Policy Making and Secularism in Macedonia

Jonuz Abdullai[*]
Xhemail Cupi[**]

Abstract

In places where social multiethnicity and multiculturalism is detected, the interethnic and interreligious dialogue is considered to be the imperative of time which should be initiated by the government itself. But in recent years, the Republic of Macedonia as a multiethnic and multireligious state goes in the direction of ruin the interethnic and interreligious harmony, thereby destroying the basic rules of the secular state. The purpose of this scientific study is to make a specialized overview regarding the recent function of secularism in the Republic of Macedonia. The main hypothesis of this study is theconfirmation that in the Republic of Macedonia there is an attempt to ruin secularism by the actual government. This will be proven by mentioning several cases and challenges that occurred in our country lately as well as we will recommend way of overcoming the same. Different methods were used in this study, starting with the descriptive method by consultingrelevant bibliography and analyzing relevant reports from the country and the international factor, the causal method, the content analysis, whereas a questionnaire was used as a technique which was filled by people living in the main cities of the Republic of Macedonia between January and March 2015, and an interview was held as well. The results of this study prove that in recent years the borders of secularism were infringed and that the political parties through the impact of government indirectly helped one particular religious community, so that there is ethnical and religious conflict and discrimination which has had a great impact not only on the country but this is reflected in the region as well, in the development of reports with the neighboring countries of the Republic of Macedonia.

Keywords: *Macedonia, religion, challenges, relations, conflict*

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[*] Professor, PhD, SEE University, Macedonia, Faculty of Public Administration and Political Science, Phone: +389 44 356 188, Email: j.abdullai@seeu.edu.mk

[*] Ph.Dc., SEE University, Macedonia, Faculty of Public Administration and Political Science, Phone: +389 44 356 188, Email: xhemail.c@hotmail.com

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The return of religion has become a crucial phenomenon in many societies, as well as a global orientation that gains more strength with the development process of globalism. In this process of religious returning in half instances, time after time it is pretended to exist in Macedonia as well. Peter L. Berger, one of the foremost advocates of secularization during the 1960s, said that "a whole body of literature by historians and social scientists loosely labeled 'secularization theory' is essentially mistaken." According to Norris and Inglehart "there is no question that the traditional secularization thesis needs updating. It is obvious that religion has not disappeared from the world, nor does it seemlikely to do so. Despite trends in secularization occurring in rich nations, this does not mean that the world as a whole has become less religious" (Norris, Inglehart, 2004: 4-5). During the last decade, however, this thesis of the slow and steady death of religion has come under growing criticism; indeed, "secularization theory is currently experiencing the most sustained challenge in its long history"(Berger, 1999: 2). On the other side, we have authors who show their concerns for the secularism of Europe as a whole, for example: "religious leaders, journalists, sociologists, politicians and most people with a passing interest in its religious and cultural identity, both within and beyond its boundaries, assume the West is secular (Smith, 2008: 3).

The term secular derives from the Latin *saeculum* and means a dualistic symbolism for time and space: In this case, time refers to "the present" or "today", whereas space refers to "the world" or "earth". As it can be seen, *seaculum* means "this time" or "the present time," i.e., it has to do with this world events or "contemporary events". Thus, the concept secular refers to the conditions of this world at this time or at this certain period of time. According to the author Harvey Cox, there are differences between the two terms "secularization" and "secularism". According to him, "secularization implicates a continuous and infinite process, in which values and viewpoints continuously are corrected in accordance with evolving changes in history, whereas secularism, the same as religion, projects a closed viewpoint and an absolute fixation of values towards a final historical goal and a final message to men" (El-Attas, 2006).

Secularism does not mean the exclusion of religion from the public life of a society. It is ofcourse possible to define secularism as a totally hypothetical notion of strict and systematic separation in all aspects of the relationship between religion and the state, and then to assert this narrow and unrealistic definition in rejecting any form of regulation of that relationship (An-Na'im, 2008: 36). For The event flow of secularism we must rely to the opinion of the author Hurd, he said that: "the social construction of secularism has taken two distinct paths in international relations: a laicist trajectory, in which religion is seen as an adversary and an impediment to modern politics, and a Judeo-Christian secularist trajectory, in which religion is seen as a source of unity and identity that generates conflict in modern international politics. Each of these traditions of secularism is associated with particular sets of practices". He ultimately thinks that "laicism, which comes out of the Enlightenment critique of religion, is associated with attempts to force religion out of politics" (Hurd, 2008: 23). So, as noted a trajectory of the word secular is alsoLaicite - the French version of secularism, which insists on the strict separation of church and state or, more generally, of politics and religion— has become well known internationally in the context of the March 2004 law prohibiting pupils at public schools from wearing ''signes religieux ostensibles [conspicuous religious signs]."During the struggle between les deux France, Republicans needed to

