

# MACEDONIAN OBAMA OR THE PLATFORM FROM TIRANA:

## *A GUIDE TO THE INTEGRATIVE POWER SHARING MODEL<sup>1</sup>*

### INTRODUCTION

In principle, overcoming the ethnic barriers to win votes from the “others” at the elections in mixed societies is a difficult task. Does Macedonia need such reform in the political and electoral system? Is our society matured to surpass all ethnic barriers during the voting process? Do the parties and candidates offer programs that are acceptable to all citizens regardless of their ethnic background? If yes, is Macedonia one of the rare multiethnic countries where the conflicts are to be considered as finished, thing of the past. We claim that this is not that case and that we need to dedicate ourselves to legal reforms and policy making that will systematically induce moderate behavior and cooperation between the elites representing the ethnic groups in the country. Macedonia needs reform of its political system so that the electoral laws would encourage and privilege interethnic agreements, the so-called interethnic (accommodation).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Sisk 1996, kaj Reilly, B. (2001) *Democracy in Divided Societies: Electoral Engineering for Conflict Management*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, and in Horowitz, D. L. (1985) *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, *A Democratic South Africa? Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 1991, и *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001.

## CASE STUDY: IMER SELMANI-MACEDONIAN OBAMA

At different past elections we have observed that winning votes of the “other” ethnic group, Macedonians voting for Albanians or vice versa, is not an impossible mission. With an attractive message and campaign Imer Selmani in 2009 and SDSM in 2016 succeeded in winning a significant number of votes of the “others.” Imer Selmani had the message of unification of all citizens from different ethnic background in one multicultural, civic concept. With this campaign he won the sympathies and the votes from all ethnic communities, including the Macedonians. In the first round of the elections, the majority of the votes went to Frchkoski and Ivanov, Selmani scoring third. He lacked 55,000 votes to get into the second round replacing SDSM’s candidate in the run off with Ivanov. Nevertheless, his success among the Albanian voters was very high. He won much more votes (147,500: 104,000) compared to the total of the other two candidates from the “Albanian” parties, Hoxha and Buxhaku.

**Table 1: Results from the first round in the presidential elections in 2009**

Candidates	Votes in the first round (%)
Gjorgje Ivanov	345,850 (35,04)
Ljubomir Frchkoski	202,691 (20,54)
Imer Selmani	147,547 (14,95)
Ljube Boshkoski	146,878 (14,88)
Agron Buxhaku	73,629 (7,46)
Nano Ruzhin	40,042 (4,06)
Mirushe Hoxha	30,225 (3,06)

Source: State Election Commission

Selmani’s campaign for winning votes of the other ethnic communities, besides the “Albanian” ones, was new, original and successful. CRPM analyzed the votes for Imer Selmani in the first round. The analysis of the votes per election units and ethnic groups are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Analysis of the votes for Mr. Selmani on the presidential elections in 2009 per ethnic groups**

EU	Macedonian votes	Turkish votes	Roma votes	Бошњачки гласови	Other	Albanian votes	TOTAL Selmani
1	3,690	1,908	1,770	1,905	0	15,029	24,302
2	1,070	683	2,975	436	0	20,915	26,079
3	5,245	1,115	3,595	1,207	0	2,353	13,515
4	6,058	3,600	1,807	58	0	151	11,674
5	2,022	6,765	4,378	988	611	13,595	28,362
6	960	5,220	921	57	76	36,381	43,615
TOTAL	19,045	19,291	15,446	4,651	687	88,424	147,547
%	12,90	13,07	10,46	3,15	0,46	59,92	100

Source: Centre for Research and Policy Making (CRPM) analysis 2017

The calculation methodology<sup>3</sup> shows that the political message influenced the “non-Albanian” voters - 40% of the votes for Imer Selmani were not “Albanian”. Selmani successfully hunted the votes from the “others” throughout Macedonia.

