal interests. Once, some year ago, I've been to a fancy party organized for the Independence day of BiH and there were the politicians. You see them in TV, fighting and giving hate speeches - well, there, they were hugging each other, saying 'oh it's been a long time you and your wife didn't come to us. Why don't we go for a picnic?'. It's just a show. In this country, who's not nationalist doesn't get any vote.* (Samira, age 26, self-identified Bošnjak, September 2016)

The young respondents, however, made an important distinction when it comes to politicization of ethnonationality and nationalist's strategies: according to their explanations, ideological indoctrination is more likely to attract less educated people and/or those living in rural areas (the two usually go together) where the 'ethnic mix' is not as pronounced as in the urban ones. While issues concerning 'particularistic relations' with the political elite 'may happen' to anyone. As a respondent said: *'Sarajevo is urban city, so you can imagine what can happen in the villages...'* (Nihad, age 25, ethnic Bošnjak, self-identified Sarajevan and Bosnian Herzegovinian, August 2016)

Although exposed too, the young interviewees pointed the attention to the fact that educational experiences and places of residence may help (as happened to them

themselves), if not to escape, at least to be less susceptible to nationalist indoctrination; while, at the same time, they were aware of being - as anyone else - exposed and vulnerable before economic insecurities, and potentially involved in clientelistic networks.

### **6.2.3.1 Youth and Clientelism: the Need of Survival**

Clientelistic practices, as in their parents' case, have been described as a widespread phenomenon and have never been framed neither through the prism of ethnicity nor in terms of groups' representation in the state bodies. Clientelistic practices, mainly related to job opportunities (but not only) were explicated as rather normalized practices in a country where economic problems are exploited for power purposes.

*My sister is part of a political party because she wants to get a job and some money. But I think it's a bad thing, I don't want that for me. She's unemployed, she has finished her studies and worked 7-8 months in a school for an internship and that's it. She's now unemployed and trying to find a job...she's in the party and hopes to get a job. (Ivan, age 25, ethnic Serb, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian, September 2016)*

*It's quite common to get a job thanks to the party, especially SDA here. For example, my brother got a MA and then he was unemployed for some months waiting for a job. A neighbour of us, from SDA, clearly said him that, if he was going to join the party, he could have helped him. Another friend of mine - she's a journalist and very talented - was looking for a job and, during the interview, they asked her in which party she was member. You see? I guess all parties do like this: my school's director was from SDP, and all the other professors were from SDP as well...so I guess... (Samira, age 26, self-identified Bošnjak, September 2016)*

*Many of my friends are not even willing to try to apply for some job because – I quote – ‘the job is insecure’. I mean, what job on this planet is secure now? So they prefer to spend their years and energies, and talent and knowledge hoping and digging through that system to get a government job, in a public service institution, where again there is only an illusion of stability and long term commitment of the state – because this state can collapse in any single moment.*



*And that mode of thinking is pervasive: people would rather go for 300€ in a public institution doing nothing and dying in it, than trying to do something by themselves. Because at the end, we don't believe in anything anymore (Samid, age 30, self-identified Bošnjak, March 2017)*

*In these last elections I saw many of my former colleagues candidates for some parties. They didn't find a job so they thought the only way is to enter into politics. But they are not educated, they are ignorant, they don't understand anything about politics. They earn 700 BAM but it's better than nothing, especially if you are from a village. Or you can subscribe the party, then they will find you a job; if the party is a dominant one, it's immediate. Then there are also fake concourses: you apply but it's known who'll get the job. Me and my brother laugh about that: he's three years that is unemployed but he doesn't want to enter the party, he's not sure. That thing has become normal, it's the only way really working if you want a job. Even those well educated do that. But it depends also on family's education: my mother would never allow me. She knows it's 'to sell yourself' (Dajana, age 26, ethnic Serb, self-identified human being, October 2016)*

None of the young interviewees had ever been directly involved in those practices but the picture changes when we consider the awareness and knowledge of the phenomenon. The youth condemned clientelistic practices recognizing that, by getting involved into those networks because of survival reasons, people end up legitimizing the power of those same parties blamed for the Bosnia's problems. As a respondent said: *'the worst thing is that people are following blindly that kind of things, especially young people who don't get the bigger picture, they just do things for their party and they don't see anything of what is going around...because they have benefits, jobs, money and everything else.* (Adnan, age 28, ethnic Bošnjak, self-identified Sarajevan and Bosnian Herzegovinian, August 2016)

However, those who get involved have not been negatively judged: rather, they have been commiserated, in a way 'justified' in the light of the system's coercive potential in not leaving people (m)any other alternative – *'people need money, need to survive'*, was the youth's explanation. Referring to them themselves, the young adults interviewed in some cases stated they would prefer not to be 'obliged' to find an employment through political parties, but if that will be the only option...

*I'm not part of anything but maybe I'll also be forced one day. If you want to find a job here, you've to be member of a party – a party which is winning in some area, which has money, connections. Maybe one day I'll be forced to become a 'slave of the party'. Maybe when I'll want to set a family, a life on my own...you need a job, you cannot stay home all the day. I'll do anything to find it legally, but if I wont...believe me, I don't want to do these things, but you know... we are forced, youth are forced to join that system. You have to survive. Friends from faculty are leftist as I am, liberals, but many of them joined some nationalist parties...they needed a job, they had to. You've to be recruited, like in the army, do some stuff for them and maybe you'll have a future. Parties are not providing just jobs in the Public Administration; they are providing jobs in the real economic sector. There are private companies run by political parties - if you want to apply you have to be in the party, if you are a random citizen, although skilled, no way. They will select the guy who is maybe 15<sup>th</sup> in the list, but in the party. For example, I'm seriously and actively trying to work in the police...well, if you want to work in the police, which is supposed to be not political, still you have to know someone that will help you to go through the application. (Dejan, age 25, ethnic Serb, no self-identified, October 2016)*

This last quotation clearly describes the sense of frustration afflicting many, and well educated, youth in BiH. Very often people feel 'to be forced by the system' in getting into it despite they deeply despise it. The political parties ruling the country, besides being blamed for the perpetuation of the social divides between ordinary people, are also blamed for having created the conditions for people to get into 'the ethnopolitical loop' so contributing (willing or not) to maintain in place the status quo.

It may be argued that there always is a choice and that people are not puppets in the hands of some superior entity. It's undoubtedly true and these reflections are not denying people's agency – but sometimes the choice is between two opposite extremes and the ultimate choice goes for the lesser evil.

These considerations open for two further reflections: first, ruling political parties and the state have become the same political entity, there is no real distinction between the two and parties, similarly to the Macedonian case, are both nations' representatives and distributors of resources. Second, ethnonational origins serve to channel individuals into the system: according to one's own background, the corresponding party/ies will (perhaps) provide the favour.

*I heard a story of a man who had the chance to be hired in the national TV. The man was bošnjak and the only thing he had to do to get the job was to say he was part of the 'others' - because they were lacking 'others' in that institution. So the man said 'ok I'm part of a national minority, I'm not sure which one, but I'm other'...so he got the job. It's paradoxical (Nihad, age 25, ethnic Bošnjak, self-identified Sarajevo and Bosnian Herzegovinian, August 2016)*

True or not, the story mentioned above shows what is stated about the ethno-political loop and the ethno-cratic way of ruling: the self-interested mobilization of one's own ethno-nationality is a key to cope with an ethnically divided state, society and country. It may not have a big importance at individual level but, as previously argued, when it comes to issues connected to politics and institutions, it does have a considerable weight. Therefore, people's partial adjustment to the system.

Overall, the young adults interviewed expressed no interest in politics – they despised it, they were not engaged and they did not trust their state, institutions, and political representatives. *'We don't believe in anything anymore'* – said a boy.

#### **6.2.4 Parents and Children. What do they discuss at Home? Youth's Perspective**

As seen so far, the Bosnian older and younger generations happened to be very similar to each other, sharing the same opinions and trying to behave according to the 'old values' system'. Accordingly, youth confirmed their parents' answers in matter of political discourses at home: politics is not much debated, and mostly confined to commenting news while watching TV, and only in a couple of cases the youth interviewed said to have very different opinions compared to their parents:

*My father is not so much interested in politics. He's little bit...he's not liberalist, he's nationalist, bit conservative and I argue with him very often about he's being conservative. He's not open to new things, to things that may be good. He thinks in one way only, like what Dodik says, and I don't like it. He's not that share everything Dodik says, but most of it. And I'm against Dodik (Ivan, age 25, ethnic Serb, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian, September 2016)*

*I do talk about politics, but only with my father. My mother is not interested; she*

*doesn't care about these things. With dad we talk but we are opposite. I'm part of the 1990s generation, so liberal, while dad is...let's say pretty conservative. Things changed, parents raised me to be liberal, and they were liberal too. My father was much more liberal ten years ago than nowadays. They were optimist, the war ended so it was going to be better...but actually it didn't, things are worse now than fifteen years ago. So my father is now more conservative than when the war ended. [...] From early age I understood that basically we are all the same, we have the same fears, problems...there is not a reason to hate, to have prejudices. (Dejan, age 25, ethnic Serb, no self-identified, October 2016)*

Besides those cases of disagreement, the two generations interviewed emerged as perfectly aligned, and they were so despite their different personal experiences. Moreover, as mentioned in the *Introduction* and in the *Premise to the Empirical Chapters*, in the Bosnian sample there were four families in which fathers passed away during the war so I expected this kind of family/personal experience to negatively affect people's attitudes and behaviours leading them towards more 'conservative positions'. On the contrary, those young adults demonstrated a surprising capacity in overcoming and learning from the past while looking at the future. None of them showed resentments or 'negative attitudes' towards any other group, never blamed for what happened during the conflict and to their families in particular.

*Some people think I'm weird because I have Muslim friends and my dad died in the war. They consider me 'too open'. But my mother never told me bad things about other people, she never said I should hate someone. On the contrary she suggested me to go to a catholic school. She never prohibited me anything. Also her best friend is a Muslim, Nadžida. (Dajana, age 26, ethnic Serb, self-identified human being, October 2016)*

*We really have to continue living together. The older population is the problem, they are pure nationalists from all the sides and nobody trust no one. [...] Our future is very much depending on it. We should let it go at some point because we cannot live like this. Especially my generation...this is an endless circle of nationalism. (Adnan, age 28, ethnic Bošnjak, self-identified Sarajevan and Bosnian Herzegovinian, August 2016)*

According to the interviews performed with both the generations, I can safely say youth's 'openness' is greatly due to their families' education and the context in which they have grown up – Sarajevo.

Concerning the family environment, in fact, the youth said their parents have always been 'liberal' in their education, letting them doing their own experiences and making friendship with anyone. Despite personal opinions on some issues and life/war experiences, parents never prohibited them hanging out with people of different ethnicities or religions nor travelling in some BiH's areas or other former Yugoslav republics. Parents have sometimes advised their children to be careful when going in some areas of the country – as any parent would do.

Only in one case, a mother told her son 'not to trust' someone given her war experience; however, as the below quotation shows, her son had the opportunity of growing up in the Sarajevo's multiethnic reality, where contacts with other groups couldn't and cannot be avoided. While explaining his mother's point of view, the young boy showed a great understanding and respect for her mother's opinions, though moving beyond war-events and antipathies recognizing the need for unity despite people's ethnonational backgrounds and war memories.

