THE EFFECTIVE NUMBER OF PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES
AS AN ASSUMPTION OF THE STABILITY OF THE
REPRESENTATIVE BODY. THE PERFORMANCE OF THE
MACEDONIAN ASSEMBLY IN THE PAST MORE THAN
THREE DECADES OF POLITICAL PLURALISM

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Abstract
Even before the formal negotiation process of the Republic of North Macedonia (RNM) for membership in the European Union began, the important role that the Parliament should play in this process was highlighted. The main contribution of the Parliament to the European integration process should be ensuring the sustainability of the reforms. The Assembly is the key place for organizing a dialogue between the government, the opposition, and civil society about the far-reaching goals of the reforms that will be made in the rapprochement process. And the European Commission further emphasized that it sees the national parliaments of the countries of the Western Balkans as a link between the citizens and Brussels. Without a stable, functional, effective representative body, these challenges will not be met. In every developed democracy, the problem of the relationship between the government and the political parties represented in the parliament has always been an actual issue. The increase in the number of political forces in the parliament leads to the need to form coalitions and, accordingly, the greater the fragmentation of political interests, the more difficult it is to build consensus, which should imply an agreement between influential MPs, regardless of whether they are in the majority or the opposition. Hence, the aim of this paper is an analysis of the representation of political forces in the Macedonian parliament in the last ten election cycles through the “index of the effective number of parties” as a tool, designed to consider the problem of balance between the representation and effectiveness of the elected bodies and their dependence from the electoral mechanisms. For this purpose, first, in a theoretical sense, the typologies of party systems and the index for the effective number of parties (developed by Estonian political scientists Laakso and Taagepera) will be reviewed. Then, with the help of this index, will be determined the number of effective parliamentary parties in the past ten parliamentary compositions in RNM. The RNM is very convenient for such an analysis because in the country’s three-decade plural history different electoral models were applied – in the parliamentary elections in 1990 and 1994, the majority, in 1998, there was a mixed (parallel) model, and since 2002, a proportional model has been applied.

Keywords: Assembly, party system, the effective number of parliamentary parties, Laakso-Taagepera index, political stability;
INTRODUCTION

Attempts at classifying or characterizing party systems for comparative purposes constitute a classical endeavour in the more general comparative study of democratic political systems (Dumont & Caulier, 2003: 1). When it comes to the party system itself, it “could be defined as a structure, which enables the competition and cooperation among the political parties“ (Xhaferaj, 2014: 123). Most of the typologies of party systems used in political science (e.g. Dahl, Blondel, Sartori) were developed in the 1960s, and few new typologies have been developed or mooted since then.

The classifications of party systems in political science, especially in the second half of the 20th century, were based on different criteria. So, for example, Diverge (1954) distinguished party systems on the simple basis of the counting of parties in competition, but this numerical criterion has become a widely accepted basis for the comparative description of party systems by Lijphart (1994, 2012), and Mair (2002). The Russian political scientist Golosov (2001: 167) correctly concludes that in modern times, the quantitative criterion for the classification of party systems does not enjoy unanimous support in political science. If some researchers accept it almost unreservedly (for example, the above-mentioned Duverger), then others completely deny it (Lapalombara). The main drawback of such a classification is obvious: it reduces the entire variety of party systems to two types, one of which is observed in a negligible number of cases.

Newly developed typologies of party systems were emerging in political science, but there is an impression that the success of Sartori’s scheme and the availability of indexes such as Laakso and Taagepera’s Effective Number of Parties – which are the special interest of this paper, cannot be questioned.

Hence, the purpose of this paper is to review (measure) the character of the Macedonian party system through the prism of the Laakso-Taagepera index (LT index) for the effective number of parties (electoral and parliamentary). For this purpose, the analysis is structured as follows: first of all, an overview of the theoretical achievements in terms of the classification of party systems will be given; then a theoretical explanation of the index for the effective number of parties will be approached; so that afterward went into an analysis of the impact of the electoral model on the effective number of electoral and parliamentary parties in the Macedonian Assembly. The RNM is very convenient for such an analysis because, in the country’s three-decade plural history, different electoral models were applied – in the parliamentary elections in 1990 and 1994, a majority model, in 1998, there was a mixed (parallel) model, and since 2002, a proportional model has been applied (Vankovska, 2014: 209).

