

**Homeland Calling:
Political Mobilization of the Albanian-Macedonian Diaspora for the 2013
Local Elections in Macedonia**

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Abstract

This thesis examines the mobilization of the members of a diaspora for the purpose of engaging them in the homeland's (local) political processes. Specifically, this thesis studies the campaign of the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) aimed at mobilizing voters from the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora for the local elections in Kichevo, Macedonia. Based on Eva Østergaard-Nielsen's methodological framework of analyzing transnational political processes, this thesis aims to answer three sets of questions: 'why' did the political leaders of DUI mobilize voters from the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora?; 'how' did they mobilize these voters?; and 'then what', that is, the implications of the mobilization. This thesis argues that a carefully crafted campaign can mobilize a large number of voters among the diaspora; whereas this mobilization can significantly impact the outcome of the political process in question.

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I. Introduction

“The Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) is requesting thirty airplanes to transfer the members of the Albanian diaspora to Kichevo, so that they can vote for their candidate; and the city [of Kichevo] for the first time in its history will have an Albanian Mayor” is the newspaper article under the headline “DUI is asking for the support of the Albanian diaspora to win over Kichevo.”¹ The picture under the headline shows the leader of the Democratic Union for Integration, speaking in front of an audience, with a large sign behind him that reads “Kichevo is Ours!”²

During the local elections in the Republic of Macedonia³ which took place in March 2013, several political parties encouraged the engagement of members of the diaspora (who are eligible to vote) in this political process. During the last twenty years, there has been a conspicuous increase in the number of *states* that engage members of their diasporas in domestic politics. As a result of this amplification, “there has been a concomitant explosion of academic interest in those transnational and trans-state relationships.”⁴ On the other hand, the active promotion of diaspora engagement in domestic political processes on the part of ‘homeland’ political parties is a rare occurrence, and literature on this topic is scarce.

The 2013 local elections in Macedonia provide a good opportunity to study how political parties, specifically, the Democratic Union for Integration (hereinafter, referred to as DUI), mobilized members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora to travel to Kichevo so that

¹ “DUI is asking for support from the Albanian diaspora to win over Kichevo”, *Sitel*, November 13, 2012 accessed on March, 7, 2013, <http://www.sitel.com.mk/dui-bara-poddrshka-od-albanskata-dijaspora-za-da-go-osvoi-kichevo>.

² All translations of the newspaper articles, speeches, and interviews (from Macedonian or Albanian to English) are done by the author of the thesis.

³ Hereafter, referred to as ‘Macedonia’. ‘Republic of Macedonia’ is the constitutional name of the state, but the name is subject to an international dispute with Greece.

⁴ Myra A. Waterbury, “Bridging the divide: Towards a comparative framework for understanding kin state and migrant-sending state diaspora politics,” in *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, eds. Rainer Bauböck and Thomas Faist (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 131.

they can vote in the local elections of the afore-mentioned municipality. DUI is the largest ethnic Albanian political party in Macedonia, as well as the most prevalent one in the Parliament among the ethnic Albanian parties in Macedonia.

“Political elites utilize a combination of ‘extra-territorial’ domestic and foreign policy tools as a way to extend their sovereignty beyond state borders and create or maintain cross-border ties of loyalty and membership.”⁵ The subtlety of the 2013 local elections in Macedonia is that DUI’s political elite utilized expatriate voting to extend their sovereignty *within* the territory of Macedonia, by getting their candidate elected for the Mayor of Municipality Kichevo.⁶ Kichevo is a city located in the Western part of Macedonia, with a total population of 30,138 according to the last official census in 2002.⁷ Of the total population, 16,140 have identified themselves as ethnic Macedonians (53,5%), whereas 9,202 as ethnic Albanians (30,5%). The remaining 16% have identified themselves as Turk, Roma, Vlach, Serbian, etc.⁸ It is of an utmost importance to emphasize that the last official census in Macedonia took place in 2002 – thus, these numbers omit the changes in demography which have occurred during the last 11 years since the census.

According to the daily *Utrinski Vesnik*, Municipality Kichevo was part of the ten “most critical points in the election map”; and that the 2013 local elections in this municipality symbolize a ‘battle’ between the ethnic Albanian and the ethnic Macedonian political parties.⁹ The municipality was previously governed by an ethnic Macedonian administration and an ethnic Macedonian mayor, and for the first time in the modern history of the municipality, an ethnic Albanian candidate (from DUI), Mr. Fatmir Dehari was elected

⁵ Myra A. Waterbury, “From Irredentism to Diaspora Politics: States and Transborder Ethnic Groups in Eastern Europe,” *Global Migration and Transnational Politics* Working paper no.6 (2009): 2, Center for Global Studies: ISSN 1941-7586.