*My mother told me - she's not a nationalist she's never been - but she told me that during the war, some of her friends who were Serbs turned against them. She always told me 'don't trust those people'. She knew a guy next-door but he just took a gun and that's why she would never ever believe again a Serb in her life. It's kinda reasonable, she got betrayed and it's reasonable, but we cant live in that way forever. Me personally, I've many friends who are really great people, who don't have that kind of attitude like the older people. War happened, it is behind us, we were children, we weren't there to betray or get betrayed, so yes, we are still in the same country, doing the same things, same age. Young people are aware of the situation and are trying [...] doesn't matter who you vote for, who you are. [...] At first I wasn't allowed to go to Republika Srpska...she told me not to trust Serbs because of her experiences. But I have Serb friends and she never told me anything because she trusts my judgment about people and she never told me anything about my Serbian friends. But yea, she is always uncomfortable if I go to Republika Srpska, she's not saying not to go but she's really uncomfortable. I mean, she's more uncomfortable with me going to Republika Srpska than me going to Belgrade. Both mom and dad are*

*Bošnjaks, my father is from Sarajevo, my mother from Travnik. But I was born in Sarajevo, they lived all their life here in Sarajevo. During the war we were here in Sarajevo (Adnan, age 28, ethnic Bošnjak, self-identified Sarajevan and Bosnian Herzegovinian, August 2016)*

Once again, it seems youth are really trying their best not to frame reality, and act into it, according to their own and the others' ethnonationality.

Parents' teachings had a great influence on them, and the youth's rather neutral attitude towards ethnonationality was due to their families' ability in transmitting them 'old values', particularly through stories concerning their Yugoslav life.

*Oh they love Tito and Yugoslavia, and I'm very proud of that. I'm also nostalgic of that period because they always talk about it, and they say only good things. Yes, they are nostalgic and us with them! [...] They say life was good, everyone had a job, everyone was satisfied. Every year people could go on vacation while now there are people it's twenty years that don't go on holiday. They say that, even when things were not going too well, that was not reflected on people. People were not suffering. Now the situation is drastically different (Darjana, age 25, ethnic Croat, self-identified Sarajevan, August 2016)*

In the light of this research's aims, the positive emphasis parents' put on Yugoslavia and good relations among people played a very important role: by recognizing 'the old values' as paramount values in any society, parents taught them the richness rather than the weaknesses of diversity by using the Yugoslav society as a positive example. Thus, they have continued to believe that unity – rather than disunity – is the key for a successful society. And so they have taught their children.

Parents and children, overall, emerged to be aligned with the previous system's set of values, recognizing the current divisive role played by ethnonationality is politically – not socially - generated and fostered.

Finally, as in the Macedonian case, Yugoslavia emerged to be part of the past, 'another world'; however, contrary to the Macedonian case, the Yugoslav society is the kind of society the Bosnian parents and children enclosed in this sample would like to reproduce and live in – having understood divisions based on ethnonationality can only lead towards something bad, and bad for everyone.

The nostalgia for the past emerged in the Bosnian case, thus, did not denote and wasn't

depicted as the symptomatic effect of individuals' failed adaptation to the new system; rather, it denoted the failure of the system itself.

#### **6.2.4.1 Generational changes**

The young generation enclosed in this sample emerged to be a quite special one. The young adults interviewed often pointed the attention on the wide gap existing between their (war) generation and the following, younger, ones. Those born in late 1990s/early 2000 have been depicted as more nationalist than them, and the reason was generally attributed to both the ethnically segregated environment in which they live in, and their families' education.

*The new generations, those in their twenties, are indoctrinated by the educational system and the media. Young people are more vulnerable and more divided, they are growing in homogenous areas, especially in the rural areas, without knowing each other...you develop fear, and fear leads to hate, and hate to war (Mirela, age 30, ethnic Bošnjak, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian, October 2016)*

*There are youth who are even more nationalist than their parents because they learned nationalism from parents and grew up where nationalism was approved. Not only approved but normal, encouraged (Ana, age 26, ethnic Serb, self-identified Sarajevan, August 2016)*

*I am from the 1990s, my generation is disgusted by the system. When I was supposed to run my bike it was war outside. There is lots of anger inside us. And most of us do not want to be part of this system. Those youth in national parties, they don't even know what means to live in a basement for years (Nina, age 27, self-identified Bosnian Herzegovinian, November 2016)*

The young generation of adults enclosed in this research sample – despite born in the war-time, experienced the first experiments of divided education and grown up surrounded by nationalism, had the luck of being exposed to an alternative model of coexistence largely taught by their parents through the telling of positive memories and experiences.

### **6.3 Conclusive Reflections.**

#### **Yugoslav Parents and the Post-Yugoslav Children.**

##### **Understanding the politico-institutional importance of Ethnonational Belonging and its Social Irrelevance in the ‘special’ context of Sarajevo**

The chapter has investigated meanings and functions of ethnonationality across two different generations living together in the same family and has focused the attention on the Sarajevo’s reality. By asking different sets of questions it has tried to identify if there is some level of inter-generational dis-continuity as well as the impact macro-factors have had/have on people’s perceptions and behaviours.

According to the general hypothesis stated in the *Introduction* the family scenario characterizing the findings in the context of Sarajevo is one of ‘Reverted Adjustment’ combined with possible utilitarian and occasional uses of one’s own ethnonational background. Both generations emerged to be aligned with the previous values’ system and there was no case of generational conflict – only a few minor generational disagreements connected to personal experiences and hopes. The continuity characterizing the two generations was due to parents’ personal experiences but also to the context in which they live/d in – Sarajevo, whose features helped them in retaining and preserving certain values and behaviours despite the massive surrounding changes. Sarajevo has, in fact, partly preserved its plural character and the Sarajevans have tried to protect ‘the old way of living’. Nevertheless, the overarching system is aligned with a new set of ‘(dis)values’ and set up according to very different rules, with ethnonationality being a pillar of the social and political life. So, in their everyday life, both generations try their best to live according to the old values however sometimes clashing with the obstacles featuring the new system – hence, their potential adjustment to the new conditions when it comes to particular circumstances.

#### **6.3.1 Continuity and Changes: understanding the Yugoslav generation**

Bosnia Herzegovina is the former Yugoslav republic that suffered the most the transition from one regime to another one, and the one that went through the most drastic changes in its societal and territorial composition. BiH passed from being a ‘*Jugoslavija u malom*’ to perhaps the most divided country in Europe and Sarajevo,



its capital city, is trying to retain its reputation of ‘meeting of cultures’ despite its population is slowly becoming more ethnically homogenous year after year<sup>123</sup>.

The parents’ generation enclosed in this sample was the one born between the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s, thus that generation grown up in the ‘golden age’ of Yugoslavia, where the system’s promises were maintained and people were not disappointed.

The ideological framework set up by the Socialist system and based on (formal) equality among the groups, happened to be particularly well translated in the Bosnian society (or at least in its urban areas) were, as the interviewees said, people were all the same – ‘*we were breathing the same air*’, a father said. People were of course aware of ethnonational differences, yet these hadn’t any dividing potential or social relevance. The interviewees explicitly said ethnonationality never mattered, and relations between people (or ethnic groups) have been described as ‘good and close’.

As the parents pointed out, it was with and because of the war (not yet in the 1980s), that things started to change and the massive wave of ethnonationalism investing the collapsing federation freed the divisive potential of ethnonational belonging. In more than one occasion parents, indeed, pointed out how not people, but ethnonationalist leaders first leading the war and then the country, made ethnonationality ‘a problem’, creating barriers between people and compromising the old, good, relations.

As seen, although life experiences connected to the war caused them family losses, moving, and influenced their current political opinions and feelings of attachment towards the larger state and portions of it, all the parents included in the sample have positively recognized, and looked with nostalgia, not simply the old collapsed system but especially its positive life climate and good relations – so teaching their children according to what they believe to be the most appropriated way to live in a plural society.

Consequently, the concept of Yugonostalgia was not understood as people’s failed adaptation to the new conditions but as a failure of the system itself; the respect for that system surpassed and survived the tragedies of war, and the parents asked in this

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<sup>123</sup> See Popis Stanovništva, Domaćinstava i Stanova u Bosni i Hercegovini, 2013. Rezultati Popisa. Census of Population, Households and Dwelling in Bosnia and herzegovina, 2013. Final Results. *Agencija za Statistiku Bosne i Hercegovine. Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo, Jun 2016;

research taught their children according to the ‘brotherhood’s values’ – as some defined them.

However, if BiH is such a divided society, a reason there should be.

The parents surveyed have, in fact, made a very important distinction that also reveals something important about their political attitudes and conceptions of the larger multinational state. The distinction in question pertains the way in which they were using the ‘us and them’ dichotomy – namely, to distinguish between normal people, ordinary citizens and political class, nationalist individuals seeking power. When it comes to ethnonationality’s meanings and functions, this distinction goes in parallel with the two level of analysis – the everyday life/social level, and the politico-institutional one, eventually generating a discrepancy between the two.

So, in their everyday life and small social circles, the parents interviewed try not to frame reality according to ethnonational origins and so have taught their children. The fact that ethnonationality, for the parents included in this sample, did not, and to some extents still doesn’t, matter at social level, it’s further witnessed by a really interesting finding: none of the parents interviewed – even when supporting national parties, not recognizing BiH as their own state, having fought in the war and for different ideals – never ever mentioned or blamed any of the three major groups composing Bosnia. On the contrary, ethnonational leaders and international powers were blamed for the existing separations.

On the other side the concrete existence of obstacles set up by the system, generally described as coercive and not leaving space for alternatives, very often requires people to adjust to the rules - so that the mobilization and/or protection of one’s own ethnonationality has become crucial to survive the Bosnian ethnopolitics.

According to what emerged during the interviews, even when identifying only with portions or areas of the country and even when supporting national political parties, the parents interviewed framed their opinions, and motivated their answers, not in ideological terms but in terms of resignation to the context – the only way. In fact, it’s not (always) matter of ideological brainwashing. As the parents in this sample pointed out, sometimes (or often) it’s also matter of survival in a deeply divided system. Hence, the reasons why people might potentially adjust to the system.

These reflections do not imply there are no people ideologically convinced of the truthfulness of the national cause; they instead means that a macro-system set up along ethnonational lines makes hard, for ordinary citizens, to think but especially

behave out of the dominant framework, and particularly in certain circumstances when the institutional and the political spheres are involved.

The 'survival' issue, in fact, widely emerged during the interviews and the old generation pointed the attention on its two aspects – however both conducive to fear: fear of not surviving as group and as individuals.

On the one side, given the territorial, administrative and political divisions across ethnonational lines, and the general perception of BiH not being a (united) country, to support ethnonational parties is convenient in terms of group survival. On the other side, the divisions mentioned above coupled with economic deficiencies, lead people to support ethnonational parties also because of possible individual benefits, ranging from job opportunities to medical services or education.

Even though the parents interviewed, in the context of Sarajevo, were generally supporting non-ethnic and civic political parties, the widespread support for national parties is however a reality in BiH. According to the interviewees, this support may be seen as a symptomatic outcome of a well-established ethnocratic system largely functioning according to ethno-clientelistic mechanisms, and in which ethnic oligarchs are succeeding in keeping to the minimum the non-ethnonational and civic alternatives.

Concluding, for what concerns the meanings attributed to one's own ethnonational background, the old generation of parents interviewed emerged to be still sticking (or trying to) with the old system's set of values, according to which ethnonationality is something private that shouldn't impede social relations – and shouldn't be politicized. However, the practical implementation of those principles is generally confined to the everyday life and their own social circles while, as they pointed out, when it comes to issues pertaining to the political and institutional spheres there are major obstacles that have to be faced – so that the mobilization of one's own ethnonationality for pragmatic reasons may become an option.