Imer Selmani’s results at the presidential elections could have been the basis of changes in the political situation in Macedonia. If these results were repeated at the parliamentary elections, New Democracy could have been an important factor in forming the future government coalitions. It is difficult to presume the results if Selmani succeeded in transferring his success on party level. Here, according to the D’Hondt method, presidential results are put in the parliamentary simulation using the results from the presidential candidates (Selmani for *New Democracy*, Boshkovski for *United for Macedonia*, Ivanov for *VMRO-DPMNE*, etc.) as if these were party results.

**Table 3: Scenario of election results “presidential as parliamentary”**

Election unit (EU)	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total PMs
VMRO-DPMNE	7	7	10	10	8	2	44
United for Macedonia	3	3	4	3	4	1	18
SDSM	6	4	5	6	4	2	27
DUI	1	2			1	6	10
DPA						2	2
ND	3	4	1	1	3	5	17
NDP						2	2

Source: Centre for Research and Policy Making (CRPM) analysis 2017

The table above shows that in eventual confirmation of Selmani’s success as New Democracy, this party would have been dominant among the “Albanian” parties and would have been very powerful in the coalition negotiations for the new Government (for example, in the simulation the opportunity to form a Government could have been given to VMRO-DPMNE and New Democracy with 61 MPs, or to SDSM with United for Macedonia and New Democracy with 62 MPs).

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<sup>3</sup>Based on publicly available data for election results, descriptions of the polling stations, and voters per polling station, [www.sec.mk](http://www.sec.mk), <https://izbirackispisok.gov.mk/Search.aspx?type=address>, <http://www.mojotizbor.mk/arhiva/informacii/izboren-proces/opisi-na-izbiracki-mesta.html>, database was created with the data of all elections (local, presidential, parliamentary) per polling stations. In the mixed communities there were analyses of the ethnical background of the election units. The historic results were also considered for the parties, as well as the maximum support to the candidates and parties within a particular ethnic community. Thus, it also considered the turnout data at all election cycles. However, this is still an assessment analysis without guaranteeing absolute accuracy, which is not possible regarding the secrecy of the voting process and the right to the citizen of ethnic/national self-determination.

## CASE STUDY: SDSM AND ZAEV

At the elections, SDSM had the campaign called “Plan for Life in Macedonia”. The general promises made by Zaev were higher wages, democratization, decent job, and justice for all. SDSM had special campaign for attracting “Albanian” voters, as a continuation of their previous activities. SDSM went a step further from Selmani’s citizens’ approach. Instead of citizen approach, it led the campaign of representing the interest of the “Albanians” in Macedonia. Due to this, SDSM managed to gain significant support, and in the municipalities with “Albanian” majority had far better result than the “Albanian” parties. CRPM analyzed the “Albanian” votes for SDSM at the elections in 2016.

**Table 4: Analysis of the “Albanian” votes for SDSM**

Election unit (EU)	Total votes	Albanian votes	%of Albanian votes compared to those of SDSM
1	92,247	7,758	8.4%
2	69,842	12,531	17.9%
3	81,204	2,046	2.5%
4	94,780	40	0.04%
5	71,020	4,497	6.3%
6	25,986	11,290	43.4%
Total votes for SDSM	435,079	38,162	8.8%

*Source: Centre for Research and Policy Making (CRPM) analysis 2017*

Percentage wise, SDSM got large number of its votes from the Macedonian Albanians in EU2 and EU6. In EU1 and EU5 SDSM gets smaller support from the Macedonian Albanians, but it should be considered that there, in general, the number of ethnic Albanian voters is smaller compared to EU2 and EU6. Finally, in EU3 and EU4 the number of Macedonian Albanian voters is very small, and the support for SDSM from these is the smallest compared to the other election units, both in percentage and in numbers.