⁶ Later, the same was done in another town, Struga.

⁷ “Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Macedonia, 2002” last modified May, 2005, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/knigaXIII.pdf>, 21.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁹ “10 Critical Points on the Electoral Map”, *Utrinski Vesnik*, December 12, 2012, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://www.utrinski.com.mk/default.asp?ItemID=95AE9E8968D6914B89DAABF23BBA404E>.

as Mayor. Unofficial statistics on voter turnout in Municipality Kichevo suggest that this victory owes it to the votes cast by members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora who came to Kichevo on Election Day – and a successful diaspora mobilization campaign on the part of DUI.

After providing a theoretical and methodological framework for expatriate voting in Macedonia, this study will analyze the campaign of, mainly, the Democratic Union for Integration, aimed at mobilizing members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora to participate in the local elections of Municipality Kichevo on March 24, 2013. It will also briefly look at the diaspora mobilization for the elections in Struga: another critical point in the electoral map. This thesis will be structured in accordance to Eva Østergaard-Nielsen's¹⁰ three-step approach to a “process oriented analysis of transnational political practices”: a) the process of mobilization (the ‘why’); b) strategies and participation (the ‘how’); and c) the impact of migrant transnational practices on democratic processes in the country of origin (the ‘then what’).¹¹

¹⁰ Eva Østergaard-Nielsen, “The Politics of Migrants’ Transnational Political Practices,” *Center for Migration Studies of New York* Volume 37, Number 3 (2003): 765.

¹¹ To be elaborated in the section about methodology.

II. Theoretical and Methodological Framework

The contemporary debate on transnational political membership has been mainly structured around two questions: should the democratic exclusion of resident non-citizens be justified; and/or should the democratic inclusion of non-resident citizens be justified? This thesis deals with the second question, that is, whether or not the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora should participate in domestic political processes? Yet, the aim of this thesis is not to provide a normative answer to this question; regardless of the answer to this dilemma, DUI mobilized the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora to engage in the local elections in Kichevo. This section will offer a brief overview of the theoretical framework surrounding the debate on expatriate voting and engaging members of a diaspora in homeland politics.

Several scholars have claimed that expatriates are not subject to the political authority of their state of origin and, hence, they should be automatically excluded from the demos (Lopez-Guarra);¹² others such as Rainer Bauböck claim that “in a stakeholder conception of democratic community, persons with multiple stakes need multiple votes to control each of the governments whose decisions will affect their future as members of several demoi.”¹³ And “stakeholders are those whose circumstances of life link their future well-being to the flourishing of a particular polity.”¹⁴ As we shall see later, the campaign of DUI was based on the idea that members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora have a ‘stake’ in the politics of Kichevo, and that should motivate them to vote.

¹² David Owen, “Transnational Citizenship and the Democratic State: Modes of Membership and Voting Rights,” *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, Volume 4 Issue 5 (2011): 659, accessed May 27, 2013, doi: 10.1080/13698230.2011.617123.

¹³Rainer Bauböck, “Stakeholder Citizenship and Transnational Political Participation: A Normative Evaluation of External Voting,” *Fordham Law Review* Volume 75, Issue 5, Article 4 (2007): 2428.

¹⁴ Owen, “Transnational Citizenship and the Democratic State Modes of Membership and Voting Rights,” 665.

1. Conceptualizing Expatriate Voting

According to Bauböck, there are different terms used to describe external voting: remote voting, absentee voting, out-of-country voting, expatriate voting, etc. “Often, these terms are used as synonyms, but they can be employed to distinguish related but different phenomena.”¹⁵ In the 2013 local elections in Macedonia, only those who hold Macedonian citizenship (with biometric passport) were eligible to vote, and in order to vote, they had to be physically present in the country. This type of voting is classified as ‘Expatriate voting’ by Bauböck, and is defined as “voting by individuals who have a permanent residence abroad and no permanent residence in the country where the election is held.”¹⁶ The delicacy of the ‘external voting’ for the local elections in Kichevo was that in their personal documents, members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora had an official residence in Kichevo – but in practice, they did not reside in Kichevo.