Although clearly not generalizable to the whole Bosnian population, the research findings concerning the old generation of parents have pointed the attention on their attempts in not adjusting to the new ethnocratic system, however acknowledging circumstantial and occasional adjustment as a sort of resigned position before a coercive system.

### 6.3.2 Inter-generational Continuity and Generational Differences

The younger and the older generation emerged to be very similar to each other: both were aligned with the previous system's set of values concerning ethnonationality's meanings and functions and, contrary to the Macedonian case study, it was the nostalgia of the past, coupled with the features of the context in which they lived in, that consistently helped them in retaining and maintaining as much as possible close social contacts between individuals and alleged groups' members.

However, since the purpose of this work is to assess inter-generational continuity and the generational impact of macro-factors in shaping the meanings and functions of one's own ethnonational belonging, the kind of continuity emerged between the two generations was both contextual and generational.

The city of Sarajevo has in fact partly preserved its features over time: although less mixed than once, still it is more mixed than any other urban and rural area in the country. As for the case of Skopje, continuity pertaining to the micro-reality allowed the older generation to preserve 'the old way of living', not asking for a drastic re-adjustment. Consequently, and on the other side, parents had a huge influence on their offspring and the modalities in which ethnonationality is understood, framed and used between the two generations is really similar if not the same.

The younger generation, despite its initial experience of segregated education, has grown up in rather mixed social environments which did not precluded them the possibility of making inter-ethnic friendships. As emerged from the interviews, the family environment was in some cases ethnically mixed and so were/are the youth's groups of friends – never monoethnic. Parents happened to have a great impact on the offspring, thus assuring inter-generational continuity for what concerned the meanings attributed to one's own ethnonational origins.

In both the generations' case, socio-political phenomena were explained in terms of bad politics coupled with economic deficiencies – not in terms of group antagonism and competition. In fact, the dichotomy 'us and them' was used to distinguish between people and political elite, normal citizens and nationalist leaders, so recalling what stated in Chapter 4 about the 'new class' (Đilas 1957) on top of a 'totalitarian dictatorship' of ethnic bureaucracy.

The emerged inter-generational continuity was thus encompassing both the social behavioural sphere and the one of political opinions and attitudes.

Regardless the party voted for, both the generations interviewed highlighted their deep disappointment towards the political class, blamed for creating and deepening the divide – social and political – between the communities. As their parents, all the young adults surveyed recognized that the ‘problem’ is more politico-institutional than inherently social. They envisaged the need for steps forwards aimed at bridging closer the two communities but, at the same time, they felt hampered by the surrounding – which, as they often pointed out, it’s not working for the wellbeing of the society but for deepening its divisions. Thus their political disaffection and non-engagement into politics.

The parents and the youth interviewed critically discussed the problems raised by the school system, the manipulative use of media and clientelistic practices - defined to be political tools in the hands of ethnic entrepreneurs. Even in these matters, parents and children were perfectly aligned, and even in these cases no reference to other groups was made.

Finally, for the most part, the interviewees adopted non-ethnonational/ethno-territorial forms of identification arose in some but not in all cases and, when arisen, were either connected to the ethnically mixed background of the respondents or to anti-nationalist positions.

Indeed, civic and non-ethnic forms of identification may be the outcome of ethnically mixed origins but also of political views against nationalism and its collectivization. Next to the ‘Bosnian Herzegovinian’ identity, indeed, emerged the ‘Sarajevan’ one. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, both the two kinds of identification expresses attachment and identification with a plural entity – be that either BiH or Sarajevo -, taking the distance from the Bosnian politics and ethnic collectivization while at the same time including and encompassing any ethnonational group. The two self-identifications wanted to highlight the (once more than nowadays) cosmopolitan and plural character of BiH and Sarajevo but, above all, that cosmopolitan character some of the parents and children in this sample have identified as a value that needs to be preserved from nationalist contamination and homogenization.

To conclude, ethnonational belonging emerged to have two different meanings according to the level of analysis considered – not the generation: we can identify the first as a ‘social-contextual’ while the second one as ‘politico-institutional’.

Ethnonationality’s meanings and functions have generally been described for the negative consequences they produce, rather than as forms of attachment and pride;

this doesn't mean the people interviewed did not express any sort of ethnonational sentiment – they did it but, as seen, in some cases was too difficult, if not impossible, to define 'which the group of belonging was', so stressing the fluidity and the multiplicity of identities and forms of identification. On the contrary, from a politico-institutional perspective people are sharply defined according to their backgrounds and origins, which in turn clearly define their institutionally crystallized identities. Hence, as the interviews illustrated, when micro and macro enter into contact, and the individual dimension come across the collective one, the possibility of instrumental uses of ethnonationality aimed at safeguarding one's own survival - both as individuals and as members of ethnonational collectivities - becomes a valid possibility, a key able to open doors in a country functioning according to the ethnopolitics' rules.

In both generations' case, ethnonational origins emerged to be one among many identity's components however, under certain circumstances and in some occasions, recognized as the main key to have access to the politico-institutional level, to survive the ethnopolitical scaffolding.

### **6.3.3 A Couple of Remarks**

Before concluding this chapter, a couple of remarks regarding both meanings and functions of ethnonational backgrounds and the generational continuity emerged in the context of Sarajevo have to be made.

As seen, the generation of parents interviewed happened not to have 'radical' positions and opinions about theirs and others' ethnonational groups, even when supporting national parties or when signed by family losses and tragedies. Similarly, although grown up in an ethnically divided society, their children took the distance from nationalist politics and ethnic collectivization, trying to move beyond war memories and ethnic classifications.

In a broader perspective, however, this is not the rule; perhaps, it is an exception to the rule.

Ideological indoctrination and more radical positions, featured by some degree of ethnic antagonisms and conscious avoidance of contacts with other groups also (and widely) do exist in the broader Bosnian contexts – and even in Sarajevo.

Personal experiences – especially connected to the conflict - do have a major role in shaping people's opinions and behaviours but, in addition to that, two other intertwined elements may have a role, helping or not in ending up into the nationalist trap. These two elements may be linked to the rural-urban dichotomy and to generational disappointments. Although none of the two explored in this work, we can safely point out a couple of issues.

First, as Touquet (2015: 394-95) explained, 'in the case of Bosnia and Sarajevo in particular, the urban-rural discourse reflects the complexities of post-war life, as the country has undergone major demographic changes during and after the war'. Due to practical reasons, this research has focused the attention only on the urban context of Sarajevo – a context different from both other urban cities in BiH, such as Mostar or Banja Luka, and to rural areas.

Urban cities with clear ethnic majorities (such as Banja Luka) or with clear ethnic divisions (such as Mostar) may produce very different social dynamics and, in turn, affecting in a more negative way the way how people do understand and attribute meanings to their own ethnonational origins, as well as the way how people do interact with others (see Touquet 2015). On the other hand, life in the rural areas – where socio-economic conditions are worse, where people have different needs, the population has not only less chances to interact with other groups but also to receive higher education - may also produce 'more conservative' positions, fear of the otherness and, in turn, the protection of ethnonational boundaries at the expenses of attempts in bridging the communities.

So the context of Sarajevo may be considered a unique one in BiH, still featured by a certain secularism and plurality despite the last two decades' changes. A micro-environment that has, overall, been able to favour inter-ethnic contacts and positive experiences despite the siege and other atrocities, to produce civic forms of identification untied from ethnonational origins however respecting, and including, differences.

Second, and concerning generational disappointments, the interviews with the younger generation let emerge other generational differences and pertaining to the generations younger than the one enclosed in this sample. As briefly mentioned in the chapter, the generation of children born in late 1990s/early 2000s has been described as more nationalist and conservative than the one here analysed – so that my interviewees took the distance from them pointing the attention on a generational gap.

As the young adults interviewed said, the younger generations are more nationalist even if they did not live the war. However, a plausible explanation may be retraced, as in this research's young generation's case, in both the context's features and their parents' influence based on their own personal experiences and disappointments.

However, these are just assumptions based on the interviews performed in Sarajevo and informal conversations held by the researcher in the last couple of years, and no empirical analysis has been done on the topic.

To conclude, the analysis performed in the context of Sarajevo with 12 families has shown a high level of generational continuity for what concerns the meanings attributed to ethnonational origins – continuity guaranteed by the parents' positive experience of the Yugoslav system as well as by the particular features of the micro-reality these families live in. On the other side, however, the positive continuity in terms of values and meanings sometimes does not match, and thus clashes, with the surrounding macro-reality, featured by a sharp definition of the ethnic collectivities' boundaries and respective identities. Therefore, the factual implementation of what is transmitted within the family is often confined to a small social reality and restricted to a more superficial level. Ethnonational origins, indeed, emerged to have a very different meaning and weight when it comes to the political and institutional spheres – where ethnonationality does play an existential role and it's sometimes used accordingly.

As the reader had the chance to notice, the apparently similar contexts of BiH and Macedonia have, instead, shown some interesting differences when it comes to the micro level of analysis.

BiH and Macedonia have a common macro-starting point and as well as a common macro-ending point, but the paths followed to reach the finish line are clearly different. Therefore, the next chapter will compare in a broader perspective the two case studies, taking into consideration the macro-features of the respective contexts (as exposed in Chapter 4) and pointing more in detail the attention on generational differences and macro-micro intersections and interdependences.



## CHAPTER 7

### **ETHNONATIONALITY IN MACEDONIA AND BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA. INTER-GENERATIONAL DIS-SIMILARITIES AND DIS-CONTINUITIES IN TWO APPARENTLY SIMILAR CASE STUDIES.**

The scientific curiosity in deepening issues concerning ethnonationality in two former Yugoslav republics, and across generations, derived from the political and institutional salience ethnonationality has acquired after the fall of Yugoslavia. This macro change – encompassing the political, the institutional and the social spheres - has, in turn, justified a micro-analysis enclosing two differently socialized generations. The research aimed to understand how interactions between state structures and individuals have potentially accounted for inter-generational discontinuities in the meanings and function of one's own ethnonational background.

Acknowledging the relation of mutual dependence existing between macro and micro, and the impossibility of understanding micro-phenomena without including also a macro-perspective (and vice versa), the aim of the multi-dimensional analysis performed in this work was twofold: 1) understand the extent in which past and present 'macro-elements' have penetrated and shaped the micro-world; and 2) how, and why, these two generations' ideas and behaviours connected to ethnonationality are dis-similar to each other.

As emerged from the analysis exposed in the previous chapters, in fact, not only macro-structures and actors do influence and shape people's lives, proposing and sometimes imposing certain ideas and uses of ethnonational belonging, and filling political categories with sharply defined meanings; but also people have the ability to influence the macro, legitimizing or not the system and the dominant framework in which they live in. In a broader perspective, in fact, the research findings do tell something interesting about the functioning of ethnocracies, the potential of state-sponsored ideologies and behaviours in penetrating the grassroots of the society and, in the light of people's possible reasons and motivations, which are the basis and extents in which the system gets or not popular legitimacy.

In trying to summarize the research results presented in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, the following pages attempt to build a coherent discourse on the evolution of ethnonationality in two post-Yugoslav countries by looking at the intersections between macro and micro and their generational effects.

### **7.1 What kind of comparison(s)?**

The interrogatives driving this work, all grounded on the concept of ethnonationality and focused on the two generations composing the family unit, do make clear the complexity of the issues investigated. They involve macro and micro, individuals and groups, meanings and usages, different political systems and two countries. In turn, to make a general, overarching and sufficiently complete and clear comparison is not an easy task.