develop an ideology that could replace Catholic morality and that would spread the ideal of secular citizenship across the country" (Jansen, 2006: 477). The eventual objective of secularization is to deny God and to completely eliminate religion or to limit it in the private sphere only while recognizing the existence of a "God" that is not responsible for issues on Earth or secular issues affecting people. The concept cannot be set out of the context of Europe evolution and the church reformation movements. In order for Christianity to survive in the first centuries of its existence, it would set the division of faith and city, a division that was set in parallel with the differences between the world and the body. The first Christ's order "to Caesar" - which became immensely important in the Saint Paul's writing - added a political dimension to Christianity and to the already Christ's dual nature (Temimi, Esposito, 2010: 37). Jose Casanova suggests that secularization should be thought of as a three-fold phenomenon: the decline of religion, the differentiation of the secular spheres, and the privatization of religion. (Casanova, 2006) According to Holyoake "secularism remained secure, so long as the consensus that religion belongs within the private sphere remained in place" (Cady, Hurd, 2010: 4-5). This means that religion should not interfere in the internal affairs of state, as the state should not interfere in the internal affairs of religion, but this does not mean that religion should stay indifferent to the actions of the state and the state to stand indifirent to works of religion. Help each other but not to interfere in the affairs of another. Thus, the term secular can be defined as one of the most important organizational principles of modern politics. Mark Chames I claims that secularization should not be defined as "retreat of religion, but as a weakened sphere of religious authority" (McGuire, 2007, p: 68), whereas according to Uatt "the secularization process is necessarily universal, unstoppable and irreversible, even though he does not agree that in the end of this secularization process the religion will be destroyed or lost. He tries to see religion in a modern and laic society" (Pajaziti, 2012: 223). The relationship between religion and secularism can also be viewed as mutually sustaining. "Secularism needs religion to provide a widely accepted source of moral guidance for the political community, as well as to help satisfy and discipline the nonpolitical needs of believers within that community. In turn, religion needs secularism to mediate relations between different communities (whether religious, antireligious, or nonreligious) that share the same political space or space of civic reason" (An-Na'im, 2008: 41). To be clear on the point, "secularism cannot replace religion for believers, nor provide cross-cultural foundations for universal norms of human rights" (An-Na'im, 2008: 42).

Based on the abovementioned definitions, a personal and comprehensive definition can be given, so that we can say that secular is "that state where there is not accepted any official religion and at the same time it is not considered to be anti-religious, meaning that there are moral norms that originate from religious, but regarding its citizens, it does not impose religion nor forbid it". In most of the cases, the religion is considered to be a personal issue, and collective issue in cases when citizens or religionists of a particular religion get organized with religious communities or associations not being financed by the state as long as they do not spread hatred and religious discrimination.

Secularism in Macedonia - After the introduction of the term secularism, through this scientific research I intend to make a more specialized view about the functioning of secularism in Macedonia in the recent years. The main hypothesis of the study is to prove the idea that in Macedonia there is a tendency of dissolving secularism by the actual government. This is going to be illustrated with the following case studies:

the carnival in the Vevcan village near Struga, the building of the church in the Skopje Forteress, the building of giant crosses in visible places for members of all religious communities as well as the murders that happened in Smijlkovci village near Skopje. The conduction of a survey for the wide population was the technique that was used in the territory of Macedonia in the period between Januay – March 2015 both through emails and directly. The survey questions were sent through emails to 250 people, and directly to 150 other people. The reasons for the electronic survey are objective and subjective, i.e., it is an easier form of delivering and filling it, but having in mind that the Internet is used more by younger generations and less by older generation, the traditional form of the surveye was also used, through direct contact. The survey had a total of ten questions with some subquestions, and the answers were based on the Likert survey, that included five answers: I definitely agree, I agree, I do not know, I do not agree, and I definitelly disagee. In the survey, there were included people of all ages, i.e., from 15 to 21 years old 14%, from 22 to 34 years old 39%, from 35 to 44 years old 27%, from 55 to 64 years old 13% and older than 65 years old there were only 7%. Both genders, males and females, were included equally 50% - 50%. The percentage of their education is as follows: 24% with primary school, 45% with secondary school, and 31% with university diploma. Regarding their ethnicity and religion, I have tried to pay more attention to these two points, because they are related to the interethnic and interreligious dialogue, thus, regarding this issue, their percentage is as follows: 55% of surveyed people are Macedonians, 30% Albanians, 4% Muslim Macedonians, 4% Turkish, 4% Roma and 3% Bosnians, whereas regarding their religion, the percentage is as follows: 53% Orthodoxes, 43% Muslims, 3% Catholics, and 1% Atheists.