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1 The simple criterion of the number of parties present in parliament is nevertheless at the heart of the seminal distinction between two-party systems and multiparty systems made by Duverger (1954).

2 Sartori (1976) in one fourfold typology differentiates: predominant party systems, two-party systems, moderate pluralism, and polarized pluralism.

3 This index occurs in two variants: Effective Number of Electoral Parties (ENEP) or its legislative variant, Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties (ENPP).
1. The Typology of Party Systems in the Theoretical Literature

When talking about differentiating party systems in science, as previously stated, it is based on different criteria. One of the criteria that can be taken is relevance, i.e., the number of relevant parties. For Sartori (1976, 122-123), only those parties should be counted as components of the party system that are “relevant” in terms of having either “coalition” potential or “blackmail” potential. But the party systems, apart from this feature, can also be considered according to the degree of polarization, particularly whether competition is unipolar or centripetal, bipolar or multipolar, and according to the presence or absence of clustering – whether parties regularly ally with each other in permanent or semi-permanent electoral alliances (Wolinetz, 2004: 3). Lijphart (2012: 64) correctly notes that although Sartori’s criteria are based on two variables, size and ideological compatibility, size is the crucial factor.

Robert Dahl’s Political Oppositions in Western Democracies (1966) demonstrated not only the variety of sites to which opposition might be directed, but also that relations among parties could range from coalescent to competitive. Although Dahl (1966) masterfully distinguished patterns of opposition, his typology, differentiating systems which were strictly competitive, cooperative and competitive, coalescent and competitive, or strictly coalescent, did not take hold (Wolinetz, 2004: 3).

Two years later, Jean Blondel (1968, 184–187) proposed a classification of party systems that considers both their number and relative sizes. In this sense, he proposed a fourfold typology: two-party systems,\(^4\) two-and-a-half party systems,\(^5\) multiparty systems with a predominant party, and multiparty systems without a predominant party (1968: 184-187). His typology was derived by investigating clusters in the average share of the vote won by the largest two parties and then considering the ratio of the first party’s share to that of the second and third parties. Blondel’s typology was useful because it highlighted differences and similarities among pure two-party systems and systems with two larger parties, and a relatively smaller ‘half’ party, able in some instances to play a balancing role between them (Wolinetz, 2003: 4). As Siaroff (2003) notes, the role of the ‘half’ party varies from ‘hinge’ parties, located between two larger parties, influential because their votes are needed to make parliamentary majorities, and ‘wing’ parties, which are less influential because their votes are rarely needed either to form coalitions or ensure that legislation was passed. The main weakness of this new classification was that the relative size of ‘half’ and ‘strong’ or ‘dominant’ parties was arbitrarily set (Dumont & Caulier, 2003: 3).

As for the typology of Sartori (1976), which we pointed out in the introductory part of this chapter, in political science it is still considered the most refined of all those we have considered so far. At the heart of Sartori’s classification, was not the number of the parties, per se, but rather, the degree of polarization and whether party competition and thus the mechanics of the system were centripetal or centrifugal (Wolinetz, 2014: 5). Hence, this typology unites two criteria: the number of parties and ideology. Sartori’s typology mentioned above, except in its fourfold version, can also be shown as a seven-component one, hence we speak of: 1 (one-party political system): 1. political system with one party;

\(^4\) It should be emphasized that the systems “two parties, and two parties only” are extremely rare (Lijphart, 2012: 63).

\(^5\) Bolded values show the effective number of parties under these four types of party systems.
2. a system with a hegemonic party; 3. a system with a predominant party; 4. two-party system; III (multiparty system): 5. a system with limited (moderate) pluralism; 6. a system with extreme pluralism; and IV 7. atomized system (Shurov, 2015: 86).