Nevertheless, much of the work has already been done, and the three previous empirical chapters have already provided the reader with a clear picture of the reality studied. However, if the purpose is to create a coherent discourse encompassing all these dimensions, we should try to simplify a bit and proceed by steps.

The first step is a macro-country analysis.

This means to look at Macedonia and BiH from a macro-structural point of view, summarizing what emerged during the empirical analysis performed in both countries. The aim of this first level of comparison is to illustrate how, why and in what extent macro structures and events may have penetrated and so influenced people's micro-realities. This allows better identifying the characteristics of the context in which people live in, the strategies and mechanisms political actors use to influence and reach the micro, eventually laying the bases for properly understanding people's ways of thinking and acting with and within their plural realities.

The second step, thus, connects macro and micro.

This means to point the attention on the two generations surveyed looking at their ways of signifying and possibly using ethnonational backgrounds in the light of the influences macro events and structures have had on them. This second comparison takes first into consideration the two older generations while then the two younger ones, allowing answering – from a generational perspective - questions about how members of two differently socialized generations interact with and within their plural societies.

Finally, the third step is to shift the attention to the family unit, so to perform an inter-generational comparison.

After having understood how the macro may influence the micro and how the micro may interact with the macro and within the micro reality of the everyday life, the last step puts together all the puzzle's pieces making order in the complexity of political and family socialization, in turn producing that lacking knowledge about the inter-generational transmission of meanings and usages of one's own ethnonationality.

## **7.2 First level of comparison: understanding the Macro. Context, Strategies and Mechanisms.**

Macedonia and Bosnia Herzegovina emerged to be rather similar in terms of political and institutional set up, functioning and dis-functioning.

Both countries are characterized by ethnopolitics and, in both the two cases, the same strategies are employed by the ruling political elite to get their masses consent and support. Instrumental uses of media, educational school system and ethnic clientelistic practices emerged to be the main strategies and, in both cases, also to function rather well, attracting – in one way or the other – the largest part of the population.

Recalling and connecting the empirical analysis together with the theories exposed in Chapter 1, we can see the approaches of Malešević and Wimmer in the study of ethnicity and nationality as the ones better suiting and explaining the findings of this work.

### **7.2.1 Same Game, Same Rules**

Malešević (2004) argued that, for ethnonationality to become salient, mere social contact between groups and individuals is not enough; rather, it is when social contacts happen in particular moments, such as to respond or cope with the changing of the environment, that the political mobilization of cultural differences eventually makes ethnicity and nationality relevant. This approach, however, it is true also in the opposite direction – meaning, groups' cultural differences may be politically, and thus socially, de-emphasized to decrease their relevance. The difference lies in the final goal the political actors involved in the process want to pursue.

As we have seen, the Yugoslav system, in order to gain legitimacy and survive, needed to discourage ethnonational sentiments while fostering unity and solidarity untied from ethnonationality – so emphasizing the common features the groups shared. Once the Yugoslav system was collapsing – so, as Malešević said, in order to cope with the changing environment -, cultural features of the groups have been politically mobilized in order to attract and gather the masses on a different legitimizing base.

Ethnonationality.

Nowadays, in both Macedonia and BiH, the main political parties – and since the very beginning of the multiparty system's implementation, campaign almost exclusively on ethnonational basis, not competing among each other but within the borders of their respective ethnonational communities.

Relying on particular institutional assets hoped to favour inter-groups cooperation, political parties of both countries have been able to establish new alliances with 'their own ethnicized masses', hence generating new dynamics of power distribution.

In order to gain legitimacy, ideological and institutional strategies have been used to highlight and safeguard ethnonational differences, in turn convincing the masses that only ethnonational groups' political representatives (rather than citizens' representatives) could truly satisfy their masses' needs and interests.

Ideological indoctrination partly allowed by the state structure, and generally based on fear of the 'otherness' – be that articulated in terms of institutional overruling or cultural contamination, emerged to be a key strategy to make the system functioning while keeping alive internal divisions drawn upon ethnonational lines. As Wimmer (2008a; 2008b) argued, indeed, what influences the saliency of groups' boundaries is the overarching institutional framework, the distribution of power between the groups, and the networks of political alliances shaping elite and non-elite's interests and behaviours. But more precisely, it's the interactions between different social and political groups, and based on compromises entailing 'an exchange of the guarantee of political loyalty for the promise of participation and security' (Wimmer 2004: 32), that allow the state to function.

In the context of institutionalized ethnopolitics and functioning ethnocracy, as it is the case of Macedonia and BiH, both elites and masses have generally found more convenient to interact *within*, rather than across, the boundaries of the ethnonational groups - so that, eventually, they started trusting each other, identifying with each

other (Wimmer 2013). In this way, ethnically selective patterns of behaviours and interactions have become routinized and taken for granted, so normal.

The ruling political elite has also assumed 'new' functions, making considerably blurred the distinction between state and ruling parties. These latter, indeed, are largely seen as *the* state and so have become also distributors of resources.

As emerged from the interviews performed with both case studies' informants and ordinary citizens, resources are often redistributed to individuals in quality of ethnic groups' members and via ethnonational political parties - rather than to individuals in quality of country citizens and via de-politicized/de-ethnicized state institutions. In fact, together with ideological indoctrination via media and school system, another strategy widely employed by ethnic entrepreneurs committed in their 'ruling by dividing' is the large use of ethnic clientelistic practices. As shown, both Macedonia and BiH are plagued by economic deficiencies and high rates of unemployment – and those are especially high among the young populations. Therefore, a kind of illusionary protection largely sold is the economic one.

Political leaders in both Macedonia and BiH are often in control of entire sectors of the public administration/public companies and, oftentimes, also own private companies; in this way, and at some conditions (always involving voting during elections), they have been able to tie in-need people while assuring themselves power. As said, 'where doesn't arrive ideology, arrive the money'.

However, it's worth to say again that the fold assumed by politics in both the two countries surveyed has been partly allowed and incentivized by the state structure itself – based on ethnic power-sharing mechanisms introduced after their respective conflicts. Although meant to favour the main societal groups' participation in the decision making processes, ethnic power-sharing mechanisms, applied in two countries already plagued by inter-group tensions and antipathies, could barely promote non-ethnic politics.

Indeed, the strength of ethnocentrism and nationalism has not decrease over the years: on the contrary, by exploiting in their favour institutional mechanisms based on ethnic power-sharing, the ethnic representatives of both countries have been able to 'democratically' ruling by dividing – so making '*divide et impera*' the way to do politics and governing their plural societies.

### 7.2.2 Same Game and Rules but different Legitimizing Grounds

If ethnopoltics and ruling by dividing have become that pronounced and long-lasting, it is because they have been based on solid legitimizing grounds – which, however, consistently differ between the two countries here analysed. Nationalist and ethnocentric standpoints of both Macedonia and BiH are, indeed, rather different and since the very rise of ethnonationalism in the end of the 1980s.

In Macedonia, ethnonational parties do not sell protection from culturally and religiously different others (hence, protection from ‘cultural contamination’), but mainly protection in terms of institutional representation of the groups composing the larger state. Given majority/minority dynamics intertwined to far-back rooted collective frustrations related to the socio-political status occupied by the groups, political discourses in Macedonia have always been articulated on two oppositional narratives: ‘this is our state’ on the ethnic Macedonia side, and ‘this is also our state’ on the ethnic Albanian one. As seen, ethnic Macedonians have constantly been contested as distinct nation by the neighbouring states, and so was the territory of Macedonia – always considered a geographical area until when, within the establishment of the Socialist Yugoslavia, both the group and part of the geographical Macedonian territory have been politically recognized as separate and distinct.

Ethnic Albanians in Macedonia, instead, have always been the largest among the smaller groups but, in spite of that, both during Yugoslavia and in independent Macedonia, have been treated as a minority and as belonging to a lower status - socially, culturally and politically. However, if this lower status was ideologically overshadowed during the Yugoslav decades, given the Brotherhood and Unity policy, it became official in 1991. Trying to satisfy their historical dream of full statehood, ethnic Macedonians claimed the exclusive ownership of *their* state, eventually built on contestation rather than consensus. While ethnic Albanians, seeing their recently little-improved status fiercely downgraded to a minority, asked for status elevation as co-constituency, where co-state’s ownership meant political recognition and representation. Hence, mistrust between the two communities, ideologically overshadowed during Yugoslavia, became clearer in the 1990s exacerbating in the 2001 conflict. Finally, with the new institutional asset set up by the OFA, collective frustrations and national struggles for recognition and representation found a sort of

equilibrium and political legitimacy within the consociational system, where representatives of two collective identities share power and state's institutions alike. However, since then, ethnic Macedonians feel to be institutionally discriminated and their nationhood and (nation-)state endangered; while ethnic Albanians feel to be finally levelling up the socio-political hierarchy and getting closer to their wished, but not yet achieved, status of co-constituent nation of the Macedonian state.

These historical, political and institutional developments and dynamics, characterizing Macedonia since its Yugoslav past, make clear that when we try to understand the evolution of meanings and usages of ethnonationality in the Macedonian context we cannot not to consider two main issues: 1) far-back and deeply rooted collective frustrations and 2) majority-minority dynamics connected to different ideas of the very nature of the state – if mono, bi- or multinational.

Collective identities' frustrations connected to the status the groups occupy, and wish to occupy, within the state (practically speaking, a failed exclusive state's ownership on one side, and a failed official co-ownership on the other one) indeed reveal a deeply rooted debate over state's ownership and explain why, for ethnonational political parties, to sell protection in terms of groups' representation in the state bodies is so important – the main political narrative from any side.

The main cleavage between the ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian communities, hence, is about state's ownership yet articulated in terms of ethnic groups' collective rights and representation in the state bodies. According to what emerged from the interviews performed in Skopje, what has changed over time is only the official/institutional way in which 'apparently ethnic' cleavages and issues are articulated and managed. Overall, indeed, ethnonationality has always mattered, channelling groups' claims and discontents, eventually affecting also the micro-world and the kind of social interactions between the groups.

In BiH, instead, we can observe a different reality.

By relying on both the absence of an ethnic majority above 50% and on the experience of the war as well, ethnonational political parties play on a different political platform and generally sell an illusionary protection in terms of 'cultural contamination' by the hand of different others.

Since the 1990s, in fact, nationalist political discourses in Bosnia Herzegovina have always been based on cultural and religious clashes and incompatibilities, more than

on co-ownership of the state. Recalling the theories exposed in Chapter 1, the articulation of nationalist rhetoric on the cultural-religious ground has been made possible because of the always existed little distance and difference between the three main Bosnian groups; as Conversi (1999) explained, when groups do share many elements, then ethnic entrepreneurs have to fabricate some new ones in order to mark the groups' boundaries. This explains the heavy ideological indoctrination pursued by those leaders, which have to constantly remind (and scare) people about their (little) differences if they want to preserve, and legitimize, their power positions.

Hence the implementation of consociationalism and power-sharing mechanisms via ethnonationality's institutionalization, in 1995, had the effect of creating a sort of equilibrium – albeit fragile and paradoxical - in which the three ethnonational groups' representatives can separately deal and rule over their ethnic masses without effectively cooperating with each other, so maintaining the situation immobile while gaining constant power by feeding people with different types of fear.

Summarizing, national leaders in Macedonia and BiH play the same game and follow the same rules although operating in two different legitimizing grounds.