The Republic of Macedonia by constitution is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious state, where the largest ethnicities are Macedonians and Albanians. As Pari said "people of both religions have coexisted with centuries, and the religion was a sign of their culture so far, until the appearance of nationalism in the region and of the ethnic difference" (Peri, 2003, p: 405). To understand the reality of Macedonia we must return to its past, and this was very well defined by author Pajaziti, he said that "Macedonia, as a part of former Yugoslav Federation, is mainly led by the principles of Marxist atheism, communistic ideology, respectively. It has tried to reduce and confine the religion as a consciousness issue, a phenomenon with which the religionist lives in his/her inner world, without being visible to authorities and the state. By considering that the religion can hardly be eliminated from peoples' hearts this state had chosen the gradual approach" (Pajaziti A., 2003: 41-42). After being separated from Yugoslavia in 1991, in Macedonia there was a secular spirit which was mixed with a dose of tendency towards the orthodox direction, by giving it a priority based on the higher percentage of orthodoxes that are mostly Macedonian (65%), thus, having asymmetric and unequal attitude towards the Muslim population who based on the overall number of population have the second place (33%) (U.S. Department of State Reports, 2014). According to the author Spasenovski (2015: 9), "Macedonia has a combined model of secularism which holds the following three elements: the first one, European national standards; the second one, traditions of the majority of population of the orthodox version of Christianity, and the third one, the realities of the actual religious landscape". According to him, "the challenge of the Macedonian model of secularism, as the reality will demonstrate, consists in the ability to ensure balance between the three mentioned factors, and this duty is assigned to institutions which are led by political parties".

At the first glance, it seems that these three points are valid and in harmony with each other, but in reality it is not like that. The points that Macedonia have in common with all the Western countries with which it aims to integrate, are the first point, namely, "All the democratic states in the world have the human rights as a base of religious freedom" which is concluded with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of UN and with the international rules of NATO and EU, agreements that are signed by Macedonia, as well as the third point that states that "all the heterogenic states that consist of multi-ethnical population and many religions ensure guaranty for all the communities", which has also happened in Macedonia, but the point that differentiates this state from the others is the second one, namely, "the tradition of the majority of population of orthodox version of Christianity," pretending this way that if the church is not connected to the state, this state is not completely functional. This point has changed continuously for years, where the article 19 of the Constitution in 1991, favors the Macedonian Orthodox Church among the other religious organizations, with the following formulation: "the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the other religious groups", but with the changes that happened in 2001 as a result of the OhridFramework Agreement, this formulation with the amendment VII underwent changes, and it states: "the Macedonian Orthodox Church as well as the Islamic Religious Community, the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Methodist Church, the Hebrew Community, and other religious groups and communities". Now, with the last changes that happened, the religious confessions are divided in three groups. The Macedonian Orthodox Church is in first group, the Islamic Religious Community, the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Methodist Church and the Hebrew Community are in the second group, whereas in the third group, actually, in the category of "other religious groups and communities" there are included all the other smaller confessions. Even though these new changes which are related to constitutional changes for the status of the main religions in Macedonia made a progress in the issue of equality among religious communities, again this did not make all these communities equal, and again the Macedonian Orthodox Church has a priority over other communities because by adding the conjunction "as well as" in the amendment VII the basic criteria of secularism is ruined, the criteria that states that all the religious communities are equal by the constitution.