The results from the parliamentary elections changed the political situation in the Republic of Macedonia. Namely, 38,162 Albanian votes from the total of 435,079 for SDSM seem a little. But, these 8.8% of the total number of votes were a significant factor for winning MP seats and forming the new Government afterwards. It is difficult to predict the outcome of these elections if some of the voters did not vote out of their “ethnic” community. These votes are also a good base of further success at the local elections in “mixed”, and even in some “predominantly” Albanian communities.

According to the D’Hondt’s model, these votes for SDSM are crucial for winning the MP seats in several election units. What if they were gone? The analyses shows that the votes SDSM won from the ethnic Albanians at all previous elections would

have been distributed among the “Albanian” parties in Macedonia, such as DUI, DPA and the rest. CRPM made a simulation of the election results on the basis of this assumption. If in EU1 SDSM won even without the Albanian votes, in EU2 without these votes SDSM would have got 1 MP less, which would have gone to BESA. In EU3, the ethnic Albanian votes for SDSM and the increased number of votes from the other smaller communities brought one MP more for SDSM and one 1 less for VMRO-DPMNE. In EU5, the “Albanian” votes gave SDSM one MP more, taken from DUI, and in EU6 both BESA and the Alliance for Albanians would have had one MP more, while both SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE would have got one MP less. Applying the D’Hondt’s model, and assuming that the Albanian votes for SDSM were won by the other Macedonian Albanian parties, then the final results of the elections would have been different, and would have opened opportunities for possible new coalition makings.

**Table 5: Projection of the MP seats of SDSM without the “Albanian votes”**

Party	MP seats according to SEC	MP seats according to CRPM simulation
VMRO-DPMNE	51	51
SDSM	49	45
DUI	10	11
BESA	5	7
Alliance for Albanians	3	4
DPA	2	2
Total	120	120

*Source: Centre for Research and Policy Making (CRPM) 2017*

The table above presents that the “Albanian” votes for SDSM play an important role in the coalition forming. According to the simulation, SDSM without the Albanian votes would not have been able to form the Government so easily. SDSM together with DUI and Alliance for the Albanians would have had 60 MPs. VMRO-DPMNE together with BESA and DPA would have also had 60 MPs.

## MACEDONIAN OBAMA OR PLATFORM FROM TIRANA

The successes of Imer Selmani as a Presidential candidate of New Democracy and of SDSM at the parliamentary elections in 2016 are evident, but achieved with different methods. Imer Selmani had the message of unification of all citizens from different ethnic background in one multicultural, civic concept. With this campaign he won the sympathies and the votes from all ethnic communities, including the Macedonians. On the other hand, SDSM and Zaev “sold” the story of implementing civic values with different content. Namely, their civic concept was based on a campaign with two messages, one for the Macedonians and other minor communities for “life” in Macedonia and fight against the corrupted party elite of VMRO-DPMNE, and the other for the Macedonian Albanians, which along the promise for better life included a notion of improving the status and the political power of this community. In fact, SDSM and Zoran Zaev at the elections in 2016 offered redefinition of the interethnic relations in Macedonia defined in the Ohrid Framework Agreement from 2001. SDSM’s offer for the Macedonian Albanians in 2016 was committed to change the balance of power and the rights of ethnic Albanians agreed in Ohrid.

What were the results of the SDSM’s strategies? The Parliamentary elections in 2016 were successful for SDSM in the “hunt” of the Albanian votes. Playing in this “field”, SDSM disturbed the plans of the ethnic Albanian parties. They reacted with radicalization, or ethnic outbidding. The ethnic outbidding in the political sciences is analyzed as a term when ethnic parties adopt radical strategies aimed to maximize the support from the voters from a particular ethnic group to represent themselves as the real fighters for the *cause* and weaken the legitimacy, delegitimize the political rivals representing that community.<sup>4</sup> The theory of ethnic outbidding emphasizes that it leads to extreme competition, offering more radical options for the public policies that lead to the danger of destroying the political system itself. Ethnic outbidding happens when the politicians compete to get the support of a certain ethnic community and make requirements in favor of that community over the others. It is a process when within an ethnic community the political competition comes down to proving which party is a bigger defender of the community’s interests.<sup>5</sup> Whatever the policy or circumstances leading to ethnic outbidding, it makes ethnic negotiations almost impossible, since even the moderate ethnic elites are being radicalized, and the public discourse follows their actions. The ethnic outbidding in the divided societies can have serious political consequences, and can even lead to conflicts and eventually war.