Although social and political ethnic-based divisions have, in both the two cases, to be nurtured and deepened via ideological and pragmatic/economical strategies, the difference between the two case studies lays in the main 'justifying' narrative – that is (mainly) about groups' socio-political status in the Macedonian case, while (mainly) about groups' cultural incompatibilities in the Bosnian one.

It goes that, although in both states' cases the groups composing the plural state are involved in a debate over the very nature of the state itself, once again and in the light of the above stated, the employed narratives are rather different: in BiH the state is 'no one's state' – each of the three groups see it differently but, more importantly, two of them do not recognized it as their own and wish for their 'ethnicized portions of territory' either autonomy or secession; in Macedonia it is the opposite: the state is by both groups seen as their own and both want to improve their respective group's statuses at the expenses of the others.

Concluding, what this first macro comparison shows is that, from a political and institutional perspective, ethnonationality's importance is undeniable and stressed, implicitly and explicitly, in a multitude of ways - hence making hard, for ordinary citizens, to detach themselves from the dominant framework.



These findings have been further corroborated by the interviews performed with informants and ordinary citizens of both countries, which have confirmed how ethnonationality has become the prime pillar on which the entire system functions and is built upon, in turn favouring people's adherence to collective and politicized identities, as well as the self-interested mobilization of ethnonationality.

### **7.3 Second level of comparison: Connecting Macro and Micro.**

#### **How members of two different generations interact with-in their plural societies.**

In the light of what explained so far and pertaining to both countries' macro-level, the following section aims at comparing and explaining the main micro-differences emerged on the meanings and functions people do attribute to their own ethnonationality – and, in turn, on the nature of the interactions they entertain with and within their societies.

The comparison, this time, is generational and looks first at the two Yugoslav generations while then at the two younger, post-Yugoslav, ones. The aim is to make clear how and in what extent macro structures and events have influenced/influence the micro, and how the micro does interact with-in the macro. Only then, a family overview describing the kind of different inter-generational continuities emerged will be provided and more clearly understandable.

#### **7.3.1 The (differences between) Yugoslav Generations**

The Macedonian and Bosnian generations of parents enclosed in this research sample, born between 1952 and 1965 and grown up in the 'Golden age of Yugoslavia', happened to be rather dissimilar from each other. However, the differences emerged to be due to the macro-features of their respective countries, not to their ethnonational origins. Indeed, in BiH no ethnic distinction could be made and groups' boundaries happened to be rather blurred; in Macedonia, instead, although the dividing line between the two major groups was more clearly traceable and group antagonism more perceivable, the specular positions assumed by the ethnic Macedonians and the ethnic Albanians on certain issues were clearly linked to the fold assumed by political dynamics (and the politicization of their ethnic belongings) more than to effective ethnonational differences.

For what concerns the kind of mutual interactions between macro and micro – state and masses, the generation of parents from Macedonia, regardless their ethnonational origins, happened to be perfectly adjusted to the new system and no nostalgia from the past was impeding that alignment. More precisely, as Chapter 5 and the above country-analysis have demonstrated, the ‘adjustment to the new conditions’ is only apparent: although the system – in terms of polity - has changed, the establishment of ethnic power-sharing and multiparty system has institutionalized previously ideologically minimized antagonisms and cleavages, thus not requiring people to really re-adjust themselves.

Opposite was instead the case of the generation of parents from the Bosnian sample which, again regardless ethnonational origins, happened to be still sticking with the ‘Yugoslav understanding’ of ethnonationality and trying to adjust their behaviour to the drastically changed surrounding.

By bearing in mind the previous macro analysis, the main differences emerged between the two generations are the followings:

*a) Nature of the social distance and use of the ‘Us and Them’ dichotomy*

The social realities of Skopje and Sarajevo emerged to be very different. While Skopje has been described as a ‘divided city’, where even in the most mixed area (the Old Bazaar) places and people are ethnically separated, Sarajevo has been described as a still rather mixed reality where the avoidance of certain groups and people is not really possible.

The parents included in the Macedonian sample were and are used to live, since the Yugoslav era, in rather segregated social environments. Social divisions have been related to both groups’ cultural differences and politico-institutional mechanisms of exclusion/inclusion. In turn, inter-group relations have been described as ‘cold and superficial’ and the dichotomy ‘us and them’ always employed to distinguish between the two main groups.

As previously shown, given the far-rooted ethnicization of political narratives and demands, it cannot be surprising why the interviewees have described and framed their socio-political reality in the same terms however each one from its own ‘ethnic’ point of view. Precisely, socio-political dynamics were explained through the prism of (ethnic) collectivism and in terms of groups’ struggles for recognition and status

elevation and, in a broader perspective, in terms of state ownership.

In the Bosnian sample, instead, parents have always been used to live together, never paying attention to people's ethnonational backgrounds – which began to matter in the 1990s and especially with and after the conflict. Inter-ethnic relations between ordinary citizens have, in this case, been described as 'still rather good' and mainly depicted as relations between human beings rather than ethnic groups – as to further stress that ethnonationality has never mattered from a social perspective. However, acknowledging that this is not the rule, and that ethnonationality does matter in the larger Bosnian socio-political environment, the dichotomy 'us and them' did emerge also in this case. Curiously, however, the generation of parents from Sarajevo did use the 'us and them' dichotomy not to distinguish between people belonging to different ethnic groups but, rather, to distinguish between us – the people, and them – the (new) political class (Đilas 1957).

#### *b) Political attitudes*

Given these premises about nature and quality of social interactions, social environments and attitudes towards the groups composing the larger society, it cannot be too surprising the parents interviewed in Skopje and in Sarajevo also had different political attitudes.

The inhabitants of Skopje were all supporting ethnonational parties, with ethnic Albanians supporting the party stemming from the 2001 conflict, while ethnic Macedonians mainly the leftist and liberal one (still ethnonational although its recent opening towards other communities, during the 2016's electoral campaign). The support for ethnonational parties, especially in the ethnic Albanian case, was motivated in terms of collective interests' protections and groups' institutional representation. Nevertheless, on the one side the political scenario (in detail analysed in Chapter 4) has shown there actually is no much alternative besides ethnonational political representatives, since multiethnic and civic parties almost do not exist; on the other side, groups' protection in terms of institutional representation is, since the first government formed in 1991, one of the key points stressed by the main parties – which, as seen, largely campaign on this platform and articulating their narratives in ethnic terms.

The inhabitants of Sarajevo, instead, all supported multiethnic parties campaigning along civic and ethnically inclusive platforms, so reflecting their overall anti-nationalist and anti-elite political positions. The few parents currently living in the RS were, instead, supporting the dominant ethnonational party of the area. The support for national parties, in this case, was framed and explained in terms of fear and need of survival – both in quality of individuals and groups’ members – in a society where ethnonational belonging is the principle according to which people are represented, interests safeguarded and resources redistributed. The explanation the Bosnian parents generally gave was, indeed, in terms of bad governance and political-institutional coercive powers not leaving people ‘alternatives’.

As a consequence of the different political attitudes between the two samples of parents, different attitudes towards phenomena involving the groups composing the society did emerge as well. The clearest example was about ethnic clientelism, widely present in both the two case studies’ societies.

In Macedonia, given that groups’ institutional representation is collectively understood as synonymous of groups’ status – either elevation or decay - and groups’ status in the larger society has always been matter of concern and debate between the two groups, clientelistic practices running along ethnonational lines and aimed at improving/decreasing the representation of certain groups in the state’s bodies were morally condemned but practically normalized and sometimes practiced, and generally described as a sort of collateral effect of an otherwise superior goal.

The Bosnian sample, once again, revealed a slightly different attitude.

Ethnic clientelistic practices were condemned and framed in terms of political strategies implemented by ethnic entrepreneurs ‘to trap’ people exploiting the state’s bad economic conditions. Indeed, the phenomena’s explanation the Bosnian parents gave was always about the need of surviving in a poor country, and those who engage in those practices – instrumentally mobilizing their ethnonationality even when not ideologically supporting the parties selling the favour - generally commiserated, depicted as adjusted/surrendered to a coercive context in order to survive the ethnopolitical scaffolding.

*c) The attitude towards their Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav states and the concept of Yugonostalgia*

Finally, a few other main differences, all interconnected between each other, emerged between the two older generations surveyed.

As seen in the macro comparison, the Macedonian reality is featured by far-back and deeply rooted collective frustrations and majority-minority dynamics connected to different ideas of the very nature of the state – if mono, bi- or multinational. It goes that the events characterizing the 1990s, when Macedonia was firstly established as an ethnic nation-state and the ethnic Albanians treated once again as second-class citizens, also produced a ‘rather cold’ attitude towards Yugoslavia and justified the then alignment with the new system. From an ethnic Macedonian perspective, the collapsing structure, acknowledged as objectively good, was however not the best, since the best was collectively seen as the just-achieved full sovereignty and statehood. From an ethnic Albanian perspective, instead, the subordination experienced in the nascent independent state was seen as the continuation of an already existing subordination; so, although Yugoslavia was acknowledged as a rather fair and good system, it served as a base for a graver discrimination.

In both the two major groups’ case, the changing macro environment produced a cold attitude towards the Yugoslav past, and the alignment with the new system was based on the (past and future) struggles for national recognition and status elevation. In line with what argued by Mishler and Rose (1997: 420) in their study about trust and skepticism in post-communist societies, ‘the ultimate failure and collapse of Communism also may serve, perversely, to encourage public trust in the institutions of the new regimes’. Consequently therefore, the concept of Yugonostalgia was used to illustrate people’s failed adjustment to the new conditions.

In BiH, instead, we can find the opposite attitude.

Emotional attachment towards the Yugoslav past widely emerged during the interviews and regardless the ethnonationality of the respondents. In particular, the respondents highlighted, and missed, the life climate featuring BiH at that time – a time in which ethnonationality was not important in ordinary citizens’ lives and where it did not constitute a social obstacle, being it not politicized. The concept of Yugonostalgia, thus, in the Bosnian case was completely differently framed and aimed at illustrating the failure of the new system itself, not of people in adjusting to it.

This shift of attention from people’s failed adjustment – in the Macedonian case, to the state’s failure – in the Bosnian case, may thus be explained as a subjective and

‘periodic revision based on more recent experiences and evaluations of contemporary performance’ (Mishler, Rose 1997: 436), particularly the political ones<sup>124</sup>. In turn, this different attitude points the attention on the two generations’ different attitude towards their respective new systems more in general. In the Macedonian case, regardless the ethnonationality of the respondents, the new independent system was widely accepted and preferred; while, in the Bosnian case, it generally was despised and acknowledged as the reason for Bosnia’s destruction, often depicted as a ‘non country’.

#### *d) Identities*

Last but not least, also identities and ways of self-identification happened to be different. In the Macedonian case identities emerged to be collective and crystallized, with no option for crossing the borders of ethnonational belonging and creating alternative, non-aligned forms of self-identification. In the Bosnian case, once again, identities emerged to be fluid and definitely multiple, despite their sharp ethnicization and crystallization from a politico-institutional point of view.

This difference, however, is also linked to the two countries’ respective social-divisions’ backgrounds: in Skopje, as seen, the two major groups have never really mixed together although coexisting in the same city; mixed-marriages have never been a common practice – as further confirmed by the parents’ reactions before the possibility of their children being involved in a mixed marriage. In Sarajevo, instead, people have always been used to share not only the same urban spaces but also mix their personal lives; and mixed marriages, highly practiced until before the war, were not really denied when hypothetically involving their children.