This point contradicts the two other points, because by giving priority to one religion or ethnic community it loses the equilibration and its heterogenic concept. The functionality of a secular state does not mean that it should not be connected to one community or religious object. By distinguishing a particular religious community it seems as if one community is more constituent than the others, as if it has more obligations, liabilities and responsibilities than the others, and as a result it has more priority in the management and leadership than all the other communities. Again, this thing contradicts the most crucial rights of the democracy.

With this we are witnessed so far is in line with what the author Maleska says "theoretically, in a state where different ethnical groups live, the nationalism of one of them triggers or strengthens the nationalism of the others" (Maleska, 1991: 93). In Macedonia there is a correlation between ethnicity and religious affiliation; the majority of Orthodox Christians are ethnic Macedonian and mostMuslims are ethnic Albanian (U.S. Department of State Reports, 2014). According to Atanasov "nationalism in Europe is not dead. Europe is a nation-state business. The Balkans too. Macedonia is one of the rare interesting examples from a multicultural point of view as a practice, theory too. The Macedonian state is driven between the nationalism(s) and multiculturalism, and there

are no easy solutions" (Atanasov, 2003: 314). He also said that "macedonians still perceive Macedonia as their 'natural' state, and involuntarily make more 'space(s)' for the Albanians" (Atanasov, 2003: 304). These two ethnicities have a huge difference regarding the religion and nationality concept. Generally, regarding the Orthodoxes, in all Balkans, if we rely on the opinion of Denford "the building of autocephalous churches was considered to be necessary step in the process of the creation of nations-states. The autocephalous orthodox church represented a continuation of the state … religious saying about the nation" (Denfort, 2003: 41). In the same line is Ortakovski too, he said that "the orthodox Church and its supporters mythologize its historical function today, and consider it to be essential for the existence of the nation. Ethnic Macedonian nationalism has been traditionally tending to connect with the Church, as in all the cases of the Orthodox Commonwealth, that's way Macedonian Orthodox Church acts not only as a religious, but also as an ethnic organization" (Ortakovski, 1998: 412).

Albanians, on the other side, according to Peri, regardless of their religion as they are divided in Muslims, Catholics and Orthodoxes, "they did not develop feelings of nationalism until the twentieth century" (Peri, 2003: 367). Albanians as a nation belong to three religions: Muslims, Christians and Orthodoxes, and the shifting or conversion of a person from on to another religion does not impinge his/her nationality as well as does not affect his/her value and dignity, because as it was mentioned above there is not a strong tie between the nationality and religion, whereas regarding the Macedonians, their shifting or conversion to another religion apart of Orthodox impinges their nationality because in their faith the religion is closely connected to the nation and citizenship, and in the cases of conversion then there are real chances that the person loses lots of respect and his/her dignity is impinged by the surrounding society.

This conclusion is also based on our survey, and based on the raised issues there are two more: On the Macedonian side, religion is considered to be essential for the existence of the nation and the answers of the surveyed people are as follow: I definitely agree 39%, I agree 28%, I do not know 10%, I do not agree 13%, and I definitely disagree 10%; and on the Albanian side, religion is considered to be essential for the existence of the nation and the answers are as follow: I definitely agree 5%, I agree 8%, I do not know 25%, I do not agree 35%, and I definitely disagree 27%.

The events that are case studies in this research and that have happened in the recent years are related to the conflict between the two biggest ethnicities. The issue of interethnic conflicts is very delicate but in Macedonia they have had more echoes because of the aforementioned analysis, i.e., the issue of inseparability between the nation and religion. By deriving that for the Macedonian community the citizenship is an element of religious principles, then they consider themselves as dignified owners of their state, which was proved with the Constitution of the year 1991 in relation to the nation and religious communities, whereas the other communities were considered as second hand citizens.

One of the reasons of a polarization between Albanians and Macedonians in Macedonia is also the fact that the Macedonian political parties deploy the Orthodox religion in their political doctrines by stating that the spiritual, the religion and the faith is eternal food of Macedonian identity, whereas they consider the Macedonian Orthodox Church as essential for the existence of nationalism to the extent that the Macedonian Orthodox Church did not function only as a religious organization but also as an ethnical organization. The doctrine of VMRO-DPMNE of the year 2009 ranks the religion as one of the eight main columns and it says: "The spirituality, the religion and the faith are