Where is the ethnic outbidding in the Macedonian context? After the elections in 2016, DUI, Alliance for Albanians and BESA negotiated a new political agenda

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<sup>4</sup>See also: Gormley-Heenan, C & MacGinty, R (2008) ‘Ethnic Outbidding and Party Modernization: Understanding the Democratic Unionist Party’s Electoral Success in the Post-Agreement Environment.’ *Ethnopolitics* Vol. 7, No. 1, страна 44.

<sup>5</sup>Examples in: Coakley, J. ‘Ethnic Competition and the Logic of Party System Transformation’ *European Journal of Political Research* 47 (2008): 766–793.

in Tirana, a political platform that seeks to extend the agreed reforms in Ohrid in 2001.<sup>6</sup> It was announced on 6 January, 2017, as the so-called “Tirana Platform”, requiring realization of goals, “in the future government mandate and/or in each future mandate,” to increase the power of the Albanian political entities in the country. It de facto aims to changes in the Ohrid Framework Agreement from 2001 and redefining Republic of Macedonia as a non-territorial federation. The platform also foresees promotion of the Albanians’ status, among else through realization of the right of “equitable implementation of the multiethnic principle in the Constitution of Macedonia, where the Albanians are [to be] considered as state-building nation...”, achieving complete language equity, use of the Albanian language at all levels of governance and guarantee that it will be applied as a fundamental and constitutional right. It is foreseen that the Constitution should define the “Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet and the Albanian language and its alphabet as official languages in the Republic of Macedonia”, to open a comprehensive debate about the flag, anthem and coat of arms “in order the state symbols to reflect the societal multiethnicity and ethnic equity.” Within the ideas of reaching economic equity and social welfare, especially through equal regional development, the Platform demands to “create one Ministry of Political System and Inter-Ethnic Relations, as an authorized institution for recognizing the rights of the communities and stimulation of economic and social development in the underdeveloped areas”, “realization of equity in the security forces, the army, the prosecutors and the courts”, “taking affirmative measures to provide financing for the Albanian cultural institutions at central and local level”, as well as “realization of equity at all levels of central government and public services or stakeholders entities.” In the foreign affairs it requires inclusion of “Albanians in the working group for direct negotiations with Greece and Bulgaria”, “collaboration with Kosovo and Albania for integrated board management”, as well as “opening new border crossings.” Besides the other requirements at a lower symbolic level, it insists on adopting the “Resolution of the Republic of Macedonia condemning the genocide over the Albanian people in Macedonia in the period from 1912-1956.”

After the platform was published, VMRO-DPMNE did not manage to make a coalition Government with DUI, yet it was SDSM who did it, with DUI and the Alliance for Albanians. On the other hand, as a consequence of the radicalization in the requirements from the Albanian political parties, a new Macedonian protest movement involving also the other minor ethnical communities was formed. It was led by artists, such as Boris Damovski, Bogdan Ilievski, and Igor Durlovski, united under the motto of “For United Macedonia” aiming to stop the implementation of the Tirana platform, asking the President of the Republic not to give the mandate to SDSM and legalize the coalition. The three-month protests’ culminated on 27<sup>th</sup> April when in the Parliament, the parliamentary groups of SDSM, DUI and Alliance for Albanians irregularly elected the President of the Parliament. A group of protestors entered the Parliament and occupied the assembly hall and Press Centre, and some attacked MPs from SDSM and Alliance for Albanians, including their leaders Zaev and Sela. Macedonia was very close to the worst scenario of people being killed victims and even a civil war starting.