The typologies which we have been considering were developed and refined in the 1960s and 1970s. Since then, there have been relatively few efforts to augment or replace them (Wolinetz, 2004: 6). Among the more recent categorizations, attention deserves Mair (1996, 2002), who proposed that the contest for the formation of a government should be taken as an indicator for distinguishing party systems. In this sense, a distinction is made between party systems in which competition for government is closed – the access to government is typically restricted to only a few parties; and open – some parties rotate in and out of government, while others remain. Alain Siaroff’s (2000) typology may also be mentioned in this context, which represents an expansion and upgrade of Blondel’s classification. Siaroff uses multiple measures to tap the relative size and strength of political parties winning more than 3% of the vote. He ends up with an eightfold classification distinguishing:

1) two-party systems; 1.92
2) two-and-a-half; 2.56
3) moderate multiparty systems with one dominant party; 2.95
4) moderate multiparty systems with two main parties; 3.17
5) moderate multiparty systems with a balance among parties; 3.69
6) extreme multiparty systems with one dominant party; 3.96
7) extreme multiparty systems with two main parties; 4.41
8) extreme multiparty systems with balance among the parties; 5.56

Attempts to classify party systems on the one hand ebbed in the 1980s and 1990s, but on the other hand, a process of more complex counting of the number of parties began, with the development of continuous or weighted measures such as Rae’s (1967) fractionalization (Fe) and Laakso and Taagepera’s (1979) effective number of parties (N or ENEP and ENPP) (Wolinetz, 2004: 2). Two other indices are sometimes cited in theoretical discussions about indicators of party system fragmentation, but they were not taken over in many empirical studies. In this group, we can mention Wildgen’s (1971) index of hyperfractionalization and Molinar’s counting the number of parties (1991) (Lijphart 1994: 69-70; Taagepera 1999: 499; Dunleavy & Boucek 2003: 308-13).

The Laakso-Taagepera index for the effective number of parties deserves special attention here because Laakso-Taagepera’s Effective Number of Parties comes closest to being a standard not only in parties research but particularly in the analysis of electoral laws (Lijphart, 1994; 2012; Dunleavy & Boucek, 2003). This index will analyze the impact of the Macedonian electoral models on the number of effective electoral and parliamentary parties in all the previous ten compositions of the Macedonian Assembly.

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6 The shown bold values represent the number of effective parliamentary parties, calculated according to the Laakso-Taagepera index, which Siaroff assigns to these eight types of party systems. This is not at all surprising because Siaroff (2003) was among the scholars who suggest to go back to the older agenda of the classification of party systems through the use of numerical indicators.
2. THEORETICAL REVIEW OF THE LAAKSO-TAAGEPERA INDEX FOR THE EFFECTIVE NUMBER OF POLITICAL PARTIES

As a counterpoint to the qualitative classification of party systems (e.g. Sartori), the index of Estonian scientists Markku Laakso and Rein Taagepera, who with their fruitful work made a huge contribution to the development of political science, offers a quantitative approach to the classification of party systems through introducing the concept of “effective number of parties”. As Grofman and Klein note (2012: 4) “the LT index has become the ‘gold standard’ for operationalizing effective electoral or parliamentary parties”. This is because “the effective number of parties index has gradually reached a high level of acceptance since its first exposition by Laakso and Taagepera (1979)” (Dunleavy & Boucek, 2003: 291). The index is a measure of the level of concentration in political life, giving greater influence to large parties and excluding very small parties in its calculation.

Since the main ambition of the LT index is to quantify, it should be emphasized that there is no diametric difference or opposition between qualitative and quantitative approaches. Rather, they complement each other (Shurov, 2015: 87). For Golosov, the formula for the effective number of parties should be considered exclusively as a theoretical key, as a scientific instrument, as an instrument of comparative research, while its author himself, Taagepera (2007: 6-7) notes that the reason, the motive for its appearance was the resolving of specific political problems.

The mathematical formula for calculating the effective number of parties is as follows:

\[ N_p = \frac{1}{\sum (P_i)^2} \]  \hspace{1cm} (1),

where \( P_i \) is the party’s share of votes (seats) in the elections.

How does this formula work in practice? Suppose that a system consists of four parties (P), each of which received 25% of the voters’ votes. Then N is equal to 1 divided by four times 0.25 squared. The result will be equal to 4. If we do a simulation at a ratio (51, 42, 5, 1, 1) N will be equal to 2.3; at a ratio (51, 26, 11, 11, 1) N = 3.1; at a ratio (40, 37, 11, 11, 1) N = 2.9; at ratio (40, 37, 9, 9, 5) N= 2.6, etc. (see: Golosov, 2001: 169). From the example, it is more than evident that the Laakso-Taagepera index assigns a certain weight to the largest parties.

