PRISONERS OF CONSOCIATIONALISM?

BETWEEN GENDER EQUALITY AND ETHNIC CONFLICT IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA AND NORTH MACEDONIA

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ABSTRACT

Consociationalism is a type of power-sharing that has been implemented throughout peace-agreements in several civil conflicts during the last decades and proved to be successful in satisfying the major groups in dispute. Notwithstanding, feminist scholars claim that consociational settlements are detrimental for marginalized communities such as women, that are usually co-opted or ignored by state institutions that are framed to prioritize the main elite constituencies. However, saying that consociationalism is always unfavourable for women is limiting, not only because its features are not inherently against gender equality, but also because there is limited research regarding which intervening variables can induce consociational settlements in promoting women's rights. The thesis aims at filling this academic vacuum by investigating whether consociationalism promotes women's rights with the conditions of having a feminist civil society and the international community involved in women's empowerment. Bosnia-Herzegovina and North Macedonia are the case studies selected for this analysis, as they are both consociations that experienced a civil conflict and share many socio-historical similarities. Therefore, the research question is: *Does consociationalism impact gender equality? If so, under which conditions can consociationalism promote gender equality? Did Bosnia-Herzegovina, a corporative consociation, and North Macedonia, a hybrid consociationalism, promote gender equality between 2005 and 2018?*

INTRODUCTION

Civil conflicts have spread in numerous scenarios over the last decades and have created instability and insecurity not only domestically but also at the international level. Every time a civil war escalates, a key of concern is to find a way to overcome the conflict and create a peace agreement that can accommodate the major actors in the plethora. Consociationalism is a specific type of power-sharing that has proved to be a valid solution for this intricate issue in several situations, such as in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, Northern Ireland, Malaysia, and North Macedonia. Its theorist, Arendt Lijphart, formulized this specific type of power-sharing with the belief that majoritarianism is not suitable for divided societies, because it does not guarantee the participation of all the parties nor allocate rigid criteria for the distribution of resources (Lijphart, 1977). Majoritarianism, indeed, has "coherent single-party executives, a strong parliamentary opposition, and [a] close territorial link between MPs and their constituents", so its application may cause more harm than good in situations where communities demand long-term insurances to be represented (Reynolds, 2000: 157). Even if consociational agreements proved to be successful in accommodating the leading groups in dispute, there is considerable debate regarding the effect that consociationalism has on marginalized communities such as sexual minorities, minor ethnic or religious groups, and women (Stojanovic, 2018).

Feminist scholars have attributed a negative connotation to consociationalism regarding gender equality, because especially in patriarchal societies, entrenching the system of government over one main issue, by for instance allocating reserved seats and veto rights only to the constituencies, it may lead to the marginalization of fragile communities such as women (Kennedy, Pierson, and Thomson, 2016; Stojanovic, 2018; McCulloch, 2019). If consociational theorists hypothesized that a consociation with liberal features, such as limited territorial autonomy and ascriptive reserved seats in the Parliament, should incentivize the participation of marginalized communities (O'Leary, 2005), Northern Ireland is an example of liberal consociationalism in which women are still co-opted by the government (Nagle, 2016). Indeed, Nagle (2016) compared the corporative consociationalism of Lebanon with the liberal consociation of Northern Ireland and has concluded that both types of consociationalism end up in segregating marginalized categories.

Saying however that consociationalism is always harmful to women is limiting, mainly because until now, there has been limited research that investigated how certain variables, such as the international community and the civil society, may influence consociational settlements in advancing gender equality (Pierson and Thomson, 2018). Indeed, current research uses a top-down perspective; thus, excluding the contributions of anthropological feminists (Pierson and Thomson, 2018). The relevance of the thesis consists in addressing this academic vacuum by integrating a multi-layered perspective to analyze whether and under which conditions consociationalism promotes gender equality. As consociational settlements are increasingly used by policymakers to create peace agreements (Bogaards, Helms and Lijphart, 2019), understanding whether the former can be influenced to promote human rights is paramount. Both consociational theorists and feminist scholars, in fact, demand further theoretical development on the matter (Pierson and Thomson, 2018; Bogaards et al., 2019; McCulloch, 2019).

Bosnia-Herzegovina and North Macedonia are the two selected case studies in which the theory will be tested by using a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods. Bosnia is a classic example of corporative consociationalism with significant territorial autonomy and pre-determined reserved seats in state institutions (McCulloch, 2014). Macedonia, instead, is a hybrid between liberal and corporative consociation, as it does not entrench seats in the Parliament but still gives partial territorial autonomy and veto rights to constituencies (McCulloch, 2014). Because the case studies share historical, socio-economic, and geographic similarities, they are suitable for a comparison close to Mill's "most-similar-cases" method.

The research question, therefore, is*: Does consociationalism impact gender equality? If so, under which conditions can consociationalism promote gender equality? Did Bosnia-Herzegovina, a corporative consociation, and North Macedonia, a hybrid consociationalism, promote gender equality between 2005 and 2018?*

The core argument of the thesis is that consociationalism promotes gender equality under the conditions of having a feminist civil society and the international community involved in addressing women's rights. It argues, thus, that Macedonia and Bosnia achieved women's empowerment thanks to grassroots initiatives and the involvement of the international community between 2005 and 2018.

The thesis will firstly provide a literature review with the most relevant feminist schools of thought and theories that analyze consociationalism, feminist civil society and the international

community regarding gender equality. Theory and Methods will show the overall theoretical framework of the thesis, the operationalization of gender equality (politics, labour market, education, health, gender-based violence), the classification of the case studies and the methods used in the research. The thesis' analysis will firstly provide two chapters in which Macedonia and Bosnia will be respectively investigated, by using process tracing and focusing on the consociational settlement, the feminist civil society and the international community. Later, the thesis will provide a quantitative analysis of gender equality by comparing Bosnia and Macedonia during the studied timeframe. Lastly, findings and conclusions will be given.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The waves of feminism have shaped several schools of thought that have investigated both the reasons why gender inequality persists in societies and the strategies to adopt to achieve women's empowerment (Persadie, 2012). The first distinction that can be done is regarding the two, sometimes conflictual, approaches to achieve gender equality: liberal and anthropological feminism (Cudic, 2018). The former is a top-down approach that focuses on the institutional structure of the society including its legal framework and assumes that women's empowerment can be pursued by creating and reforming laws and political institutions (Persadie, 2012). On the other hand, anthropological feminism investigates the "social construction of gender" and assumes that the subjugation of women may be overcome throughout the localization of norms, feminist movements, and NGOs (Björkdahl, 2012; Cudic, 2018).

More specifically regarding the "top-down" theories of feminism, an established one is feminist jurisprudence (West, 2019). Emerged last century, it assumes that legal frameworks are both the cause for gender inequality but also the means that can overcome women's subjugation (West, 2019). Liberal feminists see the law as a double-edged sword and demand that women must be treated as equally as men without any form of discrimination (Persadie, 2012). Over time, their perspective has been integrated with novel contributions: radical feminism and intersectionality. Thanks to the former, feminist jurisprudence started considering the importance of undertaking positive actions in areas in which women are the most vulnerable, such as regarding gender-based violence (West, 2019). Radical feminist has also stressed the importance of gender quotas to avoid the under-representation of women in the political field (West, 2019). Intersectional feminism, instead, has taken a step forward in claiming that both radical and liberal feminists are too Western-focused and only represent "middle-classes, white and heterosexual" females (West, 2019:18). Indeed, they demand that, for instance, the perspectives of brown and disabled women are also taken into consideration for the creation of ad hoc laws that fight discrimination and exclusion (West, 2019). Nowadays, theorists and policymakers use a joint combination of these schools of thought; thus, they work on gender equity in the law (liberalism), provide gender quotas and protection against gender-based violence (radicalism) and multiple discrimination for gender and sexual minorities (intersectionality).

In tandem with feminist jurisprudence, feminist constitutionalism took momentum with the creation of the resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council and constitutional engineering, by investigating how the latter influences gender equality and how the participation of women in peace-agreements can foster women's political and social empowerment in societies (Irving, 2017). In particular, consociationalism has been investigated by feminists, as it represents the current most used form of constitutional design in peace-agreements (Bogaards et al., 2019). Consociationalism has been theorized by Arendt Lijphart in his "Democracy in Plural Societies" (1977), by focusing on conflicts caused by a separation of social groups that can be driven by "religious, ideological, linguistic, regional, cultural, racial, or ethnic" causes (Lijphart, 1977: 3-4). Specifically, four pillars need to be followed to implement this type of power-sharing, namely: grand coalition, proportional representation, territorial autonomy, and mutual veto system (Lijphart, 1977: 25-52). By implementing this formula, consociationalism could be able to satisfy all groups that proportionally claim political power and promote homogeneity in communities to mitigate inter-group cleavages (Bogaards et al., 2019).