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<sup>6</sup> Taken from: <http://puls24.mk/mk/vesti/tiranska-platforma-integralen-tekst>



## CHANGES TO BE MADE FOR INTEGRATION TO BE ACHIEVED

Unfortunately, Imer Selmani's project for multicultural Macedonia was unsuccessful. Seven years later another project led to the reopening of the topics that were closed with the Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001. The ethnic issues were back in full light on the agenda with SDSM's electoral campaign in 2016. The analysis clearly shows that SDSM's project to win votes from the Albanians through offering public policies to promote the power of this community has brought them election success. Feeling endangered, the ethnic Albanian parties united around the Tirana platform, additionally increasing their demands. The reaction by some Macedonians, Turks, Serbs and other was and still is very negative towards these issues. Since majority of the issues pertaining to interethnic relations was agreed in Ohrid in 2001, today Macedonia is facing a new challenge to discuss, and actually negotiate the basic postulates of the country. Nationalism as when a "genie is left out of the bottle" is difficult to suppress and control. New strategies are necessary to contribute to the moderation and community and civil convergence towards a common goal. We need compromises over the ethnic issues.

The integrative model is committed to this kind of election approach. Generally speaking, the interethnic conflict is a conflict over the control and ownership of the country, conflict over the superiority of one ethnicity over the others, etc. There is no single formula to reduce the conflict. In countries where the electorate is divided on ethnic grounds, it is difficult to convince the party leaders to make compromises without giving certain compensation. Thus, the attention must be focused to establishing such legal norms to initiate moderate and cooperative behavior among the ethnic political elites. These stimuli can be easily found in the election systems. They can be positioned in a way to encourage and influenced the interethnic agreements and the so-called interethnic accommodation. In this case the elections would offer specific benefits for the parties interested in interethnic collaboration. One such example is the so-called vote-pooling or a situation when the ethnic parties exchange their votes, or in order to get votes from the other communities, the ethnic parties are urged to soften or moderate their approach.

In order to alleviate the situation, it is necessary to redefine the election model for electing a President. One option is to introduce several integrative aspects at the following elections. For example, one model could be the Nigeria model for electing a president from 1978.<sup>7</sup> If, for example, the parliament passed amendments of the election law that would specify a certain percent of votes from all electoral units to elect the President, including those with Albanian majority, that would get the effect of moderating the election agenda of the Macedonian candidate without a formal regulation introducing the Vice-President position. Even now, there should be discussions about the parliamentary elections in 2020, including which election

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<sup>7</sup> See: Horowitz. 1985. Ethnic groups in conflict. Berkeley: University of California Press.



mechanisms could be introduced to initiate the party collaboration between the different ethnical groups.

According to Horowitz's integrative theory to alleviate ethnic tensions, it is prudent to use the majoritarian electoral system with the so-called "alternative vote". According to this model, at elections voters rank the candidates based on their preferences. If the candidate wins the majority of first-ranked preferences, he/she is elected in this electoral unit. If none candidate wins absolute majority (more than a half) of the first ranked preferences, the last-ranked candidate is eliminated, the ballots of this candidate are checked and the second-ranked preferences of this candidate are recalculated and distributed to the other candidates. If again there is no winning candidate, the procedure is repeated until one candidate gets the absolute majority.

Horowitz's idea is that the candidates, or the parties, in such an election system will have to be moderate, and actually cooperate, because it is not only the first but also the second and the third the voters' choice that could be important in winning seats. In an election system with parties representing different ethnic communities, they would depend on the votes from the "other" ethnic groups, which is an important motivation to have moderate campaigns and programs. This mechanism, where it is important and significant to "get votes of all ethnic and religious groups, through agreements with other parties to trade with the second, third and fourth preferences, requires mutual moderate behavior regarding the ethnic or racial issues and problems."<sup>8</sup> In this case, Macedonia should change the election system from proportional to majoritarian.