eternal food of Macedonian identity…" but with time, VMRO as a political party of the center right advocates for less expressed division of the state with the religious communities, so that with this defined reality it persists the role of MOC-AO to be emphasized without damaging the other remaining religious organizations. Herewith, starting from 2001, this political party started in the same way to address the citizens of the other Christian denominations (Catholics and Protestants), as well as Muslims, especially at the time when many members of the Macedonian Muslim community became members and voted this political party. SDUM (SDSM), as a political party of the center left, considers the church as a historical factor in the development and fortification of Macedonian national identity (Party Programme of the SDSM, 2014, p: 125). The former president Branko Crvenkovski, an ex leader of the opposition SDAM, when in power in 2007 has awarded the MOC with highest honors for special achievements and contribution to the benefit of the state. (The journal of turkish weekly, 2007) According to the opinion of Macedonian author Spasevski, "in principle, this political party advocates for stronger expressed division of the state from the religion without favoring any of the religious communities. In the true sense of the word, this means not to interfere in religious institutions, but at the same time disabling religious communities to interfere in the work of institutions" (Spasevski, 2015: 17). Regarding Albanians, their case is slightly different because even though the religion among them is an important aspect of their identity, considering the fact that historically the Albanians have had three religions, and that the Muslim, Catholic and Orthodox religion, this was not necessarily connected to their ethnic identity, whereas The Islamic Religious Community in Macedonia despite of having a protective politics for the Albanian Muslims in particular, it also protected the rights of every Muslim believer in Macedonia, regardless of their ethnicity. Regarding the political parties and politicians, in a local plan some Albanian political representatives have kept connections with the Islam believers in Macedonia (QMBN, 2009, p: 35-36), but at the Albanian political parties at the period between the years 1991-2001 there is not a religious content in the programs of the Albanian political parties (QMBN, 2009, p: 35), and this result continues to this day with all Albanian parties.

When we defined the secular, we said that the state must not favor one religious community, and must not have a government project for building a religious object or for financing and sponsoring something similar. But, in the recent years we have witnessed things that go on the opposite direction, as is the case of the building of the church Constantine and Elena in the center of Skopje.Immediately after the 2006 parliamentary elections, the government decided to finance the construction of the church of Sts Constantine and Elena in Skopje's central Macedonia Square, appointing the Ministry of Culture as the project leader (Pisarev, 2014). Although it remain an speculations that we can not prove definitively because for all these hipothesis there are not any declaration by the government representatives, government spokesmen or even published official declaration by governmental web sites. According to the video clip that visualizes the New Skopje which additionally is added in YouTube (Proekt "Skopje 2014", 2010), it proves that the church "St. Constantine and Elena" was part of the government project "Skopje 2014" even though in the construction place there is a signboard where there is written that the investor of the church is the foundation "St. Car Konstantin". According to the portal post of Apostlov, "at the beginning, the Ministry of Culture was engaged in the building of the object and in 2009 it opened a tender that failed because "Granit" – Skopje offered, according to the government, very high price for building it. The thing

that is known to the public is that until now for the building of the church two donor conferences were held, and the second known thing is that besides of the businessmen, there was also present the Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski" (Apostolov, 2014). The only official source, is the following information given by of the Republic of Macedonia in 2013 that says "the Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, who was present at the donor conference, said that he was pleased that once again they gathered to support the initiative and to give support for building of the new church "Saint Constantine and Elena" – he said. He invited the attending ministers, deputies, directors, representatives of the economic chambers and businessmen to help in the continuation of, as he said, the building of a beautiful tradition in Macedonia and together to build the church "Saint Constantine and Elena"' (The government of the Republic of Macedonia, 2013). According to a interview with Kosta Stanoevski made by Jordanovska, "a secretary general of Skopje Eparchy, the state has given the land of the center "Macedonia" as a gift where the church should be built" (Jordanovska, 2009). Afrim Tahiri, ex general secretary of the Islamic Religious Community, complains that the Orthodox Church enjoys an exclusive position in society, and acts in alliance with government institutions, reflected in their routine presence and participation at events where no religious community has a place. He said that the secular constitution of the state was being directly undermined also by the government's decision to build churches within the "Skopje 2014" project, which is intended to beautify the capital. "These trends are followed by local governments and government ministers," Tahiri maintained. According to him, despite of the promises given for years, very little or nothing was done for the elimination of the problem, a problem that affects negatively in the interreligious and interethnic harmony. As the sponsoring of religious objects by the state is a very delicate issue, through the survey we were also interested for the citizens' opinions. The discussed hypothesis was: "The government in Macedonia has financed and continues financing the building of churches," where 24% of surveyed people definitely agreed with this declaration, 29% only agreed, 12% gave no answer, 20% did not agree, and 15% definitely disagreed.