This index usually comes very close to Sartori’s (1976) estimates of the number of ‘relevant’ parties, or at least “... as close as possible to any operational index based on seat share alone, without more detailed knowledge of the given country“ (Taagepera, 1999: 498). In other words said, “the Effective Number of Relevant Parties operationalizes Sartori’s concept party relevance“ (Dumont & Caulier, 2003: 20).

However, a certain criticism is also forwarded in the science towards the Index of Laakso and Taagepera. Criticisms can be sublimated as follows:

1) The index operates with only a few indicators, which inevitably leads to data loss;
2) It does not take into account the qualitative characteristics of individual actors;
3) Due to its limitations, the index does not take local specifics into account (cultural, historical, economic, and other circumstances that have a strong influence on the political system);
4) The index can show an overemphasized fragmentation, but not a lack of representation/representativeness;
5) The index sometimes cannot clearly distinguish a two-party system from a system with a dominant party (Shurov, 2015: 88-89);
6) The index is also not useful in cases where one party has more than half of all seats in the assembly, i.e. absolute dominance – and the index still shows a multiparty constellation (Taagepera 1999: 497).

On the one hand, the undoubted analytical value of the index of the effective number of parties, by the Estonian political scientists Laakso and Taagepera, is seen above all in the fact that it offers an elegant solution to the problem of the balance between the representativeness and the efficiency of the elected body, as well as its dependence on the electoral mechanisms. On the other hand, this tool works only in the direction of identifying the number of the most influential political actors based on the results of the distribution of votes in the elections. Such a formula, in principle, is not able to reflect the lack of representativeness that occurs, for example, due to too rigid electoral thresholds (Shurov, 2015: 89).

3. THE EFFECTIVE ELECTORAL AND PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES AFTER ALL TEN ELECTION CYCLES IN R. N MACEDONIA

3.1 The election cycles in the 1990s

The first multiparty elections, in what was still the Republic of Macedonia at the time, were held in 1990 according to “the Macedonian variant of the majority electoral model in two election rounds” (Klimovski & Karakamisheva, 2006: 107). The 120 members of the Assembly were elected in 120 single-member constituencies. If no candidate received over 50% in the first round, a second round was held and contested by every candidate who received over 7% of the vote in the first round. In the second round, a majority was not required, and the candidate who received the most votes won the seat.

In these elections, 9 political parties entered the Parliament, i.e. half of the total number of political parties that competed and three independent MPs. Hence, the number of effective electoral parties according to the Laakso-Taagepera index was 6.7, while the number of effective parliamentary parties was 5. According to Siaroff’s classification (2000), the first parliamentary composition, according to the number of effective parliamentary parties, had the character of an extreme multiparty system with two main parties, while according to Blondel’s typology, a multiparty system without a predominant party. When it comes to the two dominant parties, VMRO-DPMNE with 24.24% of the voters’ votes won 31.68% of the parliamentary mandates, while the second dominant party, League of Communists of Macedonia–Party for Democratic Transformation, with 24.08% of the votes won 25.83% of the parliamentary composition, which is a classic example of asymmetry of political legitimacy. If we describe the first parliamentary composition according to Blondel (1968), as a multiparty system without a predominant party, this qualification is also completely correct because it was obtained “a truly polycentric (polarized) parliament in which no party managed to secure an absolute majority of votes“ (Klimovski & Karakamisheva, 2006: 108). All this was contrary to the idea of the legislator, who estimated that a majority model in two election rounds best suited the social, economic, and political conditions in the country at that period. The effect, however, was completely the opposite – the model did not provide a stable and efficient parliament with a democratic majority capable of controlling the work of the Government, which was neither stable nor efficient, i.e. we faced weak governments that were unable to “command” the parliamentary majority (Ibid., 107-108). Despite all the weaknesses of the first multiparty elections, their greatest achievement was that they made democracy in the Republic of Macedonia possible.
The second multiparty elections in pluralism, in 1994, were marked by the boycott of the coalition of VMRO-DPMNE and the Democratic Party between the two election rounds, due to accusations of falsifications and irregularities in the first election round. That gave great comfort to the pre-election coalition “Union for Macedonia” (Social Democratic Union of Macedonia /SDSM/, the Liberal Party /LP/ and the Socialist Party /SPM/) which won 87 mandates. The remaining mandates were won by seven independent candidates and the same number of party lists, who won 1 mandate each, and three other political parties who received 10, 5, and 4 parliamentary seats respectively. The number of effective parties after these elections was 3.3, while the number of effective parliamentary parties was 3.2. According to Siaroff’s (2000) typology, the system would be described as a moderate multiparty system with two main parties, and according to Blondel (1968), as a two-and-a-half-party system. The election result of 1994 is a classic “textbook example” of what has been pointed out above that the Laakso-Taagepera index is not useful in cases where one party has more than half of all the seats in the parliament, i.e. absolute dominance - and the index still suggests a multiparty constellation, which was not even remotely like that after the elections in 1994, because in the Assembly we had the absolute and undisputed dominance of the Union for Macedonia, which practically controlled 80% of the entire parliamentary composition, and its carrier, the SDSM, with 59 mandates was close to an absolute majority (Klimovski & Karakamisheva, 2006: 115-116).