Therefore, in the light of both Sarajevo’s cultural heritage and parents’ socialization, in the context of Sarajevo some have developed ‘alternative forms of identification’ aimed at escaping ethnic categorizations imposed from above. Next to the ‘Bosnian Herzegovinian’ identity, indeed, stood also the ‘Sarajevan’ one – however both linked and stressing the plural character of the country and, especially, the cosmopolitan

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<sup>124</sup> See the study performed by Mishler W., Rose R., 2002. ‘Learning and re-learning regime support: the dynamics of post-Communist regimes’. *European Journal of Political Research*, 41:5, pp. 5-36;

features of its capital city.

### ***7.3.1.2 Aligned and Non-aligned***

In the light of the above explained differences, we can now understand why the parents from the Macedonian sample were all aligned with the new system while those from the Bosnian one generally were not.

Many factors have influenced the way how people do signify and attribute meanings to their ethnonational belonging: as seen, institutions' shape, political parties' narratives, old groups' frustrations, collective memories about Yugoslavia and their respective conflicts, the features and the heritage of their cities of residence and so on. Therefore, the alignment of the older generation from the Macedonian sample, regardless the ethnonationality of the respondents, may be explained in terms of interiorization of far-back rooted, yet still dominant, antagonist narratives articulated in ethnic terms which have then shaped interaction's dynamics and patterns of behaviour. This interiorization has, in turn, produced a strong and exclusive identification with the group of belonging and the identification with it is strictly tied to major issues such as state's identity and state's ownership.

Ethnonationality, therefore, emerged to be not only a politicized element used by political representatives to articulate old frustrations stemming from different social statuses and power positions within the state, but also a social filter interiorized by the most and able to *a priori* channel and exclude interactions.

The overall non-alignment of the older generation from the Bosnian sample, again regardless the ethnonationality of the respondents, may instead be explained in terms of interiorization of the *previous* dominant narratives, interaction's dynamics and patterns of behaviour. Coupled with a total awareness of ethnonationality's politicization and exploitation for political purposes, the identification with the group of belonging (when possible, given the often mixed backgrounds of the respondents) was not stated in exclusive terms but, rather, was one among many others. Nevertheless, occasional forms of adjustment emerged also in the Bosnian case but, more than the result of interiorized feelings of ethnonational attachment and satisfaction with the new system, these have been explained in terms of survival and resignation to it. In those cases, identification with the group of belonging, but above all with the parties representing it, meant a shortcut to obtain resources.

Ethnonationality, in the Bosnian case, emerged to be mainly if not only a strongly politicized element used by political representatives to gain and maintain power positions while, at social level, a politically created obstacle challenged when, and if, possible.

### **7.3.2 The Post-Yugoslav Generation**

The Macedonian and Bosnian young adults surveyed in this work happened to be more similar to each other than the members of the older generation. Their similarities pertained generally to the way their socio-political realities were described and, to some extents, also to the modalities of signifying and using their ethnonationality. However, differences also emerged, and these have played a very important role in differentiating the two young generations – the Macedonian one, largely aligned and adjusted to the system while, the Bosnian one, sticking with the previous system's ethnonationality's conceptions and related behaviours, and trying hard to resist and escape the surrounding.

#### ***7.3.2.1 Main similarities and main differences***

The young adults of both countries, aged between 25 and 30 years old, have grown up after the fall of Yugoslavia and Socialism, and in societies surrounded by ethnonationalism and featured by divisions drawn upon ethnic lines.

When describing their current social and political realities, as well as particular phenomena such as ethnic clientelism, both the two countries' young adults furnished rather complex and 'de-ethnicized' descriptions. Regardless their ethnonational belonging, all the interviewees were very critical towards the political class – which has been described as self-interested and nurturing/exploiting social divisions. In both of the states' cases, youth have pointed the attention on the strategies used by ethnic entrepreneurs to indoctrinate and tie ethnic masses, mentioning the negative consequences of ethnically segregated education, politically controlled and ethnicized media and clientelistic practices growing due to economic deficiencies.

Concerning this last phenomenon, the explanations given by the young adults let emerge a sense of frustration stemming from a clash between their future hopes and a corrupted state system selling opportunities and benefits according to ethnicity and



party membership, rather than according to educational and working skills. However, the phenomenon of ethnic clientelism seemed to be more pronounced in the context of Skopje, where some of the youth even engaged in it providing meaningful examples of 'how it works'; in Sarajevo, instead, only a few interviewees personally knew someone engaged in those practices and none of them had ever been involved in it – despite its 'normalization'.

However, acknowledging that anyone in their societies is living in the same conditions and experiencing the same problems, the young adults from both countries were framing their realities from an individual perspective - definitely prevailing over the collective one. Youth were not making distinction between ethnonational groups, and the salience of these was described as politically exasperated for power purposes. In turn, the ethnonationality of belonging has been compared to a skill spendable in order to progress (or survive) in the society, to obtain benefits and resources generally redistributed via ethnic parties.

The role of politicians and ethnonationalism in dividing/deepening the divide between groups has been largely described by both the youth's generations, which saw in the political class – rather than in the citizenry or in the ethnonational groups – the source of their respective countries' problems. Consequently, in both the two young generations cases, the prevailing political attitude was anti-nationalist and anti-elite, coupled with mistrust towards the state and its institutions, as well as political disengagement.

Nevertheless, besides the mentioned similarities concerning how the socio-political reality was understood and framed, a few main differences between the two younger generations did emerge as well. These differences, as we shall see, can be traced back to two main influencing elements: their micro contexts of residence and their parents/family influence.

#### *a) Micro realities of Residence*

Although we can safely consider both Macedonia and BiH divided societies across ethnonational lines, the contexts of Skopje and Sarajevo are, as already seen, rather different from each other and, in turn, they had a different influencing potential.

For example, even though both young generations experienced divided education in their childhood, the 'less-divided' context of Sarajevo helped the young adults in not

living encapsulated in 'ethnic bubbles'; the Bosnian youth, indeed, had and still have groups of friends ethnically mixed and many highlighted the impossibility of avoiding 'other people'.

The young adults from the Macedonian sample, instead, depicted a different reality characterized by more encapsulated social micro-environments, ranging from family to school, from groups of friends to places where to hang out and have fun. A couple of them, indeed, even said they never had friends belonging to other groups. The boundary line between the different ethnonational groups is, in fact, rather different in the two contexts analysed: if in Sarajevo the boundary line between ethnonational groups is more blurred and easily crossable, in Skopje it is sharper and not easy to overcome.

The young adults from Skopje, indeed, showed the existence of a discrepancy between theory and practice, meanings and functions, ideas and behaviours concerning ethnonationality. As emerged from the interviews, although ethnonationality is acknowledged as politicized and exploited for power purposes, on the other side it sharply defines people identities and channels them into their social lives, making very hard shifting, re-defining and crossing the groups' boundaries. Accordingly, although very similar (regardless ethnonational origins) in their ways of framing and describing their social reality, the young adults from Skopje were behaving 'according to the rules', not challenging ethnic categorizations and adapting to the context. This explains why they all were largely using the 'us and them' dichotomy in their discourses, so making clear that discrepancy between theory and practice, meanings and behaviours. However, it's worth stressing that, more than a conscious and ideologically connoted establishment of boundaries, the distinction made by the youth through the 'us and them' dichotomy seemed the outcome of normalized and well rooted patterns of interaction, further consolidated by the features of their macro and micro environments. Therefore, their behavioural adjustment to the system.

The young adult from the Bosnian sample, instead, because of their sometimes mixed family backgrounds, the more positive influence Sarajevo had on them and, as seen, their parents' influence, happened to be better equipped, and thus more able, to overcome politicized groups' boundaries and live social lives as much as possible untied from ethnic distinctions. As in their parents' case, ethnonationality was acknowledged as one of the many identity's components, as well as an element

misused for power purposes. Thus, their attempts in resisting the surrounding, non-aligning themselves.

Concluding, although both young generations described ethnonationality as something that should not (be used to) divide people, the Sarajevo's reality helped the Bosnian young adults in living their everyday lives untied from ethnonational distinctions and categorizations; while, instead, the same cannot be said for the young adults from Skopje, where ethnonationality has a clearer dividing potential, not easy to overcome.

#### *b) Family*

Another difference between the two younger samples emerged to be connected to their families: what emerged to have a great influencing potential on youth's ways of framing ethnonationality was not the mixed or monoethnic nature of the family environment. Rather, it was the parents' memory and attitude towards the Yugoslav past.

The Bosnian parents have, indeed, stressed the importance of good human (rather than ethnic) relations, generally bringing them the positive example of the Yugoslav Bosnian society (meaning, pre-war non-nationalist society) – depicted as a model society featured by understating and respect for diversity. In the Macedonian sample, instead, the parents' cold attitude towards the Yugoslav Macedonian society (meaning, pre-independence society), together with the *de-facto* different social reality experienced, has deprived the youth of a good alternative example of how social relations within a plural society may work. However, contrary to their parents, the young adults from Macedonia indirectly pointed the attention on the multinational nature of their state, and never referred to the debates featuring their parents' discourses and concerning the mono, bi- or multinational character of Macedonia.

#### **7.3.2.2 Aligned and Non-aligned**

In the light of the above explained similarities and differences, we can now understand why the young adults from the Macedonian sample were generally aligned with the new system while the respondents from the Bosnian one generally were not. Many factors have influenced the way these younger generations do signify and

attribute meanings to their ethnonational belonging but, above all, it was the social heritage and features of their cities of residence and the narratives circulating in their family environments.

Therefore, although both the generations were generally framing their socio-political realities in the same terms, with the individual dimension prevailing over the collective one, the overall alignment of the young generations from the Macedonian sample, regardless the ethnonationality of the respondents, may be explained in terms of interiorization and normalization of interaction dynamics and patterns of behaviour in the society. This interiorization has (as in their parents' case) produced exclusive identification with the group of belonging - which is taken for granted, but contrary to their parents it's neither ideologically/politically connoted nor tied to issues such as state's identity and state's ownership.

Ethnonationality, therefore, emerged to be once again a politicized element used by political representatives to articulate their demands, but also a normalized social filter interiorized by the most and able to *a priori* channel and exclude interactions.

The overall non-alignment of the younger generation from the Bosnian sample, again regardless the ethnonationality of the respondents, may instead be explained in terms of interiorization of the *previous* dominant narratives, interaction's dynamics and patterns of behaviour, largely transmitted by their parents and still partly featuring the micro-reality of Sarajevo. As in their parents' case, the awareness of ethnonationality's politicization and exploitation for political purposes, has made the identification with the group of belonging (again, only when possible) only one among others. In fact, the choice for alternative and more inclusive forms of identification, such as the Bosnian Herzegovinian and the Sarajevan ones, illustrate their attempt in going against that politically sponsored collectivization on ethnic bases. Occasional forms of alignment with the system were acknowledged but never experienced in first person by the respondents; and when acknowledged, these were described in terms of survival and resignation to ethnopolitics, highlighting the instrumental character assumed by the origins of belonging.

As in the case of the older Bosnian generation, ethnonationality has emerged to be mainly if not only a strongly politicized element used by political representatives to gain and maintain power positions while, at social level, a politically created obstacle challenged when, and if, possible.

#### **7.4 Third level of comparison: Inter-generational dis-similarities and discontinuities**

The Bosnian parents and children, as well as the Macedonian parents and children, happened to be very similar to each other. However, only in the Bosnian case we can talk about inter-generational continuity based on parents-children linear transmission while, in the Macedonian one, there is an inter-generational behavioural similarity coupled with an inter-generational discontinuity in the meanings attributed to ethnonationality.