The expatriate voting mode for the local elections in Macedonia is classified as in-country voting (ICV): “where expatriates may vote only if they are physically present in the country during the election.”¹⁷ Very often in states which enable this type of voting, political parties utilize this opportunity by organizing chartered buses or flights for their expatriate supporters. The electoral campaign of DUI included organizing such chartered buses and airplanes for members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora.

“The first use of external voting in history is believed to have been organized by the Roman emperor Augustus, who invented a new kind of suffrage under which the members of the local senate in 28 newly established colonies cast their votes for candidates for the city

¹⁵ Rainer Bauböck, “Stakeholder Citizenship and Transnational Political Participation: A Normative Evaluation of External Voting,” *Fordham Law Review* Volume 75, Issue 5, Article 4 (2007): 2398.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

offices of Rome and sent them under seal to Rome for the day of the elections.”¹⁸ The proliferation of this political practice in contemporary democratic societies took a long time. In the year 1945 there were only six countries that introduced external voting – mainly, for soldiers, sailors and public administrators.¹⁹ In 2007, a study carried out by IDEA/IFE identified “115 states and independent territories that allow citizens abroad to cast votes in domestic elections.”²⁰ At present, giving voting rights to expatriates has become “a new standard that is supported by the vast majority of democratic states.”²¹

i. Expatriate Voting in Macedonia

Before looking into the governmental policies and mechanisms on expatriate voting and participation in the country’s political processes, one has to conceptualize “national belonging” to the state of Macedonia. Particular attention should be paid to conceptualizing the ‘national belonging’ of members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora to the state of Macedonia. According to Kristina Balalovska and Francesco Ragazzi, after the fall of Yugoslavia, “the newly independent states developed a conception of national belonging that is increasingly disconnected from the people’s presence on the national territory.”²² Balalovska and Ragazzi identified a new form of ethnic nationalism which developed out of this conception, namely, a “post-territorial nationalism in which the nation is conceived of as a ‘global’ ethnic nation, irrespective of the people’s actual presence on the territory.”²³ Three

¹⁸ Andy Sundberg, “The History and Politics of Diaspora Voting in Home Country Elections,” *The International IDEA Handbook*, (2007):1.

¹⁹ Rainer Bauböck, “Ties Across Borders: The Growing Salience of Transnationalism and Diaspora Politics,” *International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion in Europe* No 13. (2008): 6.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Francesco Ragazzi and Kristina Balalovska, “Diaspora Politics and Post-Territorial Citizenship in Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia,” *The Europeanization of Citizenship in Successor States of the Former Yugoslavia* Working Paper Series 18 (2011):1. ISSN 2046-4096.

²³ Ibid.

practical consequences of this ‘post-territorial’ understanding of belonging to a nation are: members of the Macedonian diaspora are allowed to hold on to their Macedonian citizenship even if they are enfranchised in their host countries; ministries and governmental agencies are dedicated to maintaining ties with co-nationals who reside outside the state’s borders, and citizens abroad are increasingly included in votes for parliamentary, presidential, and local elections.²⁴

The above-mentioned authors find it contraindicating that many “nationalist movements of the post-Yugoslav states are keen on promoting a ‘diasporic and deterritorialized’ conception of the nation, while their rhetoric is still centered around the necessity of fighting for homeland as ethnically homogenous territories.”²⁵ Hence, following from this statement, it only seems natural that homelands would grant their “nationals” political membership – based on their ethnic affiliation.²⁶ Although Balalovska and Ragazzi’s study takes *states* as agents who promote one conception of a nation, as we shall see later in the campaign of the Democratic Union for Integration, this conception of a nation is “preached” by political parties as well.

Each democratic state has the right to decide whether or not it will allow expatriate voting. Bauböck adds to this saying that “each democratic state also has the freedom to introduce conditions such as length of residence in the country, maximum duration of residence abroad, intention to return, etc. when regulating expatriate voting.”²⁷ The most recent data from the State Election Commission show that there are 95,074 voters in the electoral list who reside outside of Macedonia.²⁸ Out of this number, 62,416, or 65% of the total electorate residing abroad, have new personal documents (biometric passports) which

²⁴ Francesco Ragazzi and Kristina Balalovska, “Diaspora Politics and Post-Territorial Citizenship in Croatia , Serbia and Macedonia,” *The Europeanization of Citizenship in Successor States of the Former Yugoslavia* Working Paper Series 18 (2011):18. ISSN 2046-4096.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Rainer Bauböck, “Stakeholder Citizenship and Transnational Political Participation: A Normative Evaluation of External Voting,” *Fordham Law Review* Volume 75, Issue 5, Article 4 (2007): 2426.