These two election cycles, held according to the two-round majority electoral model, brought to the surface a large number of injustices and illogicalities, which arose precisely from such a pure application of the majority electoral model. All of this was a motive to introduce a parallel electoral model on the eve of the third parliamentary elections in 1998, which would reconcile the two weaknesses of the majority electoral model (the unfair relationship between the votes won and the mandates, and the uneconomical nature of the elections in two rounds), by introducing a proportional component (which was supposed to strengthen the legitimacy of the representative body, as well as guarantee its greater stability). A new electoral law was passed prior to the election, replacing the system in which 120 members of the Assembly were elected in single-member constituencies, with one in which 35 were elected by proportional representation at the national level, and 85 elected in single-member constituencies. In the single-member constituencies, candidates had to receive 50% of the votes cast and 33% of the total number of registered voters to win in the first round. If no candidate achieved this requirement, a second round was held between the two candidates with the most votes. Redistribution of the votes won by the proportional component was according to D’Hondt’s formula. The proportional lists were closed and an eliminatory electoral threshold of 5% was also determined.

In these elections, the Coalition for Change, consisting of VMRO-DPMNE and the newly formed Democratic Alternative (DA), won an absolute majority of votes. According to the proportional model, five parties and coalitions won mandates, and the same number of political entities received mandates according to the majority model. After these elections, the effective number of electoral parties was 5.1, while the number of effective parliamentary parties was 2.9. According to Siaroff’s typology, the party system in the period 1998-2002, according to the index value, was on the border between a two-and-a-half-party system and a moderate multiparty system with one dominant party, while according to Blondel’s criteria, it remains a two-and-a-half-party system. These values point to the fact that with the introduction of the parallel model, the Macedonian political scene was consolidated because pre-election collaboration was intensified, which was not characteristic of the previous election cycles.
3.2 The election cycles according to the proportional model

The issue of the electoral system did not cease to be topical even after the first decade of Macedonian independence and the start of the democratic transition. In fact, we couldn’t even talk about a stable and well-founded electoral system, because within a decade we experimented with the majority (1990, 1994), mixed (parallel) (1998), and in 2002 a pure proportional model was introduced (Gaber-Damjanovska & Jovevska, 2002: 41). The reasons for such frequent changes are located in the fact that it was shown that “desired (model) effects are absent when other social assumptions do not exist“ (Vankovska, 2014: 209).

Since the parliamentary elections of September 15, 2002, until today, a purely proportional electoral model has been applied, according to which 120 deputies are elected in six electoral regions (with 20 deputies in each), and the mandates are redistributed according to D’Hondt’s formula (as in the previous mixed model), without an explicit legal electoral threshold (although the effective electoral threshold at the level of electoral units de facto is 100/20 = 5% as it was in the 1998 elections). According to this model, which has undergone minor changes since 2002, a total of seven election cycles have been held until now, of which 2002, 2006, and 2020 were regular, and 2008, 2011, 2014, and 2016 were extraordinary. The results regarding the parliamentary mandates won were as follows:

1. **In the regular elections of 2002**, seven parties or coalitions succeeded in winning parliamentary seats: the Coalition led by SDSM (60); VMRO-DPMNE–LP, (33); Democratic Union for Integration /DUI/ (16); Democratic Party of Albanians /DPA/ (7), Party for Democratic Prosperity /PDP/ (2), National Democratic Party /NDP/ (1), SPM (1).