The main caveats that the literature found regarding classical consociationalism is that it does not incentivize the cooperation between groups that remain segregated, it views ethnicity in a primordial way by seeing the former as a fixed characteristic, and it marginalizes groups that do not identify with the constituencies (Stojanović, 2018). Because of these problems, McGarry and O'Leary (2007) have contributed to the development of the consociational theory by creating two sub-categories of it. The classical consociational model was redefined as corporative, that "accommodates groups according to ascriptive criteria, such as ethnicity or religion, assuming that group identities are fixed and that groups are both internally homogeneous and externally bounded" (McGarry and O'Leary, 2007: 675). The liberal consociational model, instead, " rewards whatever salient political identities emerge in democratic elections, whether these are based on ethnic or religious groups, or subgroup or trans-group identities" (McGarry and O'Leary, 2007: 675). Regarding consociationalism dealing with ethnic cleavages, ethnicity can be pre-determined or self-determined (O'Leary, 2005), and a constructivist conception of ethnicity foster liberal consociationalism. For them, liberal consociationalism could accommodate a more substantial part of the population, as in liberal consociations, grand coalitions can be complete, concurrent or weak, which means that consociational executives don't need to be fully represented by ethnic groups (O'Leary, 2005).

When assessing the impact of consociationalism in women's empowerment, feminist have usually taken a negative stand by claiming that in most of the consociations created in the last fifty years, women are underrepresented and marginalized in the society (Pierson and Thomson, 2018; Deiana, 2018). They have claimed that because the political system works around the major groups in dispute and their salient characteristic, women have found it difficult to create a space for their cause and obtain priority in the political agenda. Lijphart, McGarry and O'Leary have recognized the underrepresentation of women in these consociations but have not explicitly linked this problem with the constitutional system (Kennedy et al., 2016). However, they have stated that in liberal consociations, gender equality can be achieved easier because it is more prone to accept marginalized groups that can gain social and political power (O'Leary, 2005). Feminist theorists initially agreed with this statement, as the liberal component can theoretically serve women's interests better by allowing trans-group identities coming into power and a more inclusive definition of citizenship (Kennedy et al., 2016; Stojanović, 2018; McCulloch, 2019). In the later research, however, this claim has been confuted, for instance, by comparing the corporative consociation of Lebanon and the liberal consociational system of Northern Ireland (Nagle, 2016; Byrne and McCulloch, 2018). Both systems did not incentivize women's emancipation, as they remain confined at the margin of the political agenda, and liberal consociationalism lack cooperative incentives for groups' reconciliation as well as transitional justice (Nagle, 2016; Byrne and McCulloch, 2018). Most of these theories, however, have discarded the value of consociationalism for women without integrating compounding variables that can better explain females' condition (Pierson and Thomson, 2018). For instance, just by looking at the political system, they have not considered how this is influenced by the international community and the grassroots movements (Pierson and Thomson, 2018).

Regarding the international community, indeed, it frames the national decision making as well. International institutions such as the United Nations and the European Union bound states to implement international law norms related to liberal democratic values by pressuring them to ratify and implement international Conventions (Basu, 2015). Especially in the case of countries that aim to enter the European Union, such as in the Western Balkans, the EU conditionality plays its part in promoting gender equality (Spehar, 2012). Feminists also recognize the value of the international community in enforcing the feminist civil society by sponsoring projects and sustaining feminist NGOs financially, and transnational networks help women in gaining expertise and connections (Basu, 2015). However, foreign interventions can also have drawbacks (Nimu, 2018). NGO-ization,

indeed, is a process in which the civil society becomes financially dependent on international grants, and donors force local NGOs to pursue short-term programs without considering specific needs nor incentivizing feminist activism; thus, women's movements remain a weak actor (Nimu, 2018). Having said that, looking at the international community helps explain situations in which, even if a government is unwilling to promote gender equality, it still possesses a robust gender legal framework due to international pressure.

Another bulk to understand gender equality is to integrate a feminist top-down approach with anthropological feminism (Cudic, 2018). As previously stated, the latter values the importance of grassroots movements in shaping the political agenda and forcing governments to act for women. In particular, the feminist civil society is formed by feminist activists and organizations that work at the local level by spreading awareness across the population regarding women's issues (Beckwith, 2007). The feminist civil society creates pressure to state institutions to implement laws, and it serves as a consultant actor when politicians must make decisions regarding women's rights, providing knowledge and expertise (Weldon, 2004). Therefore, the relationship between the government and the feminist civil society is mutual, as the former gives-precludes the formation of women's movements and the latter forces the government of being accountable regarding gender equality (Weldon, 2004).

To sum up, the thesis aims at creating a link between the liberal and feminist anthropological perspectives regarding consociationalism. The research field still lacks a comprehensive investigation of women's condition in consociational settlements, that are usually defined as unfavourable for gender equality without deepening into the voices of women in *these societies* and overlooking the power of the international community in ameliorating their conditions.

THEORY AND METHODS

Theory

Does consociationalism impact gender equality? If so, under which conditions can consociationalism promote gender equality? Did Bosnia-Herzegovina, a corporative consociation, and North Macedonia, a hybrid consociationalism, promote gender equality between 2005 and 2018?

Consociationalism promotes gender equality with the requirements of having a feminist civil society and the international community that are actively involved in empowering women. Policymaking, indeed, is a process where the national, international, and local levels are intertwined, meaning that bottom-up forces, such as the civil society, and supranational entities shape national politics as well (Weldon, 2004). Moreover, because consociationalism is not inherently against women's rights, even in consociational settlements where political leaders create a hostile environment for women (Mackay and Murtagh, 2019), gender equality is achieved provided the abovementioned conditions.

CORE ARGUMENT: Consociationalism promotes gender equality under the conditions of having a feminist civil society and the international community that are actively involved in empowering women.

Consociationalism is not always detrimental to women (Mackay and Murtagh, 2019). Theoretically, consociational institutions and women's empowerment share the goal of providing representation and equality between groups (Byrne and McCulloch, 2012). The valorization of ethnic and religious identities is also not necessarily negative for women, as they are not mutually exclusive (Mackay and Murtagh, 2019). Consociational arrangements, however, become detrimental for women's rights when a patriarchal structure of the society already exists, the peace agreement is a (male) elitarian process achieved without considering women's needs and the constituents voluntary securitize the constitutional framework to allow ethnicity to be "the only" issue at stake (Kennedy et al., 2016; McCulloch, 2019). In Bosnia and North Macedonia, the creation of their peace agreements have been an elite-driven process where the population was not consulted, so the constitutional implementation has remained an arena of contentious politics where ethnonational politicians exploited the securitization of ethnicity to stay in power (Deiana, 2018; Gjuzelov and Hadjievska, 2020). Consequently, non-related ethnic issues such as women's

rights, environmental problems, and excluded minority groups such as Jews and Romani have become of secondary importance, resolving the (primary) ethnic disputes has been the main priority (Stojanović, 2018). In both countries, moreover, women are portrayed as the ones who must take care of children and not enter in the "corrupted" political arena (Deiana, 2018; Gjuzelov and Hadjievska, 2020). By using patriarchal rhetoric, women are marginalized or co-opted, and their emancipation is postponed for the sake of their families and ethnic communities.

Liberal consociationalism should theoretically be a better option for women's emancipation because it does not reserve seats of the constituents' groups and lets marginalized communities enter in institutions (McCulloch, 2019). Allowing trans-identities parties should encourage the proliferation of multiple ideologies and not entrench the political agenda with only one issue (O'Leary, 2005). In the cases of Northern Ireland and Macedonia, however, the liberal features of consociationalism did not end up in this way (Byrne and McCulloch, 2018). Liberal and corporative consociations, in fact, share the pillars of territorial autonomy, grand coalitions, veto rights for the constituents and proportional representation of them (McGarry and O'Leary, 2007). In Macedonia, decentralization based on ethnic affiliation has led to the progressive ethnic homogenization of territories, and even if grand coalitions can be formed between multi-ethnic parties, the latter has barely existed (Marolov, 2013). Veto rights is also a prerogative of the leading groups in disputes, and the Ohrid agreement does not create effective conciliative channels (Marolov, 2013). As in Bosnia, intersectional minorities face multiple discrimination whether they are sexual minorities, part of minor ethnic communities or simply live in a territory where their ethnic affiliation is at the margins (Kotevska, 2016). Thus, independently whether liberal or corporative, in Bosnia and Macedonia, the political plethora has marginalized women's issues and securitized ethnicity with a robust patriarchal inclination (Deiana, 2018; Gjuzelov and Hadjievska, 2020).

A: Consociational governments in Macedonia and Bosnia have undermined women's rights by scarcely consulting the feminist civil society, inefficiently implementing the gender legal framework, and using patriarchal rhetoric.