##### **7.4.1 Macedonia: inter-generational similarity - not continuity**

The parents and children included in the Macedonian sample emerged to be both aligned to the new system and apparently very similar to each other; however, the superficial similarity between the two generations, although make us think of a perfect inter-generational continuity, it remains confined to a more superficial level, and it's been allowed by a macro-continuity in the society's features over time. For the same reasons, when analysing the Macedonian older generation and their apparent adjustment to the new system, eventually emerged that, more than adjustment, the older generation has maintained over time the same attitude in respect to their own and the other ethnonational groups, and what has changed is only the way in which ethnonational plurality and antagonisms have been managed from a politico-institutional point of view.

The parents and children living in the context of Skopje, in fact, despite the maintenance of rather similar social behaviours, happened to have different ways of framing and understanding their realities, and thus in signifying and using their own ethnonational backgrounds.

As seen, in the older generation case, ethnonationality serves collective purposes and it's more 'ideologically' connoted due to far-back rooted antagonisms while, in the younger generation case, it serves individual purposes untied from ideological and political struggles, and its instrumental uses are mainly explained in terms of survival. Accordingly, their parents, which lived the Yugoslav transition and the struggles for statehood and national recognition, have the tendency to frame/explain socio-political phenomena in the light of the 1991-2001 events. Their children, who instead did not

live any transition or national struggle, take for granted the divisions existing because grown up and socialized in an environment where ethnonational diversity is institutionalized and ideologically emphasized.

The parents' way of framing reality, more politically and ideologically connoted, has not been transmitted to their children, so we cannot properly talk about inter-generational continuity. There is, instead, inter-generational similarity deriving from the little-changed surrounding context: a macro-environment sharply divided across ethnonational lines couldn't but produce and sustain divisions drawn upon ethnic lines – hence generating that apparent and superficial continuity across the two different generations.

#### **7.4.2 Bosnia Herzegovina: inter-generational continuity**

In the case of the Bosnian families, instead, we can retrace a certain level of inter-generational continuity for what concern meanings and functioning of one's own ethnonationality, as well as a high degree of similarity in the way how people do interact with and within their plural realities.

The two generations happened to be aligned with the 'old conception' of ethnonationality, according to which ethno-cultural origins should remain confined to the private sphere of life and not interfering with social and political relations. They both acknowledged how the heavy politicization of collective identities has created divisions, which have then been institutionalized in turn making ethnonationality the pillar of the state itself. Therefore, they both recognized how difficult may be, for ordinary citizens, to act and think out of the dominant framework.

Indeed, the parents and children enclosed in the sample, demonstrated how, in their small social circles, they try their best to retain and preserve good and close relations with anyone – regardless ethnonational origins. However, given the surrounding works on different rules, sometimes people 'have to' adjust themselves. Accordingly, both the generations agreed that the macro - meaning the state, its institutions, the party system and so on, has a powerful coercive potential in 'pushing' people in participating into a system they despise. On this purpose, both nationalist parties' supporters and those who participate in clientelistic practices have been depicted as poor people politically manipulated and left with no alternative. The need to survive - as individuals or group's member -, in a deeply divided state functioning according to

the ethnopolitics' rules, has been identified as the major reason why people to adapt and interact with the system reproducing the status quo.

Ideology was not mentioned. This doesn't mean the ideological potential of nationalism has no appeal: it surely has but it's the instrumental mobilization of ethnonationality, not ideology, what at the end of the day helps people to survive.

However, as in the Macedonian case, the micro reality in which people live in had a role in favouring this inter-generational continuity. Although the demographic of the city of Sarajevo has changed in the last two decades, its inhabitants – or at least those in my sample – still believe in the positive heritage of the city and in its cosmopolitan character, so are trying to retain good relations and contacts with anyone. Consequently, some of the interviewees developed 'alternative and non-aligned forms of identification' aimed at stressing the plural character of their country and city, and so of their identities. Declaring to be a 'Bosnian Herzegovinian' or a 'Sarajevan', indeed, was a way to escape ethnic collectivization and make clear their anti-nationalist and anti-elite political positions.

Finally, ethnonationality's meanings and functions have been described for the negative consequences they produce in the larger society as a result of their politicization and institutionalization; this doesn't mean people didn't express any form of ethnonational attachment or sentiment: they did it but, in most of the cases, stressing the multiple nature of their identities given their often mixed backgrounds.

To conclude, next to the micro reality of Sarajevo, another element that allowed for inter-generational continuity happened to be the parents' attitude towards Yugoslavia. The strong belief that 'that society' was a perfect example of how a plural society should function has been transmitted to their children through the telling of stories and positive experiences; also, those blamed for having destroyed that positive life climate have been the political elites, never ordinary people or ethnic groups – in turn transmitting to their children the idea that individuals, regardless their ethno-cultural backgrounds, can live together sharing the same spaces.

Finally, and accordingly, both the two Bosnian generations were using the dichotomy 'us and them' to distinguish between ordinary people and political elite, further making clear that ethnonationality's meanings and functions, in the Sarajevo's contexts, vary according to the level of analysis considered – micro or macro, rather than between generations or ethnonational groups.

## **7.5 Conclusive remarks.**

### **What about ethnonationality?**

As the reader has noticed, there has been no comparison involving the ethnic groups. Why? Because, despite its salience, ethnicity *per se* doesn't make the difference.

As stated in the *Introduction* of this work, one of the 'rules' followed while performing the fieldwork and the then data analysis was to try to avoid what Brubaker (2002) called 'groupism': although ethnonationality represented the fundamental pillar of the entire work, while studying how it is perceived, used, and constructed at macro and micro level, I tried not to get involved in those 'creative dynamics' of building and signifying political categories. I attempted, instead, to take the distance and adopt an 'ethnically blind' perspective, so to let emerge ethnonationality's meanings and functions spontaneously from the context and the interviews.

The point is that, from a generation and family perspective, no real ethnic difference emerged. As the comparisons have shown, the differences arisen, both between the two case studies and the generations, were due to macro elements generally conducive to a) the historical past of the countries and b) the features of the micro-contexts.

Ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians were not behaving differently in their socio-political settings, nor the meanings attributed to their belonging was different between each other. What instead made a difference, and thus explains the oppositional dynamics between the two groups, was the politicization and 'ethnic articulation' of certain issues instead pertaining to majority-minority dynamics and state's ownership – which, in turn, had a different generational impact. The differences emerged in the context of Macedonia were indeed generational and, once again, not due to the ethnicity of the respondents but to the different impact political discourses and institutional dynamics had on the two generations. As a consequence of these macro-developments, ethnonationality emerged to be salient at both social and political level and for both the generations involved – although the meanings, and so the functions, attributed to it varied among the two generations surveyed.

We can, therefore, say that the far-back rooted antagonism between the two major groups, and ever since articulated in ethnic terms, once politicized and institutionalized have also been internalized eventually allowing for the 'existence of a strong, internalized subjective identity' (Huddy 2001: 130). In the Macedonian



sample, in fact, people exclusive identification in ethnonational terms was derived from the influence of their macro and micro settings - both structured along, and emphasizing, the saliency of ethnonational political categories, so making very hard the crossing of the boundaries of ethnonational belonging. Group identities grounded on ethnonationality happened to be acquired by default in both the generations' case, but the meanings attributed to these varied as a consequence of the different generational impact macro factors had.

The same cannot be said for the Bosnian case study: despite a high level of ethnonationality's politicization and articulation of political issues in ethnic terms also in this case, the absence of 'ethnic differences' among the respondents was clearer than in the Macedonian case, and further highlighted by the multiple character of the interviewees' identities. Moreover, and despite the war experience, the politicization of ethnonationality, together with group antagonism, are more recent phenomena compared to the Macedonian case - therefore these have not been strongly internalized by everyone in the society, as witnessed by the many respondents' 'non-alignment' as a form of resistance of the above mentioned politicization. As a consequence of these developments, the Bosnian respondents widely pointed the attention on the politically constructed nature of the ethnonational collectivities, demonstrating a higher (compared to the respondents from the Skopje's sample) awareness of the identity-building processes going on in their country ever since the 1990s. Therefore, although politically and overall also socially salient, ethnonationality was, for most of the Bosnian interviewees, only one among many other elements defining who they are.

Concluding, in both of the case studies ethnonationality has emerged to be salient at both the politico-institutional and the social level, and instrumentally used by both the state and the masses. Its meanings and functions are largely determined by normalized and routinized dynamics of interactions between and among political and social actors, which have produced a general alignment with the system in the case of Skopje, while a non-alignment in the one of Sarajevo. However, inter-generational continuity in the meanings and usages of ethnonationality was featuring only the context of Sarajevo while, instead, the two-generations' alignment emerged in the case of Skopje was featured by different generational understanding and usages of the same.

What the multidimensional and inter-generational analysis demonstrates is not simply the politically constructed, institutionally promoted and socially maintained salience of ethnonationality; rather, it is the vicious circularity (in Chapters 1 and 4 defined as ‘the ethnopolitical loop’) in which individuals and structures, social and political actors are involved.

As the Macedonian case has shown, there are different vicious circularities according to the generation, so that members of different generations, although differently signifying ethnonational origins and group membership, eventually do act in conformity with the dominant patterns of interactions in place in their society. On the other side, the Bosnian case has demonstrated that ‘going against the dominant framework’ is possible but, generally mainly in the small social circles and the everyday life while, in particular circumstances and especially when macro and micro come across each other, adaptation becomes a valid (although not preferred) option.

Overall, in the absence of valid alternatives and the expectation that the system could be replaced, adaptation to the system - either by giving it positive support or resigned acceptance – confirm itself to be the dominant strategy used by people to live and survive the ethnopolitical scaffolding, and this despite the resistance of some. This doesn’t mean that ‘the structures are coercive and people have no agency’: people do have agency and it’s also them themselves that, influenced by the surrounding conditions and moved by different reasons and interests, allow and legitimize the structures’ coercive potential by playing the same ‘zero-sum game’ played by ethnic collectivities’ political representatives.

In the light of the politico-institutional and social-generational evolution of the ethnonationality’s meanings and functions, it is thus fair to say that, in this present moment and due to a multitude of subjective and structural reasons, using ethnonationality as a social filter and/or instrumental proxy to obtain resources or enjoy (collective) rights does pay more than its deconstruction. And this is exactly the reason why we need to focus our attention on the positive potential of those who are detaching and non-aligning themselves with the system.

## CONCLUSION.

### WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM THE MACEDONIAN AND BOSNIAN CASE STUDIES

We have finally arrived at the conclusion of this three-year long research project, which included two countries, four generations, and more than a hundred of interviewees. As any research project, difficulties, discoveries and new and different questions shaped the final outcome. Nevertheless, the attention always maintained on how ethnonationality's meanings and functions have possibly changed over time and generations - *fil rouge* of this work, helped to go through the obstacles, finding and building a coherent narrative.

The scientific contribution provided by this research, although minimal, does however represent a good starting point in connecting macro and micro, as well as generations. The findings of this work tell us something new about how the political and practical category of ethnonationality is evolving in two plural divided societies, as well as across and within generations. In a broader perspective, the research's results help us in better understanding legitimacy and functioning of ethnopolitics and ethnocracy, and from the perspective of both the elite and the masses, shedding light on how and why these systems get popular legitimacy and support.

#### 8.1 Summarizing the Findings

The approach adopted in this work was relational and aimed at understanding how ethnonationality practically works by looking at the interactions and intersections between macro and macro – so to have an idea of both its 'evolution' over time-periods and regimes, and across generations.