2. **In the regular elections in 2006**, eight parties or coalitions entered the Parliament: VMRO-DPMNE and coalition (45); SDSM and coalition (32); DUI and coalition (17); DPA (11), New Social Democratic Party /NSDP/ (7) VMRO- People’s Party (6), Democratic Renewal of Macedonia /DOM/ (1), Party for a European Future /PEI/ (1).

3. **In the extraordinary elections in 2008**, only five parties and coalitions won mandates: VMRO-DPMNE and coalition (63); SDSM and coalition (27); DUI (18), DPA (11), PEI (1).

4. **In the early elections in 2011**, the distribution of forces in the Parliament was similar, because again five parties and coalitions were placed in the legislature: VMRO-DPMNE and coalition (53);7 SDSM and coalition (42); DUI (15), DPA (8), NDP (2).

5. **In the extraordinary elections of 2014**, six parties and coalitions won mandates: VMRO-DPMNE and coalition (58); SDSM and coalition (34); DUI (19), DPA (7), NDP (1), Citizen Option for Macedonia /GROM/(1).

6. **At the fourth early elections in 2016**, again six parties and coalitions took part in the work of the ninth Assembly since independence: VMRO-DPMNE and coalition (51); SDSM and coalition (49); DUI (10), BESA (5), Alliance for Albanians /AA/ (3), DPA (2).

7. **In the regular elections in 2020**, for the third time in a row, six parties and coalitions won parliamentary seats in the elections: SDSM and coalition (46),

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7 In the elections of 2011 and 2014, VMRO DPMNE won plus three parliamentary mandates from the voting of the diaspora, which we do not take into account for the research.
VMRO-DPMNE and coalition (44), DUI (15), coalition AA and Alternativa (12),
The Left (2), DPA (1).

Below is a tabular presentation of the effective number of electoral parties (ENEP) and the effective number of parliamentary parties (ENPP) in the Macedonian Assembly calculated according to the Laakso-Taagepera index. The calculations that we used for the research are made by the specialized website – Party Systems and Governments Observatory at the University of Nottingham, created by Fernando Casal Bértola.

Table 1: The effective number of electoral and parliamentary parties in R. N Macedonia according to the simulation of Party Systems and Governments Observatory, The University of Nottingham

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>ENEP</th>
<th>ENPP</th>
<th>according to Siaroff</th>
<th>according to Blondel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>two-and-a-half</td>
<td>two-and-a-half</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>an extreme multiparty system with one dominant party</td>
<td>a multiparty system with a dominant party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>two-and-a-half</td>
<td>two-and-a-half</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>two-and-a-half</td>
<td>two-and-a-half</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>two-and-a-half</td>
<td>two-and-a-half</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>two-and-a-half</td>
<td>two-and-a-half</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>a moderate multiparty system with two main parties</td>
<td>two-and-a-half</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the data shown, it can be concluded that in a total of 5/7 election cycles, held according to the proportion, the character of the Macedonian party system, if the distribution of political forces in the legislature is taken into account, can be described as a two-and-a-half party system, if we refer to Siaroff’s classification, and in 6/7 cases it is the same as Blondel’s typology. However, the 2011 and 2014 values for the ENPP are 2.9 which is very close to the 2.95 index that Siaroff considers a reference point for categorizing the party system as a moderate multiparty system with one dominant party. The fact that in 2006 the ENPP was 4.1 in the Assembly is not at all surprising, because in these elections eight parties and coalitions entered the legislative house, and in all the remaining ones that number ranged from five in 2008, 2011, to six in 2014, 2016, 2020 to seven in 2002. Therefore, in the fifth parliamentary composition since independence, according to Siaroff, the party system at that time had the character of an extreme multiparty system with one dominant party, or according to Blondel’s point of view, a multiparty system with one dominant party. As for the outcome of the tenth elections for the Assembly since independence, when the number of EPPs was 3.3, according to Siaroff’s typology, the party system has the character of a moderate multiparty system with two main parties, which is not at all surprising, considering the ‘narrow’ election results between the coalitions of SDSM (46 mandates) and VMRO-DPMNE (44 mandates). The value of 3.3 is very close to 3.5, which Blondel takes as a reference for describing the party system as a system with a dominant party. But classifying the party system in the current parliamentary composition (3.3) as a two-and-a-half party system (from 2.6 to 3.5) is also not wrong.

