



Research Article

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State Building in Fragile Contexts: The Ohrid Agreement and European Integration in North Macedonia

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Abstract

This manuscript examines the security challenges and institutional fragility in North Macedonia before and after the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement, focusing on the role of ethnic divisions, institutional exclusion, and the absence of an inclusive state identity. Through a theoretical approach grounded in international relations and state-building literature, this paper argues that the construction of a mono-national state and the marginalization of the Albanian population have undermined the legitimacy and authority of state institutions. The Ohrid Agreement represents a turning point toward establishing a more inclusive political order, through mechanisms of power-sharing, proportional representation, and the integration of security with the country's ethnic realities. The manuscript highlights that, despite notable progress, interethnic tensions, socio-economic challenges, and political polarization remain structural sources of fragility. In this context, North Macedonia's aspirations for European Union membership are seen as drivers for improved governance, democratic consolidation, and the overcoming of ethnic cleavages, promoting institutional reform, rule of law, and the strengthening of social cohesion. However, the integration process remains complex and vulnerable to internal tensions and external pressures, requiring sustained and inclusive efforts.

Keywords: state security, Ohrid Framework Agreement, institutional fragility, ethnic identity, Albanians in North Macedonia, political representation, power-sharing, security community, European Union, integration process.

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