Feminist civil society in consociational settlements is an arena in which women gather for providing social services, taking political actions, and creating a network that goes beyond the affiliation of the constituencies (Pierson and Thomson, 2018). In consociations where women are marginalized or co-opted in state institutions, strengthening their power in the public plethora is still possible throughout the civil society (Pierson and Thomson, 2018). The formation of a feminist

civil society is not necessarily equated with the avoidance of ethnicity, as there are women that gather for their gender and ethnic rights (Helms, 2013). Moreover, in post-conflict countries where the international community has actively intervened, women's organizations can build ties with the latter for gaining expertise, receiving resources, and connecting with transnational networks (Helms, 2013). Consequently, a feminist civil society spreads awareness across the population for achieving women's rights, providing services to women such as protection against gender-based violence and psychological support even when the government is not dealing with these duties (Mackay and Murtagh, 2019). Feminist activists also pressure the state of creating and implementing gender laws (Deiana, 2016). Overall, the feminist civil society is an alternative source of power that allows women to promote gender equality even where the leading consociational institutions overlook their empowerment (Deiana, 2016; Pierson and Thomson, 2018; Mackay and Murtagh, 2019).

B: A feminist civil society promotes gender equality by inducing the consociational government in advancing the gender legal framework and being accountable for women's rights. It also spreads awareness across the population by providing social services and doing feminist activism.

The international community is another actor that fosters gender equality when limiting NGO-ization (Basu, 2015). Peace agreements in the last thirty years are usually negotiated with the mediation of the international community, that works for peacebuilding and implementing the new constitution (Keil and Bieber, 2009). The United Nations, OSCE and the European Union invest resources in enforcing the civil society and promoting human rights', and gender equality is one of them (Basu, 2015; Fraczek, Huszka and Körtvélyesi, 2016). Especially countries that are in the process of entering in the European Union, such as Bosnia and Macedonia, they are required to harmonize their legal framework with the *Acquis Communautaire*, and the EU conditionality influences their national agenda (Spehar, 2012). Other foreign actors, such as the Swedish government, has also invested in gender equality's projects in the Balkans and is a partner of women's NGOs abroad (Anger et al., 2012). In Bosnia and North Macedonia, the leverage of the international community has induced their government to create and (partly) implement a gender legal framework aligned with EU standards (Spehar, 2012). It should be noted that many women NGOs have also been created with foreign funding, and this has led to partial NGO-ization where feminist activism is not strong (Gr⃠deland, 2010). Notwithstanding, the international community

is a powerful ally for women's activists that jointly push the government to advance gender equality (Basu, 2015).

C: *The international community promotes gender equality by using soft-power: pressuring countries to create and implement gender legal frameworks and enforcing the feminist civil society, whether limiting NGO-ization.*

Definitions

Before explaining the methods that will be used in the thesis, it is essential to clarify three definitions related to gender: gender equality, gender identity and women's empowerment. Indeed, "gender equality means that women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and for contributing to, and benefiting from, economic, social, cultural and political development" (UNESCO, 2003). It is important not to confuse the latter with gender identity that "refers to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms" (Statistics New Zeeland, 2014: 9). When talking about gender equality, this does not refer to women and men concerning the assigned sex at birth, but with their identification of gender. Moreover, women's empowerment means that "women are allowed to participate fully in social, political and economic spheres of life" (Manuere and Phiri, 2018: 58). If gender equality is the goal, women's empowerment is the means used to achieve equality between men and women.

Regarding the operationalization of gender equality, this is done by focusing on the most salient issues that the literature found about gender gaps between women and men, and triangulating how the leading gender indices such as the United Nations indices and the Global Gender inequality Index of the World Bank have operationalized gender equality (Alexander and Welzel, 2007; Barnat et al., 2019). Therefore, five categories will be considered: politics, labour market, education, health, and gender-based violence. The choice of the gender indicators also takes into consideration the data available for the case studies, so for instance, female participation in local government and the informal economy have not been included because, even if they would have been relevant to analyze, the consistent lack of quantitative data about them does not allow their inclusion.

Thus, gender equality is defined as:

POLITICS	LABOUR MARKET	EDUCATION	HEALTH	GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE
• women's seats in the Parliament	• women in the formal economy • gender gap in unemployment	• gender gap in educational attainment • women graduated in tertiary education	• maternal mortality ratio • adolescent fertility rate	• psychological, physical and sexual violence against women

Case studies selection

The reason why Bosnia and Macedonia have been chosen for the research is twofold. Firstly, they have been selected for their similarity. These countries both share a past of being a member of Ex-Yugoslavia, they have experienced its disaggregation and the consequential instability of becoming independent and dealing with internal ethnic conflicts. Moreover, both are Balkan states and have implemented consociationalism thanks to a peace agreement. Secondly, it has been chosen to compare a corporative with a hybrid consociation for prioritizing the development of new research in a region that is currently overlooked. Studying them will contribute to the literature and revitalize interest in the Balkans, that continues to be an unstable region.

Following McCulloch's (2014) and Bieber and Keil's (2009) classification, Bosnia is a corporative consociation whereas Macedonia is a hybrid. This is demonstrated by analyzing the four pillars of consociationalism: proportionality, mutual veto system, grand coalition, and autonomy. Whether a pillar is structured in a way that only the major groups are represented, it is corporative. Instead, the liberal component means guaranteeing small minorities' rights or not having ethnicity as a criterium.

Regarding proportional representation, Bosnia follows national and territorial representation and is divided into two entities, the Federation of Bosnia (Bosniaks, Croats) (FBiH) and the Respublika Srpska (Serbs) (RS). State, entity and cantonal levels have reserved seats for the three Constituents (Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats) (Keil and Bieber, 2009). The House of People, one of the two Chambers of the Bosnian Parliament, does not have reserved seats for other minorities, and the House of Representatives has two-thirds of representatives from the Federation and the rest from the Respublika Srpska (Keil and Bieber, 2009). On the other side, Macedonia does not have reserved seats for ethnic minorities and instead pursues PR "with electoral districts designed to ensure minority participation in the state legislature" (Keil and Bieber, 2009: 347).

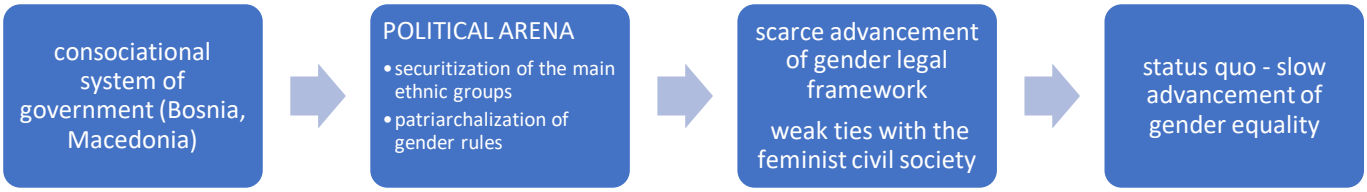
About grand-coalitions, Macedonia does not formally require power-sharing coalitions at the executive in contrast with the formal requirement in the Bosnian Constitution (McCulloch, 2014). Consequently, grand coalitions in Macedonia are informal, and excluded minority groups can form pre-election alliances (McCulloch, 2014). In Bosnia, both at state and cantonal level, having ministers from all three constituencies is required (Keil and Bieber, 2009). Parties bargaining in Bosnia is also dealt with the Office of the High Representative (OHR), an international actor that must mediate between the three constituencies (Keil and Bieber, 2009).

Macedonia has specifically defined the “areas” where veto can be applied and a permanent forum for mitigating ethnic disputes (Keil and Bieber, 2009). Bosnia, instead, has stipulated the notion of “vital interests” for veto rights and temporal panels for the negotiation between communities (ibid.). Lastly, the Macedonian Constitution does not recognize territorial autonomy based on ethnicity but allows decentralization and the use of languages spoken by more than 20% of its population in state institutions (Keil and Bieber, 2009; Marolov, 2013).

Methods

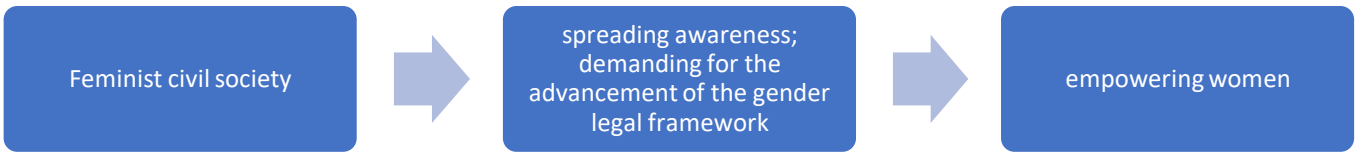
Regarding methods, process tracing will be used to test the causal relationship between consociationalism and gender equality, where the former is the independent variable, and the latter is the dependent variable. Then, the two intervening variables will be included in the process. Because process tracing means finding the mechanism that relates the two variables, this will analyze the (created and implemented) women's legal framework. This follows Kelsen's conceptualization of the legal system and the fact that constitutions, laws and institutions are positioned in a different level of the "legal hierarchy" where the constitution is the foundation, laws derive from it and institutions are created thanks to the implementation of regulations (Riofrío, 2019; Schroff, 2018). To implement the constitution, the consociational framework must be interpreted by judges and politicians that can exploit the momentum to promote private gains (Regilme, 2019). Thus, interpreting the constitution is not a neutral act as it is contextualized in a socio-political plethora (Regilme, 2019), so another section will also analyze the relationship between the political arena and gender equality, and whether women have been integrated or co-opted in the system.

Consociational settlements and gender equality:[1]



After having examined the consociational institutions, the thesis will investigate the mutual relationship between the state and the feminist civil society. It is expected that feminist civil society influences state institutions, so it will examine whether the former makes a difference in terms of counterbalancing consociational restrains and forcing the government to be accountable.

Feminist civil society:



The analysis will continue by exploring whether the international community has actively played in the promotion of gender equality in Bosnia and North Macedonia. What will be examined is if the international community has used soft power to force these countries to sign and integrate a gender legal framework, and which role it has regarding the advancement of the feminist civil society. The thesis will also highlight the responses of these nations about international involvement.

International community:

[1] The chart is referring to the case studies and not to consociational agreements in general

The quantitative analysis will be done by triangulating the gender indicators of the United Nations Development Goal (UNPD), the World Bank database and the State Statistical Offices of Bosnia and North Macedonia. Several other indices cannot be used for the following reasons: a) they lack a substantial amount of data regarding Bosnia and North Macedonia from the period between 2005 and 2018 (Women, Peace and Security Index; Gender Equity Index; Global Gender Gap Index; Gender Equality Index) or b) instead of calculating the outcome (level of gender equality), they address the discrimination in social institutions (SIGI). The indices of UNPD (Gender empowerment measure-GEM, and Gender Development Index-GDI), instead, cover the timeframe from 2005 and 2010, whereas, the Gender Inequality Index, i.e. GII, has been used for the timeframe 2010-2018. GII, in fact, substituted the other two indices in 2010, because GEM was considered with a “strong urban elite bias” (UNDP, 2010: 90), and GDI is often misinterpreted as it does not directly measure gender inequality (ibid.). The thesis uses some indicators of GEM and GDI instead of their aggregated indices because both do not possess aggregated data, i.e. the overall “score”, for Bosnia. Instead, the research utilizes the gender indicators and the aggregated index of GII that measures health, empowerment, and labour market (UNDP, 2019). Moreover, gender-based violence is analyzed thanks to some OSCE (2019a, 2019b) and UNWOMEN (2019a, 2019b) surveys. Overall, the triangulation of several databases permits to have a comprehensive "picture" of women's condition in the case studies over the years.

Talking about resources, not only Ohrid's and Dayton's Constitutions but also several domestic laws regarding gender equality will be analyzed. Various reports from the European Union, the United Nations, and NGOs will be taken into consideration, not to mention secondary sources such as journalistic analysis and academic papers relevant to the research.

THE HYBRID CONSOCIATION OF NORTH MACEDONIA

Macedonian politics and gender equality

Women in North Macedonia have experienced a non-congruent process of empowerment over the last decades. The country possesses a developed legal framework regarding women's rights, with a Constitution that has liberal features and a multitude of laws and operational plans (European Commission, 2019). However, there is a problematic lack of implementation of the former that leads to unawareness across the population and state institutions remain unaccountable (Korunovska et al., 2015). In the first years after the civil war, Macedonian state institutions were weak, and most of the effort went to implement the Constitution (Koinova, 2011). Both the international community and the political parties focused on assuring a dialogue between Macedonians and Albanians to avoid re-escalation of violence (Koinova, 2011). Women's issues, therefore, were mostly overlooked to prioritize state-building, so the small advancement of the gender legal framework did not end up in the actual implementation of it (McEvoy, 2014). For instance, with the implementation of gender quotas (30%) in public institutions, women did not have real political empowerment, as they were usually co-opted by parties and not nominated in the most salient electoral lists (Korunovska et al., 2015). Where gender quotas were not reserved, such as for Mayors, women's presence was inexistent (Korunovska et al., 2015). Parties were mainly based on ethnic belonging with no other salient issues that came at stake (McEvoy, 2014).

From 2007 to 2017, human rights were backlashed, with a Nationalist party at the government that ostracized civil society formation, inter-ethnic dialogue, and Constitution implementation (Gjuzelov and Hadjievska, 2020). VMRO-DPMNE with DUI – Macedonian and Albanian parties respectively – exploited the economic recession and the ambiguous translation of OFA - the original version is only in English - to create contested narratives (Gjuzelov and Hadjievska, 2020). Peculiarly, though, this illiberal practice stimulated the consolidation of a strong political opposition led by SDSM, that from being a Macedonian central-leftist party, started to contest VMRO-DPMNE's operate (Kotevska and Spasovska, 2019). If VMRO-DPMNE and DUI promoted the Constitution as a realm to conserve Macedonian traditions and remain divided, the political opposition opened for more inter-ethnic dialogue, civil society's protection and viewed the law as the milestone for equality between all citizens (Kajevska, 2018). Women's rights, as well as civil rights, become a focus of contentious politics, and women were the target of the government (Kajevska, 2018). With the feminist civil society not listened by state institutions, juridical courts

dependent on politicians and activists openly attacked by the media, women's empowerment refrained. Nevertheless, the new government (2017) led by SDSM has put women's rights and multi-ethnicity in their agenda (Gjuzelov and Hadjievska, 2020). However, if this will induce a long-term partnership between the feminist civil society and future governments is yet to be seen (Kajevska, 2018).

Gender legal framework

The legal hierarchy of Macedonia is the Constitution, international law, national laws, and bylaws (European Commission, 2019). Regarding the Constitution, Article 9 prescribes equality for all citizens withstanding, above all, sex (Efremova, 2012). The Ohrid Agreement does not have a separated provision regarding the equality between men and women (Efremova, 2012). The Constitution maintains a gender-neutral language, though it establishes some women's rights such as the freedom to decide for procreation and that the country must conduct a human population policy to "achieve sustainable economic and social development" (art.41) (Efremova, 2012). Protection of motherhood in the workplace is guaranteed in Article 42, and the Constitution establishes the prohibition of gender discrimination (art. 54) (Efremova, 2012). For the protection of constitutional rights, it provides a series of bodies such as the regular Court system, the Constitutional Court, and the Ombudsman (European Commission, 2019).

The Law on Equal Opportunities on Women and Men was initially created in 2006, though because of a non-aligned definition of gender discrimination with the EU acquis; it was amended in 2008 and 2015 (Efremova, 2012). This law is the bulk of the legal protection regarding gender equality, and it establishes equal treatment and opportunities, the prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination, and it defines gender mainstreaming (Efremova, 2012). By applying the law in both public and private sectors, it differentiates between "basic" and "special" measures, where the latter refers to temporary measures to tackle gender inequality in specific areas due to historical and socio-economic circumstances (Efremova, 2012). The law provides gender quotas in all public sections that have risen from 30% to 40% in 2015 (European Commission, 2019). Moreover, it defines the competence of implementing the law to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (the most crucial gender institution in Macedonia) (Efremova, 2012). Lastly, every eight years, the Assembly must adopt a Strategy for Gender Equality, followed by the creation of a periodical National Action Plan (Efremova, 2012).

The Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination is another fundamental law that defines direct and indirect discrimination, though it was emended in 2018 after years of intensive political debate about the extension of protection on discrimination related to sexual orientation (European Commission, 2019). It also establishes the concept of intersectional discrimination (European Commission, 2019). The Criminal Code guarantees gender equality in Article 137, and the Electoral Code has been amended to implement gender quotas, which are still not applied for Mayors and in the composition of the Government (Korunovska et al., 2015).

From 2006, Macedonia has progressively adopted the Acquis Communautaire. Apart from the abovementioned laws, the other transported EU directives in the national framework are the Law on Protection of Harassment in the Work Place (2013), the Law on Labour Relations (2005), the Law on Social Protection (2009) and the Law on Health Protection (2012) (European Commission, 2019).

The Macedonian legal framework has stipulated the creation of National Action Plans for the implementation of the Law on Equal Opportunities: three NAP have been created (2007-2012), (2013-2018), (2018-2020) (Carovska, 2018). Moreover, the Strategy for Gender Equality (2013-2020) is another critical operation plan (Carovska, 2018). Lastly, the ratification of the CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and the Istanbul Convention has led to the implementation of specific action plans (Carovska, 2018).

Feminist civil society

Historically, the civil society in Macedonia has been underdeveloped due to the legacy of Yugoslavia, that being a single-party regime disincentivized the mobilization of Macedonian throughout different channels (Spehar, 2012). With a patriarchal state structure, the only achievements were regarding the participation in the labour market and the Abortion Law (1974) (Spehar, 2012). Only in the nineties, the first women's organizations were created such as the Organisation of the Organizations of Women of Macedonia (OOWM), and the Albanian Women's Association of Macedonia (AWAM), but the bulk of the feminist civil society has been constructed after 2001 due to foreign funds, mainly in the form of NGOs (Kolozova and Savevska, 2019).

Thanks to women's activists, the government adopted gender quotas in 2005 and the Gender Equality Law, as they mobilized in streets and created the Women's Lobby in the Parliament (Nacevska and Lokar, 2017). Apart from these achievements, they continued to lack a grassroots

ramification, as the leading organizations were in the capital and focused on social services; thus, creating the problem of NGO-ization (Gr⃠deland, 2010). Feminist civil society also started to be ostracized in 2007, with the election victory of VMRO-DPMNE and DUI that adopted discriminatory rhetoric against women and sexual minorities (Kotevska and Spasovska, 2019).

As they were portrayed as "puppets" of the West and SDSM, the feminist civil society reacted by organizing protests and strengthening their voice (Kotevska and Spasovska, 2019; Gjuzelov and Hadjievska, 2020). Especially when the government forced the Amendment of the Abortion Law in 2013, feminist activists organized the campaign "I am not falling for it", in which the associations HERA, Akcija Združenska and the Coalition "Margini" were present (Kotevska and Spasovska, 2019). The Abortion Law's Amendment passed anyway, and this induced twenty NGOs to create a Platform for Gender Equality (Kotevska and Spasovska, 2019). The government's ostracism also incentivized the collaboration between women's CSOs and the main oppositional party, SDSM, that from 2013 have explicitly stood for women's emancipation (Kotevska and Spasovska, 2019). For instance, SDSM opposed the Abortion Law's Amendment and asked at the Constitutional Court to assess the legitimacy of VMRO-DPMNE's act (Kotevska and Spasovska, 2019). Further illiberal episodes of VMRO-DPMNE have consisted of chancing Gender Studies with Family Studies, and the proposal of constitutional amendments to ban non-heterosexual marriages and cohabitation (Kajevska, 2018; Gjuzelov and Hadjievska, 2020). The latter, fortunately, was blocked by the women activists in the Parliament, and thanks to grassroots mobilization in streets (Kajevska, 2018).

After VMRO-DPMNE's leader removal during the "Colourful Revolution" and SDSM's electoral victory, women's condition is ameliorated (Nacevska and Lokar, 2017). The current government has abolished the Amendment of the Abortion Law, increased gender quota of 40% and listened to feminist civil society's opinion (European Commission, 2019). Remarkably, in 2017, Robert Alagjozovski, Minister of Culture, gave the opening speech during the Pride Weekend (Tadić, Anđelković and Vrbaški, 2018). Consequently, the Macedonian "state capture" has induced women in gathering for their rights, protesting the government's restrictions, and strengthening their network (Bieber, 2018).

Regarding intersectionality, women's projects have partially overlooked it. For instance, the transgender Roma community feels unsatisfied about the government and NGOs, that create "monolithic" programs without grasping the intersectional needs of the group (Kotevska, 2016). Romani women, who are the most affected by gender-based violence, are unfortunately unable to

achieve the same support as other ethnic categories because they usually live in rural areas (Kotevska, 2016). Notwithstanding, things are ameliorating as more programs have been created for Romani Women, and the LGBT community is increasingly cooperating with feminist activists (Tadic et al., 2018).

Overall, the feminist civil society in North Macedonia has been fundamental for promoting the gender legal framework, such as gender quotas and the Gender Equality Law. Women activists were extremely helpful also in fighting against the patriarchal practices of the former government and in cooperating with the oppositional party SDSM. Further work must be done to limit NGO-ization and expand intersectional perspectives, but still, the presence of the feminist civil society has made a difference for Macedonian women's rights.

International Community

The main international actor involved in Macedonia is the European Union (Spehar, 2012). Before the civil conflict, the EU maintained a low profile, but when the war escalated, it became "the guardian" of the Ohrid Peace Agreement (OFA) (Koinova, 2011). The EU was present during the Ohrid's negotiations and its leverage has progressively intensified, as Macedonia became an official candidate for the EU enlargement in 2005 (Koinova, 2011). Due to the name dispute with Greece, the relationship between Macedonian politicians and the EU has been controversial (Koinova, 2011), but national leaders continue to be eager to enter the EU, so they have aligned with its recommendation even in the most "Eurosceptic" phases of the previous government (Vasilev, 2011; Bieber, 2018).

Regarding women's rights, not only the EU but also other foreign actors have actively worked for women's empowerment in Macedonia. For instance, OSCE has created several programs related to peacebuilding and the protection of marginalized communities, and at the same time, the Open Society Foundation and USAID have financed the strengthening of the civil society and women's rights (Anger et al., 2012; Kolozova et al., 2019). About foreign countries, the Swedish government has been the most proactive since 2000 in developing projects aimed at enforcing the Macedonian Ombudsman, women's leadership and intersectional groups such as Romani women (Anger et al., 2012). Kvinna till Kvinna is, indeed, a Swedish organization that provides useful policy reports, social services, and it envisages programs in which gender equality is the main goal (Anger et al., 2012).

Having said this, the European Union is still the most powerful international actor in Macedonia regarding women's empowerment (Spehar, 2012). In the last decades, it has provided the most substantial amount of funding for strengthening the feminist civil society and influenced the government in adopting gender laws (Spehar, 2012). The EU has not only stressed the importance of implementing its directive into the national legal framework, but it has also created specific Gender Action Plans with the collaboration of local activists; thus, "forcing" the government to consider civil society's recommendation (Spehar, 2012). Being part of transnational networks, such the Women's Lobby, is also an EU's merit, as the feminist civil society uses the EU enlargement process as a chance for improving women's condition (Spehar, 2012). Moreover, the EU has several times stressed the importance of considering intersectionality when creating gender equality's projects, and it has proactively induced the government in emending the Anti-discrimination Law (European Commission, 2019).

There are, however, some drawbacks regarding the international community's actions. More broadly, the phenomenon of NGO-ization is problematic for the real advancement of the feminist civil society, as many women's CSOs complain about the fact that foreign donors have applied short-terms programs that are unsuitable for the real socio-economic development (Gr⊘deland, 2010). Besides, in the first years after the conflict, the EU mainly dealt with inter-ethnic reconciliation and political parties' disputes (Koinova, 2011). This has sent confusing incentives to Macedonian politicians, that received the carrot instead of the steak even if they were deficient in implementing human rights' provisions (Koinova, 2011; Bieber, 2018). The EU's behaviour changed in the last decade, which took a more durable stand for protecting women's rights and induced the government to implement gender laws; thus, expanding its conditionality leverage (Bieber, 2018).

Taking all together into account, the international community has helped Macedonian women in strengthening the feminist civil society, let this be heard by the government and forced the latter in creating a robust gender legal framework (Spehar, 2012). Whether the first years after the conflict were spent on ethnic mediation (Koinova, 2011), its overall contribution has been to create one of the most advanced gender legal frameworks in the Western Balkans and protect activists against the former government's ostracism.

THE CORPORATIVE CONSOCIATION OF BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Bosnian politics and gender equality

Since the end of the civil war, ethnonational parties have ruled in Bosnia and consistently securitized the main ethnic constituencies; thus, marginalizing minority groups and non-ethnic issues (Mackay and Murtagh, 2019). The process of democratization is slow as the population continue to live with the scars of the conflict (Deiana, 2018). Transitional justice is barely existent, the juridical institutions cannot be considered fully autonomous, and politicians create contested narratives of Dayton (Berry, 2018). Because apathy is spread across the population, the street protests of 2008 and 2014 have dubitably created long-term effects, with politicians that intimidated them of violent repression, and the created Plenum eventually became another arena of ethnic contestation (Murtagh, 2016).

In this plethora, gender equality is at the margin of politics for several reasons. Nationalism works in tandem with its "patriarchalization", in which politicians push for a traditional division of gender roles where women are seen as mothers and wives (Björkdahl, 2012). The creation of gender quotas has slowly improved female's political representation as most of the parties continue to co-opt women and relegate at the bottom of the electoral lists (Aganović et al., 2015). Just a few parties, such as Naša Stranka and SDP, effectively consider gender equality and intersectionality, but they are too "weak" to make a difference (Aganović et al., 2015). Besides, the lack of transitional justice gives politicians the opportunity of exploiting gender narratives to create a "hierarchy of victimhood" (Berry, 2018). Bosniak women raped during the war are usually portrayed as passive victims that resemble the "irrational" atrocity committed by Bosnian Serbs, without considering that Serbian and Croatian women who have suffered as well (Berry, 2018). The legal system is also not well harmonized, as until some years ago, victims of sexual violence in Respublika Srpska would demonstrate that *60%* of their body was affected of injuries in contrast to the Bosnian Federation that does not require so (Berry, 2018).

Political-religious nexus creates further problems for sexual minorities (Swimelar, 2019). The queer Sarajevo Festival of 2008 was an event of extreme discrimination, as counterdemonstrators severely beat the organizers in revenge for having planned the event during Ramadan (Swimelar, 2019). Nor the police or politicians helped the victims who instead continued to be marginalized by

a government that contrasted the adoption of the Anti-discrimination Law related to sexual orientation (Swimelar, 2019).

Bosnia continues to lack positive peace, with multi-ethnic parties that cannot find a place in an entrenched political system that negates equal opportunities for non-Constituents groups, and it is further weakened by secessionist claims of SNSD's leader, Dodik (Bieber, 2018). Women, in all this, see their body objectified with victimhood and patriarchal stereotypes, and intersectionality remains a not-listened request (Kotevska, 2016; Berry, 2018). To sum up, SNSD (Serbian), DZ (Croatian), SDA (Bosniak), SBiH (Bosniak) are the main parties that continue to ethnically lead the country since Dayton (Aybet and Bieber, 2011), and gender inequality is just one out of many unresolved issues that the population must cope with.

Gender legal framework

The Dayton peace agreement is composed of twelve Annexes, where Annex 4 is the Constitution. In tandem with Annex 6 ("Facilities and the institutions related to the supervision of the application of human rights"), these are the most important constitutional provisions for women's rights (Szasz, 1996). During the peace-agreement, the only women present were translators or interpreters, so the negotiation was a male-driven process (Aganović et al., 2015). The Dayton Constitution uses a gender-neutral language, in which the Preamble refers to the Constituent people (Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs) and then gives a vague reference to "Others", i.e. all the other minorities (K till Kvinna, 2000; Stojanović, 2018).

Among other Treaties, the peace agreement refers to the CEDAW (1979) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) (K till Kvinna, 2000). Concerning Annex 4 (Constitution), the Article I (7) (b) declares that citizenship cannot be denied based on ethnicity or sex, Article II (3) establishes the right to marry and form a family, and Article II (4) guarantees the prohibition of all forms of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and specifically, sex (Szasz, 1996; K till Kvinna, 2000; Efremova, 2012). The same article establishes that the national legal framework must also align with European Standards (ibid.). Unfortunately, however, the Constitution does not consider the sexual harassment that happened during the war as a War Crime, nor it guarantees special provisions for gender-based violence (6, 7, 11) (ibid.). Nevertheless, Annex 6 declares that international and non-governmental institutions can supervise the application of Human Rights provisions (Articlec XIII),

and it establishes the Constitutional Court, the Commission on Human Rights of the Ombudsman, and the Human Rights Chamber (ibid.).

The pillars of the Bosnian Gender legal framework are the Gender Equality Law (2003), the Amendment of the Electoral Law (2013), the Anti-Discrimination Law (2016) and several Action Plans. The Gender Equality Law guarantees gender equality in both private and public sectors, and it states that all public institutions, from national to local level, must provide equal gender representation (Aganović et al., 2015). It also defines the concepts of direct and indirect discrimination, sexual harassment, and violence (Efremova, 2012). Moreover, it establishes the creation of the Gender Equality Agency (Efremova, 2012). It took ten years, however, to harmonize the Electoral Law (2013) with the Gender Equality Law to implement gender quotas (40%) in electoral lists (Aganović et al., 2015). The Anti-discrimination Law, instead, was adopted in 2016 and protects against discrimination based on sexual orientation and "hate speech" (Shepherd, NAP III, 2018).

For implementing the UN Resolution 1325, three National Action Plans were created in 2010, 2014 and 2018 (Shepherd, NAP III, 2018). Their goal is to achieve gender equality in decision-making, increase the number of women in the police force, the military and in peace-keeping missions as well as the protection of women that suffered from war crimes and human trafficking (Efremova, 2012). The Gender Action Plans, instead, have been created to implement the Beijing Declaration and the Gender Equality Law, and they initially covered fifteen social-economic areas (Efremova, 2012). These Gender Action Plans (GAP) were adopted in 2006, 2013 and 2018, and GAP III works for the advancement of gender equality in politics and cross-cutting areas (such as Health, the Media, education, labour market) (GAP III, 2018). GAP III also includes a fund for implementing the Action Plan (FIGAP) and guaranteeing better coordination between national, regional and international levels (GAP III, 2018).

Lastly, the institutions created for implementing the gender legal framework are the Commission for Gender Equality in the Parliament, the Gender Equality Agency and the two Gender Centres in the Entities that are part of the Executive (Efremova, 2012). If the latter is responsible for implementing the GAP and coordinate the dialogue between the government and NGOs, the Gender Equality Agency must supervise the implementation of the Gender Equality Law, coordinate activities at the state, cantonal, municipal, and local level, do "lobby" in the Ministries and collect quantitative data (Efremova, 2012).

Feminist civil society

The feminist civil society in Bosnia is quite an evolved plethora in which women have worked for gender equality and social justice since the outbreak of the Bosnian War (Berry, 2018). Women in Black, indeed, was an organization in which Balkan women gathered to protest ethnic-nationalism and violent conflicts (Berry, 2018). Besides, the four years of war created a societal vacuum in which women had to fill the gap left by "their men" who were fighting (Berry, 2018). So, they provided social services and psychological help, dealt with bureaucratic institutions, and helped refugees return to their villages (Berry, 2018). But, as a Bosnian reported in Berry's article (2018), the end of the war reversed the situation:

"Women got empowered, men came back from war, they're traumatized after [the] war [and] without work. And then the war in families start[ed]. Because men weren't in charge anymore. And war empowered women. And the balance in the marriage was disrupted" (p.207).

The post-conflict period signalled a backlash in women's rights, in which their political representation dropped by 20% compared to the eighties (Björkdahl, 2012). Notwithstanding, women continued to create civil society organizations, such as Medica Zenica, Women to Women, Srcem do Mira, Mothers of Srebrenica, and thanks to the international community, there was a "boom" of females NGOs (Berry, 2018; Helms, 2013). From just providing social services, they then became active in politics and transitional justice, by participating as testimonies at the ICTY (Berry, 2018). During the last two decades, women's activists pushed for the creation of gender quotas, induced politicians in implementing the Gender Equality Law and expanded their network with the political women Caucus (Aganovic et al., 2015). Implementing the UN Resolution 1325 is another example of how Bosnian women developed transnational networks and worked for peacebuilding (Tadic et al., 2018; Deiana, 2018).

The proliferation of women's organizations has also led to a pluralization of feminist perspectives (Helms, 2013). Some organizations are laic and multi-ethnic; other ones are ethnic-based or religious, such as Muslim Women Activists (Helms, 2013). Especially in the nineties, specific categories of gender minorities were excluded by the feminist community (Erickson, 2017). For example, it took time to include Romani Women in projects aimed at fighting gender-based violence, as activists saw the latter as a community that is "intrinsically" violent (Erickson, 2017).

Progressively, new intersectional sensibilities have shaped a more inclusive feminist movement (Kotevska, 2016).

The problem of NGO-ization is also present in Bosnia, as most of these organizations depend on foreign grants that in the last decade started to decrease (Gr⃠deland, 2010; Berry, 2018). Because there are, however, many women that during the war became aware that they can lead a country on their own, and that there are other channels throughout which they can gather even when the government marginalizes them, feminist activism is quite vivid (Deiana, 2016; Berry, 2018). Figures such as Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić and Ismeta Dervoz are examples of activists that created the Gender Centres and inspired many other Bosnian women to fight for gender equality (Aganovic et al., 2015). Therefore, the feminist civil society has been pivotal for women's empowerment in Bosnia.

International Community

The presence of the international community in Bosnia is massive (McEvoy, 2014). Since the civil conflict, a conundrum of foreign actors have directly played into Bosnian politics, starting from the OHR, the European Union, OSCE, the United Nations and USAID, but also the US and the Finnish government (Pupavac, 2005; Fraczek et al., 2016). In contrast to Macedonia, the Bosnian War and Dayton led to a devastating socio-political environment, in which there were not merely contestations of the peace agreement, but the *existence* of Bosnia-Herzegovina remained disputed, with inflammatory secessionist rhetoric of Respublika Srpska's leaders (Vasilev, 2011). In this plethora, the international community has been the primary driver of constitutional and social reforms, in which each agency has been specialized in managing specific domestic issues, sometimes also inconsistently overlapping with each other (McEvoy, 2014).

The international community has also been the guardian of women's empowerment in Bosnia, thanks to the vast amount of foreign donations – higher than the grants given to Macedonia - for creating ad-hoc programs and women's NGOs (Gr⃠deland, 2010). Especially OSCE, USAID and partially the EU, these pushed for gender equality reforms in the legal framework and the sensibilization of the population (Pupavac, 2005; Fraczek et al., 2016). The number of women's organizations in Bosnia is so high that in several interviews members of civil society complained that other issues such as "combating" ethnonationalism and ethnic segregation in the educational

system are overlooked because of gender equality's prioritization (Puljek-Shank and Verkoren, 2017).