An issue that again interferes with secularism is the religious holidays. According to Spasenovski "this was achieved with the changes of the law about holidays in 2007, which was approved at the time when the governing political party was VMRO-DPMNE. With the changes of the Law about holidays from 2007, unlike before, the state presented 27 holidays of which 15 are of religious nature, where the biggest part is about the citizens of Orthodox confession, and then, depending on the size, actually citizens of every religious community mentioned in the Constitution" (Spasenovski, 2015).

Case studies: 1
Protests at Skopje Fortress "Kale"
The first case study, chronologically chosen, is about excavations at the Skopje Fortress. On 13 February 2011, at least 100 ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians clashed at the medieval Skopje fortress (Kale), over the building of a museumchurch meant to host historical artefacts from the archaeological excavation (Europe, 2011, p: 14) which resulted that there had been evidence of an antique Macedonian church. This provoked a protest against the building of the church inside the Skopje Fortress as well as a counter-protest by the Macedonian Orthodoxes that looked like a street battle, where not only the police was involved, but also the senior leaders of the political party DUI. This event prompted a strong political reaction that shook the government coalition and

caused inter-ethnic crisis among the supporters of the church and its opponents. According to information given by Davitkovska "the clash started when the Head of the Bureau of Cultural Heritage denied giving an explanation on what was built inside the Kale Fortress" (Davitkovska, Stefanovski, 2015: 10).

Regarding the tensions in the Skopje Fortress, our survey included several questions on this issue. One of the submitted discussions was the following: "The excavations at the Skopje Fortress and the building of the Macedonian Orthodox Church (2011) were provocation for interethnic and interreligious tensions in Macedonia," where 34% of surveyed people definitely agreed with this declaration, 31% only agreed, 15% had no answer, 12% did not agree, and 8% definitely disagreed. The second question was: "The building of the church at the Skopje Fortress was prevented because nobody took the responsibility for its building." The second issue regarding this problem is the following: "The building of the Orthodox Church at the Skopje Fortress during the late hours of the night was considered suspicious for the citizens," where 31% of the surveyed people definitely agreed with this declaration, 31% only agreed, 11% had no answer, 15% did not agree, and 18% definitely disagreed. The next discussion that had to do with this issue was: "The building of the church at the Skopje Fortress was prevented because nobody took the responsibility for its building," where 27% of the surveyed people definitely agreed with this declaration, 36% only agreed, 9% had no answer, 20% did not agree, and 8% definitely disagreed. The following issue was reviewed in the next discussion: "The senior leaders of DUI should not have involved themselves physically to prevent the building of the church at the Fortress, because their involvement provoked more Albanians and Macedonian citizens to get revolted and clash with each other, where 20% of the surveyed people definitely agreed with this declaration, 25% only agreed, 8% had no answer, 25% did not agree, and 22% definitely disagreed.

Case studies: 2
Controversial carnival of Vevcani near Struga

2. In Macedonia there are cases of abuse and discrimination on religious bases as is the case with the carnival of Vevcani near Struga, where low-browed people by using masks on behalf of culture, attacked Islamic values, as well as, the principles and the main Islamic practices were mocked, a situation that aroused dissatisfaction in the country and caused interethnic and interreligious hatred as well as a conflict. Author Pajaziti, years ago, had similar analysis for Carnival in Vevcani, he said that "this carnival had its internal and external consequences. Externally was caused a diplomatic scandal with Greece (due to the symbolic burial of the Greek corpse), so Greece sent to Macedonia a protest note, internally was generated a turbulence with religious nuances, were upset religious feelings of almost half of the population of RM" (Pajaziti, 2013: 9). In front of the Municipality of Struga, demonstrations were organized in Struga on January 27th, where the Head Mufti of the Struga muftiate Ferat Polisi and the Mayor of the Municipality Ramiz Merko addressed the group of Struga citizens. They announced that the demonstration is organized because of the "offenses against the Muslims in Macedonia with the carnival masks in Vevcani". If we look at the bottom post "after this event, offensive graffiti was written on several churches and mosques in the region during the next week, and there were tries to set the religious buildings on fire" (Micevski, Popovikj, 2013: 91). Until now, it is still unclear who was the organizer and sponsor of this manifestation. The carnival is supported by the Ministry of Culture and is sponsored by the Macedonian Telecom (macedoniaonline, 2012), whereas aspokewoman from