What has emerged from the fieldwork is the presence of strong influencing macro structural factors across time periods, coupled with a large popular sustain (coming from either positive support or resigned acceptance), although with some difference between the two cases analysed – Macedonia and Bosnia Herzegovina.

The Macedonian case study has showcased, in the older generation case, a deeply rooted antagonism between the two main groups due to the politicization of claims and demands strictly connected to fundamental issues such as state ownership and state identity. This in turn has produced a strongly internalized sense of ethnic collective belonging and the sharp definition of communities' boundaries. In the younger generation case, instead, resigned acceptance of the status quo, also entailing behavioural compliance with an ethnically exclusive system, was however coupled with a progressive detachment from ethnic collectivities in view of a more inclusive – yet hardly coming into being – conception of belonging.

The Bosnian case study, and in both the generations' case, has instead showcased a 'not by everyone' internalized exclusively-ethnic sense of belonging, alongside with a total awareness of the politically created saliency of ethnonationality (at both social and political level) and related divisions. In turn, attempts of detachment from ethnonational collectivities were succeeding mainly at social level and concerning each one's small social circles while, when the social and the politico-institutional met, oftentimes the compliance with the status quo was a plausible option 'justified' in terms of surviving the ethnopolitical scaffolding.

The differences emerged between the two countries, which also explain the generational attitudes towards 'the others', are mainly conducive to two elements strictly tied together: first, the historical backgrounds of the groups and their socio-political status in the previous and current regimes – which, in turn, have shaped inter-group relations and dynamics. Second, and consequently, the features of the micro-realities in which people live in: Skopje and Sarajevo have always been featured by very different 'ways of living', the first city always characterized by a certain degree of distance and segregation between the groups while, the second one, symbol of good and very close relations between individuals – more than groups.

Eventually, what explains and has generated those differences and the current ethnopolitics is the mobilization of certain ethno-cultural features for political purposes – which is, in turn, connected and allowed by the historical past of the groups. Indeed, as seen, the legitimizing ground on which ethnopolitical actors are playing in Macedonia is based on the groups' socio-political statuses within the larger state while, in the Bosnian context, the legitimizing ground is the cultural contamination of the bounded ethnonational collectivity by the hand of 'allegedly different' others.

As a consequence, different conceptions of the state and of the Yugoslav past emerged as well: in the Macedonian case, the state is generally understood as a nation-state by the side of the majority, and as a bi-national state by the side of the largest among the smaller groups. Attempting to satisfy their old wishes while smothering collective frustrations, both the two main groups in Macedonia developed what I called ‘a rather cold attitude’ towards the Yugoslav past and system, recognized as overall good but not the best. However, these reflections are true mainly for the older generation that lived both the transition from one regime to another one and the escalation of inter-groups tensions in the early 2000s. The younger generation, instead, emotionally and personally detached from those historical-political events, perceive the state as multiethnic/national however taking for granted, and not actively challenging, the existing socio-political divisions drawn upon ethnic lines. The new system, thus, happened to be largely preferred by all the respondents surveyed in the Macedonian sample and the concept of ‘Yugonostalgia’ was generally understood as ‘people’s failed adjustment to the new system’.

In BiH, instead, the state is generally perceived a ‘non state’, a ‘no man’s land’ in which only a few do feel to belong to. The cause of this ‘detachment’ has been identified in the massive and brutal politicization of ethnonationality by the hand of ethnic entrepreneurs. Therefore, the old system emerged to be largely preferred by all the interviewees of the Bosnian sample and the concept of ‘Yugonostalgia’ used to connote the failure of the system itself – not of people in adjusting to it.

Finally, concerning the ethnonationality of the respondents, it generally did not make any difference.

As seen, differences between countries or generations were not strictly pertaining to the origins and backgrounds of the respondents but, on the contrary, to the penetration of political narratives, claims and issues into the micro-world.

The different meanings and uses of ethnonationality between the two generations surveyed in Skopje, happened to be due to people’s personal experiences of certain historical-political events. So if for the older generation ethnonationality was strictly tied to groups’ status and recognition into the larger state, and so potentially used as a proxy towards status elevation or decay, for the young generations it was something acquired by default and not ideologically-politically connoted, hence often compared to a ‘skill’ spendable for possibly gain benefits generally redistributed on ethnic base.

In the Bosnian case, instead, the often ethnically-mixed and territorially scattered family ties and backgrounds made ethnonationality only one among the many identity's components. Although in a broader country-perspective exclusive ethnonational identification is a rather pronounced phenomenon, in the context of Sarajevo people's detached attitude towards ethnic collectivities was coupled with the presence of 'alternative' and cosmopolitan identities. However, although not directly involving the interviewees in my sample, instrumental uses of ethnonationality have been acknowledged and, from that perspective, ethnonationality was described – as in the case of the younger generation from the Skopje's sample – as a proxy to obtain benefits redistributed on ethnic base.

Finally, for what concerns inter-generational dis-similarities and dis-continuities, in the Macedonian case emerged a certain degree of inter-generational *similarity* while in the Bosnian one inter-generational *continuity*. In the first case, parents-children similarity was pertaining to the behavioural dimension (how people do interact with and within their plural society) and mainly due to/allowed by the almost unaltered inter-group relations and dynamics, and to the features of the city of Skopje. However, because of the above mentioned differences pertaining the meanings attributed to one's own ethnonational background by the two generations, in the Macedonian case was not possible to speak about inter-generational continuity but only about inter-generational similarity.

In the Bosnian case, instead, parents-children similarity was coupled with inter-generational continuity in the meanings and functions attributed to ethnonational backgrounds. As in the Macedonian case, little changed inter-group relations and dynamics, alongside with the features of the city of Sarajevo, have helped the two generations in retaining certain behaviours at social level; however, when it comes to the politico-institutional sphere, occasional adjustment was by both generations seen as a 'sometimes unavoidable strategy' in order to survive ethnopolitics.

## **8.2 Research's Limits, Possible Critiques and Future Studies**

As any research, also this one is featured by some limits and there is lots of space for improvements and future researches on the topic.

A first research's limit concerns the contexts in which it has been performed.

Although both multiethnic and likely to expose people to different narratives, Skopje and Sarajevo are not representatives of the Macedonian and Bosnian realities. Especially Sarajevo, in fact, may be considered a unique context not only in Bosnia Herzegovina but in Europe as well. The other major cities in both the two countries surveyed are, in fact, either considerably less mixed than the two capitals or more divided. Therefore, an interesting and more complete study could also involve cities like Tetovo (predominantly ethnic Albanian) and Bitola (predominantly ethnic Macedonians) in Macedonia, and Mostar (divided between ethnic Croats and Bošnjaks), Banja Luka (predominantly ethnic Serb) and Tuzla (mixed) in BiH.

A comparison taking into account more and ethnically different cities may thus allow for a better understanding of how the concept of ethnonationality is evolving in the major urban centres but also in cities featured by different ethno-territorial compositions and inter-group dynamics.

Another possible study may concern, and be centred upon, the dichotomy ‘urban-rural’. By exploring and including in the analysis also small villages disconnected from the socio-political life of their respective countries, where needs and opportunities are considerably different, we could have a better picture of the countries surveyed.

Another possible limit and critique to this research is the fact that hasn’t been giving enough attention to certain ‘cultural markers’ such as language – in the Macedonian case, and religion – in the Bosnian one. Language and religion are the two main elements making and marking the difference between the groups composing the Macedonian and Bosnian contexts. As said, language provided the ethnic Albanians with the feeling of being a separate and distinct group while, religion, has been the major element (used to) differentiating between the Bosnian ones. However, if their role, saliency and politicization have been analysed in the first chapters of this research, the empirical analysis provided by Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 did not analyse them - despite their fundamental role in building ethnonational identities. The reason is that, simply, the interviewees did not mention them.

In the Macedonian case, language issues occupy an extremely important role in shaping political debates, and they are, once again, connected to the groups’ status in the larger state. However, the interviewees, besides stating they did or did not speak the others’ idiom, did not mention the language while talking about their states, realities and politics. The same goes for religion in BiH: highly politicized and

become synonymous of ethnonationality, it however wasn't mentioned by the interviewees. Some acknowledged politics' role in using religion to divide people and channel them into the right box, but religion *per se* did not emerge as an issue or matter of concern in people's every day lives.

However, it's possible that language's and religion's role as ethno-cultural markers did not emerge during the interviews because the research has been performed in two big, multiethnic and urban cities. Shifting the focus of attention on the rural areas, as above suggested, may give us a different picture of how certain elements' role vary according to the micro-context surveyed, and how this fluctuating importance/saliency differently tailors inter-groups dynamics, interactions with the state, and understandings/framings of group membership.

Finally, from a methodological point of view, enlarging the unit of analysis so to include in the sample more generations would be a great way to effectively see how ethnonationality, as a practical category, is evolving. It would, thus, be interesting to compare and explore the perspectives and understanding of other post-Yugoslav generations, looking at how the surrounding environment is shaping and forging youth's identities and understandings.

Moreover, a combination between qualitative and quantitative methods, if possible, would provide a more complete picture of a population rather understudied – the youth, which represent the future of their countries and whose beliefs and understandings will forge the socio-political realities of the next decades.

### **8.3 What's new then?**

The curiosity driving this three-years-long research was to understand how a multiplicity of elements interact together generating particular and complex dynamics gravitating around, and shaping, the concept of 'ethnonationality'. The research results have shown, on the one side, the socio-political salience of ethnonationality, reinforced at many levels and by different actors; while, on the other one, the irrelevance of the respondents' ethnonational origins in differentiating their positions and understandings. So that, banally speaking, 'people were all the same', similarly describing their realities and sharing the same problems, concerns and hopes. In both the two countries. In all the four micro-samples.



Nevertheless, ethnonationality's ability in functioning as a social filter and politico-institutional proxy, as many times stressed, came from particular interactions between social and political actors – rulers and ruled, facilitated and allowed by the presence of other macro-factors. This means that people have learnt how to behave in their societies - societies in which ethnonationality may literally 'save your life' (contrary to the war-time period where ethnonationality could make you 'lose your life'), and societies they all contribute to shape.

As largely emerged from the interviews, at the present moment, in both Macedonia and Bosnia Herzegovina, the use of ethnonationality as a social filter and/or politico-institutional proxy is generally more convenient than its deconstruction, depoliticization and de-institutionalization – and this is the case for the majority of both the political elite and the citizens. But in the same way people and elites have learned how to use ethnonationality, they can learn how not to use it anymore, and this will perhaps happen when it will no longer be convenient.

The point is, thus, time<sup>125</sup>.

People will always have the same concerns, and will always try to adapt to survive their normalized realities. However, on the other side, there will always be a small yet critical mass of individuals trying to 'resist' the establishment, pointing out its deficiencies and non-aligning with the status quo.

I do believe, in fact, that although us, in quality of researcher, can do a great job in trying to understand 'those societies and dynamics', real changes cannot be exported from the outside: in order to be long lasting, serious and legitimate, changes have to come from the inside of the society itself, and entail first of all a change in the kind and nature of those state-masses dynamics and interactions explored in this work.

So, what we can and should do as researchers is not (only) to find *institutional* corrective measures; rather, it is to help that critical, non-aligned mass of citizens in taking shape, creating a *demos* delegitimizing the *ethnos*, and gain legitimacy.

And then, wait for the change.

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<sup>125</sup> See: Rose R., Mishler W., Munro N., 2008, 'Time matters: adapting to transformation', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 24: 1, pp. 90-114;



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