## CONCLUSION

The issue is of course, open to discussion. It is important to assess whether the situation in Macedonia is being normalized and whether there is danger that the interethnic relations between the Macedonians and Albanians will worsen again. Actually, in general, the liberal principle should be respected that the state institutions serve to the interest of the citizens and that their functioning or existence should be directly related to the interests and the needs of the citizens. If it is considered that these institutional reforms are necessary in Macedonia, they should be supported. Judging from the presented in this analysis, interethnic relations and the party conflicts are radicalized in Macedonia, and we need to implement these new integrative methods to prevent further ethnic conflicts.

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<sup>8</sup>Horowitz, D. L. *A Democratic South Africa? Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 1991, page 177.

## ANNEX 1

PLATFORM by DUI, Alliance of Albanians and BESA (Tirana Platform)

### **1. Achievement of full equality, in compliance with the Ohrid Framework Agreement and the Constitution**

- \* Strict implementation of the principle of multi-ethnicity in the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, where the Albanians shall be recognized a nation-building population. Support for any legislation of constitutional initiative that strengthens ethnic equality for the Albanian population.
- \* Achievement of full linguistic equality, use of the Albanian language at all levels of governance and guaranteeing its use as a basic and constitutional right. The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia shall determine that “the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script and the Albanian language and its script are official languages in the Republic of Macedonia.”
- \* All-inclusive debate on the flag, anthem, and state coat-of-arms of the Republic of Macedonia, so that state symbols reflect societal multi-ethnicity and ethnic equality.
- \* Adoption of a Resolution in the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia with which to condemn the genocide on the Albanian people in Macedonia during 1912-1952.

### **2. Achievement of economic equality and societal wellbeing, especially through the equitable regional development**

- \* Establishment of a new mechanism, in the form of a State Committee on Financing of Municipalities, for a more just decision-making with regard to government grants for municipalities' benefit.
- \* Creation of a Ministry for Political System and Relations among Communities, as a body responsible for the respect for the rights of the communities and to incentivize economic and societal development in disfavored areas.
- \* Realization of equitable representation in the security bodies, the military, intelligence [agencies], and the judiciary.
- \* Realization of equitable representation at all levels of central governance, as well as public agencies, or public shareholder enterprises.

### **3. Strengthening of the Rule of Law, as a prerequisite for the advancement of the Euro-Atlantic integration process**

- \* Implementation of the Reform Plan, in accordance with the Skopje Agreement [Przhino], the Priebe Recommendations, the Urgent Reform Priorities of the European Commission, as well as the recommendations from the High-Level Accession Dialogue with the EU.
- \* Support for the impartial work of the Special Prosecution [Office], without ethnic or political prejudice.
- \* Shedding full light on the issues and court cases of “Sopot,” “Brodec,” “Monster,” and “Kumanovo,” though an investigative committee, or an independent international body.

#### **4. Creation of a spirit of trust in the function of good interethnic relations, as a crucial element to the political stability of the country**

- \* Affirmative measures to ensure the financing of Albanian cultural institutions at the local and national level.
- \* Creation of a central institution for the advancement of the languages of the communities, which shall ensure the training of translators, editors and lecturers.

#### **5. Resolution of the name issue, in conformity with European values and the principles of international law**

- \* Adoption of a Joint Binding Resolution in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia which shall oblige the Government of Macedonia to commit to actively work toward a solution to the name dispute.
- \* Inclusion of Albanians in the working group for direct negotiations with Greece.

#### **6. Good Relations with the Neighbors**

- \* Inclusion of Albanians in the working group for direct negotiations with Bulgaria.
- \* Cooperation with Kosovo and Albania for the integrated border management.
- \* Opening of new border crossings.

#### **7. Quick integration in NATO and the EU**

- \* Accomplishing the above points shall unblock Macedonia's path toward full integration in NATO and open negotiations for membership in the European Union.