Practically, after a total of seven election cycles, it can be concluded, from the above tabular presentation of the ENPP, that the party system of R. N Macedonia, in the last twenty years of political pluralism, can be absolutely and indisputably described (according to
Siaroff, as well as Blondel) as a stable two-and-a-half-party system. In the past two decades, as far as this electoral model is applied, the Parliament was de facto dominated by the coalitions led by the two mainstream Macedonian parties VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM, while the Albanian party DUI was supposed to play the role of ‘half’ party. But, DUI is not just any ‘half’ party on the Macedonian political scene. Here, we are talking about what in Anglo-Saxon literature is called a hinge ‘half’ party, i.e. as a hinge – a movable joint or mechanism on which a door, gate, or lid swings as it opens and closes or which connects linked objects. The role of DUI on the Macedonian party scene, after the Ohrid Framework Agreement and the strengthening of consociational elements in the Macedonian hybrid parliamentary-consociation system of power-sharing, was exactly like the hinge - it ‘swung’, ‘closed’ and ‘opened’ for cooperation within the consociative government of the grand coalition with the two dominant Macedonian parties VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM. Such ‘half’ parties are known in the theoretical literature for the fact that they aspire to have a balancing role between the two dominant parties in the totality of the whole two-and-a-half-party system. DUI, in the past twenty years of political activity, fits well into the scheme of Sartori, who rightly notes that which party is small or big is not so much determined by the number of seats in the House of Representatives, but by its effect on the overall party competition. A relatively small party like DUI (which “weighed” from 10 mandates in 2016 to 19 in 2014), is also relevant on the Macedonian scene because it has always had a powerful coalition, but also blackmailing potential. The coalition potential of DUI was contained in the fact that, with ten as well as twenty mandates, it always had enough parliamentary seats to make the coalitions in which it took part viable. But it also had the closely related potential for blackmail by blocking the formation of a coalition that others desired (as was the example after the 2016 elections, when instead of the winning VMRO-DPMNE party, it decided to cooperate with the second-placed SDSM, abandoning the principle of post-election coalitions, known as ‘winner with the winner’, for which DUI advocated with the so-called May Agreement). It should be emphasized that as a result of the powerful blackmailing potential, this political option, as a participant in consociational governments where it shared power with the two dominant Macedonian parties, at different times, often received resources, places, functions, and duties, which are disproportionate in size from its real weight in the Assembly.

**CONCLUSION**

By using the Laakso-Taagepera index for ENEP and ENPP, we aimed to indicate the influence of the different electoral models that have been applied in the RNM, in the past three decades of multipartyism, on the number of effective electoral and parliamentary represented parties in the Macedonian legislature. The index itself, which is part of a larger set of measures based on summing the percentage of votes won by each party raised to a certain power, showed in this analysis that “nor is it as systematic or ‘smooth’ as it seems, but for certain values, it also behaves irregularly, because the explanation of whether the country has 1.8, 2.5 or 3.7 parties confuses more than it enlightens“ (Dunleavy & Bouçet, 2003).

This is so because the LT index produces the effect that a certain ”type of party system” in a certain country lasts no longer than one election cycle. The examples from RNM illustrate exactly this finding. If after the first application of the majority electoral model in pluralism (in 1990) the party system in the RM was an extremely multiparty system with two main parties, already in the next elections according to the same model (in 1994) the extreme multiparty system with two main parties was transformed into a moderate
multiparty system with also two dominant parties so that when using the mixed electoral model from 1998, it became a two-and-a-half-party system. The two-and-a-half-party system continued to dominate in the pure application of the proportion since 2002, through the 2008, 2011, 2014, and 2016 election cycles. But even in the application of the current electoral model, we had a deviation from the two-and-a-half-party model in 2006 with an extreme multiparty system with one dominant party and in the last elections of 2020 when we had a moderate multiparty system with two dominant parties.

After the Conflict in 2001 and the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the elements of consociational democracy strengthened in the political system of the Republic of Macedonia. It is a generally accepted fact in political science that consociational democracies are suited to a multiparty system without a dominant party, i.e. the number of EPPs needs to be greater than 4.5. Therefore the political system of RNM cannot be described as a ‘classical’ consociation, but as a hybrid of consociative and elements of parliamentary democracy, because its party system continues to function as a typical two-and-a-half-party system.

REFERENCES:


