

## Review of the Book:

Hristova Lidija and collaborators, *Political Identities in the Republic of Macedonia*

ПОЛИТИЧКИТЕ ИДЕНТИТЕТИ ВО РЕПУБЛИКА МАКЕДОНИЈА,

Христова Лидија и др.; Скопје, Република Македонија, Универзитет „Св. Кирил и Методиј“ Институт за социолошки и политичко правни истражувања, 2011, 260pp.  
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During the last two decades, the quality and the quantity of empirical research in the social sciences and in particular in sociology in the Republic of Macedonia were determined by the changing patterns of available funding and by new research agendas. In the first instance, public resources were shrinking dramatically, in all areas of public services and provisions. This trend endangered the very existence of long established research institutions. Their functioning was basically conditioned by the capacities of researchers to obtain external funds. Safety belts were offered by numerous international organizations which were active in the country on various grounds. In their efforts to support the processes of nation and state building of the country, for internal and for regional stability reasons, they raised the demand for applicative skills of the domestic researchers. As a consequence, instead of concentrating on fundamental or developmental studies, researchers were writing various types of reports. Under such circumstances professional ethics requires us to identify, salute and articulate any signs which testify to the existence of academically inspired research. The work of Lidia Hristova and her collaborators is such an example.

Their book provides a readable and empirically supported account of how political identities are shaped and sustained within societal milieu of a developing country in transition (in economic and political terms) such as the Republic of Macedonia.

Theoretically the authors have made an effort to embed their research question and methodological approach into existing Western literature on political identities, reviewed in the first part of the book. Following that model, the fundamental question they have tried to answer is whether the existing and manifestly distinctive political identities (operationally recognized and studied via the citizen's political attitudes and values and their political party affiliations and support) are based on existing "social cleavages" (defined as social groups with distinctive interests, needs, consciousness and perceptions of the world).

Methodologically, the research questions are studied by utilizing content analysis and survey methods. Content analysis is used for profiling the ideological differences between one dominant left-wing and one dominant right-wing political party (within the two domain political blocs in the country, the ethnic Macedonian and the ethnic Albanian). The survey method is used for obtaining data on demographic characteristics, social origins, ideological positions and voting behaviors of

citizens. The obtained data is studied by descriptive statistics and a simple design of factor analysis.

The authors present the results of the empirical study in six interrelated themes in the second part of the book. The first chapter (by Lidija Hristova) studies the characteristics of Macedonian political pluralism; the second chapter (by Aneta Cekic) analyses the electoral programs of two dominant ethnic Macedonian political parties; the third chapter (by Bekim Kadriu) analyses the electoral programs of ethnic Albanian political parties for the 2008 elections; the fourth chapter (by Anica Dragovic) by using factor analysis studies the relation between the various elements of the socio-economic status and the party affiliation; the fifth chapter (by Lidija Hristova) analyzes citizens' values and political orientations; and the sixth chapter (by Eleonora Serafimovska) studies the political predictors and manifestations of the personal correlate of social conformism.

Within such a theoretical and methodological frame-work, Lidija Hristova as coordinator of the study summarizes the individual research findings by concluding that political party identities in the country are not based on structural grounds (socio-economic status) and interests. Political parties in Macedonia do not have a social basis (class or ideological) other than ethnicity. She argues that the classical distinction between the political left and the political right does not apply in the Republic of Macedonia. Rather, the dominant political identities are founded on the alternative divide between liberalism and conservatism, based on values and in particular on the national identity. This explains some of the most striking antagonisms in the Macedonian political arena between the "traitors" and "patriots", "communist" and "anticommunist". At the same time and in parallel with this, interpreting the survey research findings, Hristova concludes that citizens' party affiliation (even among the so called "loyal" voters) does not significantly correlate with their values and political orientations. The majority of citizens subscribe to the values of the left and support state interventionism and the welfare state (70%) and, at the same time, to values of conservatism (80%).

Summarizing the area specific findings, Hristova and her collaborators argue that in Macedonia, as well as in other contemporary democracies, the political projects of political elites shape the opposing political identities. This general conclusion is more a heuristic than an empirically tested statement and thesis. According to it, the professionalisation of politics, political marketing and

mediatisation of politics have become principal traits of political party identities. According to this, in Macedonia too the 'unchanged voters' change their votes stimulated by charismatic leaders and party leaderships which politicise differences. Yet, unlike in developed democratic countries, Macedonian society is a divided society with poor civic traditions, and it is for these reasons that the authors end the book by posing new questions about the future consequences of such kinds of elite intervention and political entrepreneurship.

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