Besides, the EU's conditionality has been quite weak considering that Bosnia is not yet an official EU candidate and that the organization has tried to centralize Bosnian institutions not only in contradiction with the Dayton Constitution but also with the centrifugal claims of Serb and Croat minorities (Vasilev, 2011). The significant contribution of the EU for women has been the influence over the gender legal framework, as the Anti-discrimination Law and the Law on Gender Equality have been created and implemented because Bosnian politicians wanted special provisions such as the SAA and the visa liberalization (Fraczek et al., 2016). Overall, the EU prioritizes stability over social reforms, and its recommendations stress ethnic reconciliation (Deiana, 2018). Only the European Commission has continuously focused on women's rights in Bosnia, and the EU Representative has pushed more vigorously for gender equality's reforms since the last decade (Fraczek et al., 2016).

OSCE, instead, has played a fundamental role in promoting democratization, strengthening women's rights, and creating sensible educational programs, by working at the grassroots level with the civil society and women politicians (Kvinna till Kvinna, 2000; Aganović et al., 2015). The World Bank, moreover, has created a series of microcredit projects aimed at empowering women economically, in tandem with USAID (Pupavac, 2005). OHR, however, remains the leading foreign player in Bosnia, by using Bonn Powers, enforcing the role of Ombudsman and sponsoring women's participation in the government (Björkdahl, 2012).

However, because there are so many foreign actors in Bosnia, the feminist civil society complains about NGO-ization and for the fact that foreign donors are not able to create programs suitable for localized issues (Deiana, 2018). Several times, the international community sent contradictory signals, such as working on a "subjective" version of gender-based violence, by emphasizing rapes against Bosniak women and overlooking violence against other ethnic minorities, such as Serbs (Björkdahl, 2012; Berry, 2018). The progressive EU's will of taking the place of OHR is also problematic, as the latter has been so central in Bosnian politics that depriving Bosnia of its mandate could lead to political stagnation and a backlash of human rights (Aybet and Bieber, 2011).

Overall, the international community's leverage over women's empowerment in Bosnia is undoubtful, because it has guaranteed the resources to enforce the feminist civil society and implemented the gender legal framework. Without foreign actors pushing for gender equality

reforms, it is questionable whether marginalized categories such as gender and sexual minorities could have effectively ameliorated their condition.

BOSNIA AND MACEDONIA IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE: FINDINGS OF GENDER EQUALITY

This chapter will focus on a qualitative comparison between Bosnia and Macedonia regarding gender equality in the period between 2005 and 2018. Following the operationalization of gender equality, the chapter is divided in female political participation, women in the labour market, education, health, and gender-based violence, and it will end with some data of the UN Gender Inequality Index (GII).

Politics

Female political participation in the case studies is analyzed by looking at the percentage of female seats in the Parliament, and how these proportions changed during the timeframe. Both countries have gender quotas of 40% for the Parliament, and figures are taken from the UN Human Development Reports, specifically the indicators of GEM and GII.

In North Macedonia, there were 19.2% of parliamentarian women in 2005, but this proportion substantially rose during the timeframe, reaching 28% in 2009 and 38.3% in 2018 (UNDP, 2006-2019). The only year that the trend had a reverse outcome was in 2012, with 30.9% of female seats, but it then continued to increase the following year when a rate of 34.1% was reached (UNDP, 2006-2019). The situation in Bosnia is different, as women's political empowerment in Parliaments was around 7% during the timeframe (ibid.). This means that in 2005, just 12.3% of parliamentarians were women, and the proportion grew slowly, reaching 15.8% in 2011 and 19.3% the following year, but then stagnating until 2018 (ibid.).

Thus, the rise of Parliamentarian women was around 20% in Macedonia and 7% in Bosnia, revealing that Macedonia made much more progress in implementing gender quotas and empowering women (UNDP, 2006-2019). Moreover, in all those years, there were more female parliamentary seats in Macedonia than in Bosnia. The results can be explained by considering that the SDSM party in Macedonia created a partnership with the feminist civil society, whereas in Bosnia, there were not major parties that promoted gender equality during the timeframe.

Labour market

Female participation in the labour market is investigated by looking at the proportion of women that work in the formal economy and is calculated out of the (female's and male's) total

participation. Moreover, the gender gap in unemployment is examined by comparing the percentage of women and men that were unemployed between 2005 and 2018. Both indicators have been created by collecting data from the World Bank Open Data.

Regarding female's participation in the formal economy, the situation is similar in both countries (World Bank, 2020c). Both Bosnia and Macedonia had less than 40% of female workers, revealing a gender gap of around 20% (World Bank, 2020c). However, their trends are partially different. 39.24% of the total Macedonian workers were females in 2005 compared to 36.88% of Bosnian women employed in the same year (ibid.). If the gender gap was more pronounced in Bosnia at the beginning of the period, this country made consistent progress by having a surge of 3% of female workers out of the total (ibid.). In fact, 38.35% of Bosnian workers were women in 2010, and the ratio increased by reaching 39.22 in 2018 (ibid.). In Macedonia, instead, the situation stagnated in all those years, fluctuating of just 1% and eventually figuring 39.19% of women workers in 2018 (ibid.).

About the unemployment rate, in both Macedonia and Bosnia, there was a constant drop in women unemployed, that passed from 38.4% to 19.9% in Macedonia, and from 34.9% to 20.3% in Bosnia (World Bank, 2020a, 2020b). Thus, Macedonia experienced a decline of around 19% of female unemployment compared to approximately 15% of women unemployed in Bosnia (World Bank, 2020a, 2020b). Moreover, between 2005 and 2012, there was a higher rate of female unemployment in Macedonia than in Bosnia, but after that, the trend changed in favour of the former (ibid.). In both countries, there was a gender gap in unemployment, as the percentage of men without a job was lower than the female counterpart, but if there were years in Macedonia in which there was a higher rate of male unemployment than females without a job, this is not the case of Bosnia. Indeed, in the latter, the gender gap was much more pronounced (ibid.).

Education

The gender gap in education is investigated by focusing on the overall educational attainment of females and males, and the gender gap between students graduated in tertiary education. The data is taken from the State Statistical Offices of Bosnia and Macedonia, and the educational attainment refers to the last censuses of Bosnia (2013) and Macedonia (2002).

The Macedonian data for educational attainment provides a distinction between gender and different age groups (State Statistical Office North Macedonia, 2014: 39). It shows that the gender

gap is much more pronounced in the elderly, with 42% of men and 68% of women over their sixties that did not complete primary school, and just 10% of women with secondary education compared to 21% of men (ibid.). The gender gap shrinks among the young (ibid.). For both groups aged between 30-39 and 25-29, the gap in primary education is not remarkable; most of men and women have a diploma; besides, there is a higher percentage of the female population that has a degree compared to the male's rate (ibid.). Moreover, whether the gender gap between adolescents is barely noticeable, the proportion of women between 20 and 24-years old with tertiary education is higher than the men's counterpart, and there is a 2% difference between the two gender categories regarding people without primary school (ibid.).

Across the Bosnian population, more than 20% of women are without education or with an incomplete primary school in contrast with just below 8% of men with the same level of educational attainment (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2018: 22). 59,5% of men finished secondary school compared to just 43% of women, and the rate of females with only primary education is 5 points higher than the males' percentage (ibid.). Consequently, the gender gap in educational attainment is pronounced, especially regarding the percentage of women with lower education.

Regarding the rate of graduated in tertiary education, in both Macedonia and Bosnia there is a higher number of women who obtained a degree during the timeframe (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2009, 2014, 2018; State Statistical Office North Macedonia, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2015, 2019). In Macedonia, around 65% of graduated in 2006 were women compared to 35% of men, and the gender gap consistently decreased until 2017, when 57.5% of females obtained a degree in contrast to around 42.5% of males (State Statistical Office North Macedonia, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2015, 2019). Bosnia experienced a different trend, starting with 57.7% of graduated females in 2006, and the gender gap increased with a ratio of 0.6 for women until 2010 (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2009, 2014, 2018). After that, the gender balance between graduated students was better, and in 2016, 55.15% of Bosnian graduated were women (ibid.). Therefore, the percentage of females that obtained a degree is higher, but in both countries, the gap is shrinking.

Health

The gender gap in the health sector is shown by looking at the maternal mortality ratio and the adolescent fertility rate, and the data is taken from the UN Human development reports.

Specifically, the maternal mortality ratio is calculated by how many women die during pregnancy for every 100,000 live births (UNDP 2010). Between 2003 and 2007, more Macedonian pregnant women died than in Bosnia, with an overall ratio of 10 and 3, respectively (UNDP 2010-2019). Whereas Macedonia's values stagnated until 2010 and then ameliorated by reaching a rate of 8 in 2015; Bosnian data is more pessimistic (ibid.). In the latter, the maternal mortality ratio had an increase in 2010 with a rate of 8 and continued to rise until 2015, by reaching 11 (ibid.).

The adolescent fertility rate that counts the number of births for every 1,000 women aged between 15 and 19 tells a different story (UNDP, 2010). Since the nineties, there have been far less adolescent pregnant women in Bosnia than in Macedonia, with a ratio of 15.9 and 21.7 in 2008, respectively (UNDP, 2010-2019). Both countries saw a drop in their ratio of around 6, and between 2015 and 2018, the Macedonian rate was 16.2 in contrast to a ratio of 10 in Bosnia (ibid.).

