



## Research Article

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### Deliberating in the Gray Zone: North Macedonia's Hybrid Regime and Deliberative Democracy Exercise

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#### Abstract

Deliberative polling has emerged as a promising method for promoting democratic reform and citizen engagement in various contexts, however, its potential and limitations in hybrid regimes, where democratic governance is challenged by a mix of democratic and authoritarian features, remain relatively unexplored. This paper focuses on the case of North Macedonia, as a country that has undergone significant political and societal transformation especially in the recent years. Despite efforts to promote democratic reforms, the country continues to face challenges in terms of ensuring democratic governance and citizen participation. In a hybrid regime, like North Macedonia's, political leaders might not be inclined to value citizens' input, and the media environment might not be free from influence, which limits access to varied and reliable sources of information. Civil society organizations may also encounter limitations on their operations, and institutional assistance may be insufficient. Additionally, the population's diversity could make it difficult to reach and build trust with citizens. In this context, deliberative polling represents an opportunity to engage citizens in meaningful political dialogue and institutional reform. This paper examines the potential of deliberative polling as a tool for promoting governance in North Macedonia and highlights the challenges and limitations faced in this process.

**Keywords:** deliberative poll, hybrid regime, authoritarian, democracy.

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