FYROM's Ministry of Culture "the main organizer of the carnival is the Municipality of Vevcani" , despite the fact that the Carnival is funded by the Ministry of Culture (history-of-macedonia, 2012). The Carnival of Vevcani was also included in the survey regarding these discussions, hence: "In the carnival of 2012 in Vevcani, where the Islamic values were attacked by using masks, and the Muslims were mocked, it was only a demonstration of the freedom of acting and had no political background," where 12% of the surveyed people definitely agreed with this declaration, 14% only agreed, 8% had no answer, 34% did not agree, and 32% definitely disagreed. The second one was the following: "Because of the carnival, the protests in Struga and the burning of the two Orthodox churches (in Struga and Tetovo) introduced a rational response to maintain the ethnic balance," where 16% of the surveyed people definitely agreed with this declaration, 20% only agreed, 4% had no answer, 39% did not agree, and 21% definitely disagreed.

Case studies: 3
Milenium Cross in capital Skopje

3. The third case study is related to the Milenium Cross in the most visible places of Skopje, namely in the montain Vodno. Today, religious objects can be seen almost in the most unusual parts of the country, often built for political or strategical tendencies, such as the building of the crosses in many places inhabited by mixed religions or doubled (paired) minarets, that can be considered a novelty in our territories. This race reached its culmitation with the building of giant crosses on certain highlands that can be seen even from larger distances. Until recently, the building of crosses as well as autonomous symbols without the presence of the basic cult had not been a tradition of Christians. The first case is the building of the Milenium Cross, 66 meter high which was built at the summit of montain Vodno in the city of Skopje, built with the intention to compete the building of the two high minarets in the entrance of Skopje, i.e., in Saraj and at the same time to identify the capital city and Macedonia with it, as a biblical country. According to the author Vangeli (2010: 91): "the construction of the Millennium Cross was one of the most visible actions of desecularization, as the government not only put itself into a position of promoter of religion, but it also marked a highly visible public space with a religious symbol". Also, the construction of the second giant cross is almost at the end. It is 56 meters tall, and is located in Aerodrom in Skopje, that can be seen in all the territory of Skopje (Çupi, 2014) that followed the building of 100 floor residence Sky City, part of the Turkish company Cevahir Holding. According to the general secretary of the Islamic Religious Community of Macedonia Afrim Tahiri: "by participating in such events and by placing religious symbols in public places and public buildings, they acknowledge that they are dominant and that they are enclosing their own space". As a conclusion, we can say that any religious symbol that is visible for all the citizens without the presence of basic cults, requires the religious identity of the citizens that do not have that symbol as their own, that is why if the setting of crosses without the presence of basic cults in cities and mountains threatens the distinctive identity and guarantee of Muslims that live there, then those crosses should be removed.

Case studies: 4
Murders in Smilkovci village

4. The most flagrant case that prompted religious hatred and mass protests in the capital of the country is the murder of five Macedonian Orthodox in Smilkovci village. After this tragedy hundreds of angry young Slav-Macedonians staged a huge

demonstration in Skopje to protest the Smiljkovci killings. The protesters chanted nationalist slogans that blamed ethnic Albanians for the killings. The rally spiraled into violence when young Slav-Macedonians tried to enter Albanian districts, but the police managed to cordon them off. As two author tell us, "on May 20, suspects were arrested during a massive police operation in Skopje and surrounding Albanian villages" (Armakolas, Feta, 2012: 1-2). The Ministry of Internal Affairs without having concrete evidence yet, linked this case with terrorism on behalf of religion by arresting as suspicious many Albanians and Muslims, and by accusing them for radical Islamic terrorism. Pendarovski, expert on security issues, regarding this event said: "To say that the murderers did this act based on jihad is a hard thing to believe. The charge also mentions structured groups and organization as well, and not individuals. Let's take some examples: In Norway, Brejvik is a Christian fundamentalist but he is by himself; recently, in France, it came out that the person who killed in front of Jewish schools acted alone; here in Macedonia, it is said that there is an organization. Until now, I have not seen or consulted someone from abroad, particularly from western secret services that claim that in Macedonia there is organized jihad. In principle, jihad has got sporadic purpose to trigger threat, as with every terroristic attack, its primary purpose is to make society to comply with sharia rules, and this element is missing in the case "Monstrum (Monster)" (Pendarovski, 2012).

The survey was also focused on the case "Monstrum." The following was discussed: "The murder of five persons in Smilkovci village near Skopje should not be linked with Islamic terrorism or radical Islam, as the Minister of Internal Affairs GordanaJankullovska stated," in which case 38% of the surveyed people definitely agreed with this declaration, 41% only agreed, 1% had no answer, 13% did not agree, and 7 definitely disagreed.

Government relations with religious communities - The reports of the actual government with the two major religious communities were part of our survey as well. They were included in two questions. The first one was: "The government of Macedonia gives priority to the Macedonian Orthodox Church compared to other religious communities," in which case 31% of the surveyed people definitely agreed with this declaration, 24% only agreed, 2% had no answer, 23% did not agree, and 20 definitely disagreed; and the second one was: "The Islamic Religious Community, unlike the Macedonian Orthodox Church, is avoided by the actual Government because of the failure to return the temple properties, for example: the case of the Burmali Mosque in the center of Skopje, in Bitola, etc.," in which case 19% of the surveyed people definitely agreed with this declaration, 27% only agreed, 9% had no answer, 31% did not agree, and 14 definitely disagreed.

As a conclusion, after discussing all the intended issues that we thought are related with the initial definition of secularism, in our survey the basic issue of the research was put forward regarding the functioning of secularism, namely: "The actual government of Macedonia goes on the opposite direction of secularism, meaning it tries to desecularize the state," in which case 26% of the surveyed people definitely agreed with this declaration, 29% only agreed, 9% had no answer, 25% did not agree, and 11 definitely disagreed.

Apart of this, we communicated with Sasho Ordanoski through the email, a journalist and political analyst, and we asked him about his declaration given in the portal Balkaninsight, where he said: "Macedonia now belongs to a category of "semi-secular"

states, which are neither one thing nor the other. Macedonia is not completely secular like France, for example, neither it is fully non-secular, like some eastern theocracy. It operates rather on the German model, where church and state are separated but where the state supports the church indirectly and 'invisibly'. When nationalists are in power, like VMRO for example, then that support is visible, direct and demonstrative," and he replied that he still stand to this statement.

Religious expert Ramadan Ramadani says that "the state backs the Macedonian Orthodox Church openly, in part to compensate for the Church's weak position internationally, in the Orthodox world. Because of non-recognition of the Macedonian Church by its sister churches and its exclusion from the Orthodox communion, it enjoys a unique position. There is a strange symbiosis between the state and the Church hierarchy in which they help each other to achieve their own interests. On the other hand, such a relationship between the Church and the state leads to an asymmetric form of secularity. What is not considered secular when it comes to the Church is always applied as secularity when it comes to the Islamic religious community", Ramadani said. An interview was also held with BobanMitevski, Chief of cabinet of the Head of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – Ohrid Archbishopric, and he was asked about the hypothesis that there is a tendency for desecularisation by the government side, but he said: "I think that an idea or initiative for desecularisation of the system does not exist. My personal opinion is that in Macedonia exists an attempt to present secularism as atheism, and for those structures it is convenient to redirect the thesis that we deal with desecularisation. Secularization is seen only in the fact that the Church should not interfere in the state issues, or the opposite. It has never happened the Church to say for which should be voted, and vice versa in the frames of church elections. Surely, there are issues where the Church, actually, religious communities and the state are in the same frequency, actually an accordance appears for the things of general context on which both sides are personally concerned".

Conclusions

All these case studies presented in this paper, as well as the citizens opinion through the conducted survey, go on the opposite direction regarding the definition of secularism, therefore, even though Macedonia by Constitution is defined as a secular state, in practice, its society is being affected by the unfair asymmetric politics, and in many cases goes on the opposite direction of secularism. But, even though its counter secularism (desecularism) cannot be proven expressly, as we would otherwise pretend that it has turned into a religious state, that is not true, and in the end we can conclude that Macedonia has a special status, because by infringing the secular rules from time to time, it turns into a semi-secular state, with a tendency of the Macedonian political parties to turn it into a religious state tomorrow that would represent only one religious community at the expense of the others.

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