Gender-based violence

Regarding gender-based violence, the only suitable information has been found thanks to a national survey done in Bosnia in 2013, and some interviews conducted by the UN in 2018 and OSCE in 2019. Among the interviewed, 44% of them have experienced a form of gender-based violence in Macedonia compared to a rate of 48% in Bosnia (OSCE, 2019a, 2019b). In both cases, psychological abuse done by a partner is the most common, followed by physical and sexual violence (OSCE, 2019a, 2019b). Regarding the latter, 30% of Macedonian interviewed had at least one experience of sexual violence in contrast to 28% in Bosnia (OSCE, 2019a, 2019b). Just 2% of Macedonian and 5% of Bosnian have called the police if the current partner perpetrated violence, but rates are higher whether the perpetrator has been a former partner or a stranger (OSCE, 2019a, 2019b). 90% of the interviewed in Bosnia would help another victim of violence in contrast to only a 68% rate in Macedonia (UNWOMEN, 2019a, 2019b). In Bosnia and Macedonia, 51% and 49% of the responders, respectively, think that a person should be punished for forcing sex to a partner, and intersectional minorities are still more exposed to violence, especially Romani women or females that are part of sexual minorities (UNWOMEN, 2019a, 2019b). Also considering that around half of Macedonian responders do not know the existence of the Gender Equality Law (UNWOMEN 2018b), the data reveals that gender-based violence is a) widespread in both countries and b) many women do not seek for help from state institutions in the cases of need.

Gender Inequality Index

As previously stated, GEM and GII indices cannot be utilized for the overall comparison as they have not the aggregated data for Bosnia. Consequently, just GII can elucidate some results regarding gender inequality, in which GII's values range from 0 (gender equality) to 1 (gender inequality) (UNDP, 2010). Indeed, the Macedonian level of gender equality fluctuated from 2011 to 2018 without achieving remarkable improvements (UNDP, 2010-2019). Its score in 2011 was 0.151, and it increased until 2014 before dropping to 0.145 in 2018 (ibid.). Bosnia, instead, started with a level of 0.201 of gender inequality in 2013, but it then ameliorated by reaching 0.158 in 2015 and 0.162 in 2018 (ibid.). In all those years, Bosnia had a higher level of gender inequality than Macedonia apart from 2015 (ibid.). Thus, the GII shows that if women in Macedonia had experienced a lower level of gender inequality than in Bosnia, the latter had a better improvement in the studied timeframe.

Overall, gender equality has been reached in neither Bosnia nor Macedonia. Still, both countries have made substantial progress in all aspects, with Macedonia that reached concrete achievements in gender political participation, and Bosnia that experienced women's empowerment in the formal job market and the health sector. Whether the gender gap in education is also dropping in both case studies, gender-based violence continues to be a widespread problem. Moreover, figures reveal that women's condition in Macedonia is overall better than in Bosnia; in fact, the Gender Inequality Index confirms this statement by placing the former higher in the rank, but recognizing that, at least in the last decade, gender inequality's value in Bosnia had a much higher decrease than in Macedonia.

CONCLUSION

The thesis researched how gender equality is influenced by a consociational system of government in Bosnia and Macedonia, and whether the latter promotes gender equality with the conditions of having a progressive feminist civil society and the involvement of the international community. Process tracing has been used in the qualitative analysis, whereas a triangulation of quantitative data has revealed women's condition in a comparative perspective.

The qualitative analysis has revealed that both governments in Bosnia and Macedonia have constrained women's empowerment by scarcely implementing the gender legal framework, not involving the civil society, and creating patriarchal narratives of gender relations (Kotevska and Spasovska, 2019; Berry, 2018; Bieber, 2018). Thus, aligning with Nagle's findings (2016), having liberal or corporative consociationalism does not have a significant impact on women's empowerment (Byrne and McCulloch, 2018). In Macedonia, the former ethnic-nationalist government contested gender equality by trying to constrain women's rights and attacking feminist activists, a trend that has been reversed with the current executive (Kotevska and Spasovska, 2019). In Bosnia, instead, even if there has not been any explicit attempt of restraining the gender legal framework, women's empowerment has been mainly ignored by all the major parties, that have exploited war's narratives to victimize women as passive actors (Deiana, 2016; Berry, 2018).

A: Consociational governments in Macedonia and Bosnia have undermined women's rights by scarcely consulting the feminist civil society, inefficiently implementing the gender legal framework, and using patriarchal rhetoric.

The feminist civil society has played an essential role in pushing the government for adopting women's rights laws, spreading awareness across the population, and providing social services (Nacevska and Lokar, 2017; Deiana, 2018). Especially in Bosnia, the feminist civil society is strong as feminist activism derives from the civil war and the post-conflict period, when women's organizations became the primary social providers and then started to mobilize for their rights (Aganović et al., 2015; Berry, 2018). The foreign financial dependence of many women's NGOs led to NGO-ization in Bosnia, especially in the last decade when donations were decreasing, but the phenomenon is much more spread in Macedonia (Gr⃠deland, 2010; Berry, 2018). The latter experienced a rise in feminist initiatives in the last decade, mainly in response to the government's

behaviour (Kotevska and Spasovska, 2019). Thus, the thesis argues that Macedonian feminist civil society is weaker than in Bosnia, but both conspicuously promoted women's empowerment.

B: A feminist civil society promotes gender equality by inducing the consociational government in advancing the gender legal framework and being accountable for women's rights. It also spreads awareness across the population by providing social services and doing feminist activism.

The international community has been pivotal for advancing gender equality in these case studies, by applying conditionality to the governments for implementing the gender legal framework and strengthening the feminist civil society (Spehar, 2012; Fraczek et al., 2016). On the one hand, Bosnia has received more foreign funding than Macedonia, mainly because the Bosnian war has led to a more devasted socio-economical condition than the Macedonian conflict (Gr⃠deland, 2010). Consequently, many more international actors have worked for women's empowerment in Bosnia (McEvoy, 2014). On the other hand, Macedonian politics have been deeply influenced by European conditionality (Vasilev, 2011). The EU, in fact, has more leverage in Macedonia than in Bosnia, as the former is in a more advanced stage of entering in the organization and the agenda of the major Macedonian groups is compatible with EU's expectations (Vasilev, 2011). This is not the case of Bosnia, where both Serbs and Croats are threatened to lose autonomy if state centralization would be done in accordance to EU's recommendations (Aybet and Bieber, 2011; Fraczek et al., 2016). Thus, the role of the international community in advancing gender equality has been influential in both Bosnia and Macedonia.

C: *The international community promotes gender equality by using soft-power: pressuring countries to create and implement gender legal frameworks and enforcing the feminist civil society, whether limiting NGO-ization.*

Interpreting the quantitative data regarding how much women's condition ameliorated between 2005 and 2018, the results are similar in both countries. Only in the gender political participation category, Macedonia has made more progress probably because of its alliance with the SDSM party. However, looking at the overall condition of gender equality, Bosnian women experience more gender inequality than female Macedonians. A possible explanation is that even if the case studies share many similarities, a key difference is the grievances of their civil wars (Keil and Bieber, 2009). The Bosnian conflict lasted for much longer, where ethnic cleansing, the siege of Sarajevo and concentration camps occurred. This discrepancy may have affected the time necessary for returning to a stable socio-economic situation and giving space to Bosnian women in

empowering themselves. The thesis has deliberately chosen to start the analysis in 2005 to "let" the countries that have already passed the hardest post-conflict period. Future research would compare how the different characteristics of their civil wars affected gender equality in the long run.

Answering the research question, the thesis argues that consociationalism has impacted gender equality in Bosnia and Macedonia between 2005 and 2018. Both governments limited women's rights by co-opting women in the public sphere and ostracizing feminist activism. However, the involvement of the feminist civil society and the international community has "forced" the governments in implementing the gender legal framework and (partially) listening to feminist requests. Quantitative data confirms this, as there have been women's empowerment in all the studied aspects. Therefore, Macedonian and Bosnian consociations promoted gender equality between 2005 and 2018 because of the feminist civil society and the international community.

Some limitations of this research are the non-proficiency in native languages of the case studies that have limited the finding of local material, and future research could integrate additional variables such as economic development and cultural aspects (Alexander and Welzel, 2007). On the other side, the thesis seems to have enriched consociational theory by looking at the way this is influenced by other variables, so going beyond the often-limited top-down approach of consociational theorists and institutional feminists. Integrating the feminist civil society serves to add a bottom-up variable in the overall consociational mechanism, a thing that can be repeated in future research by comparing other consociational countries.

Further progress must be made in Bosnia and Macedonia to guarantee equal opportunities to both women and men, that continue to live in a society deeply divided among ethnic lines and in which the contested narratives of war restrain the welfare state of its citizens (Deiana, 2018; Kajevska, 2018). In political systems where the ruling communities obstruct women's rights, the "prisoners" of consociationalism can break the chains of oppression, by strengthening their voice and working with foreign partners.

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