²⁸ State Electoral Commission.

grant them eligibility to vote in local elections. The total electorate of Macedonia, including those with and without new personal documents, as of October 2012 is 1,878,029 people²⁹ - which means that only 5% of the total electorate resides abroad. These numbers are highly contested due to unreliable data.

Prior to 2008, there were only several legal provisions that permitted a symbolic inclusion of Macedonia's diaspora in domestic political processes. Officially, the diaspora obtained its right to vote after the 'Law for Amending and Supplementing the Electoral Code' was passed in 2008. This Law meant that members of the diaspora who hold a Macedonian citizenship can vote in parliamentary and presidential elections from *abroad*, mainly from embassies or consulates of Macedonia in their host country. The Law did not regulate this type of voting from abroad for local elections, which meant that those willing to vote in local elections had to be present in the country to do so. This Law also gave the diaspora a dedicated constituency in parliament, composed of three Members of Parliament (MPs), out of the total of 123 MPs.³⁰

2. Terminology and Concepts Defined

The terms applied in the thesis, such as "diaspora", "Albanian-Macedonian diaspora", "homeland", are all contested terms and require detailed explanation of how and why they are utilized for the purposes of this study. In general, there is a gap of academic literature about emigration from Macedonia, and there is almost non-existent literature on conceptualizing notions such as "Macedonian diaspora" or "diaspora" in that sense, as it relates to Macedonia.

²⁹ "No voting without biometric passports," *Dnevnik Online*, November 14, 2012 accessed May 27, 2013. <http://www.dnevnik.com.mk/default.asp?ItemID=05F8445ECDE5DC42A8163E241BEEDA89>.

³⁰ Francesco Ragazzi and Kristina Balalovska, "Diaspora Politics and Post-Territorial Citizenship in Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia," *The Europeanization of Citizenship in Successor States of the Former Yugoslavia Working Paper Series* 18 (2011):18. ISSN 2046-4096.

Among the first academic researches on this topic was conducted by Kristina Balalovska in her PhD dissertation in Political Science: “The Multiple Voices of ‘Macedonian Diaspora’”, submitted in March of 2013 to the Institut d’Études Politiques de Paris.

i. Diaspora

Over the last decade, the term ‘diaspora’ has been used to denote a variety of phenomena. This proliferation of the term ‘diaspora’ has depleted it of its meaning, or as Brubaker notes: “If everyone is diasporic, then no one is distinctively so; the term loses its discriminating power – its ability to pick out phenomena, to make distinctions.”³¹ Brubaker also adds that it is important to avoid thinking of ‘diaspora’ as a bounded entity, instead, to think of it as an idiom or a stance, and as a category of practice.³² In this thesis, the term “diaspora” will be used as a category of practice indicating only those members who formulate identities and loyalties of a population. As we shall see later in this thesis then, the term “diaspora” applies to those people who maintain a link to DUI, and loyalty to the ethnic community that this party represents.

The above-mentioned analysis pertains to the use of ‘diaspora’ in academic literature. But what happens when members of a political party employ this term in the party’s electoral campaign, without having defined the term, or the targeted population behind this ‘label’? – as it was the case in DUI’s electoral campaign (to be elaborated in the next section). According to Ragazzi:

“using the term ‘diaspora’ rather than an *a priori* category is a word of politics: a linguistic and social construction that serves a particular purpose, that is, to erase the previous differences between groups in order to

³¹ Rogers Brubaker, “The ‘diaspora’ diaspora,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Volume 28 No. 1 (2006): 3.

³² *Ibid.*, 12.

gather financial and political support for a long-distance political endeavor.”³³

By conflating the previous categories of emigrant groups into a single category of ‘diaspora’, “nationalist regimes create a useful political actor to deploy various forms of deterritorialised nationalism.”³⁴

The most relevant synonym for the term ‘diaspora’ is ‘expatriate’, especially since this thesis is looking into ‘expatriate voting’. The reason why I chose ‘diaspora’ over ‘expatriate’ is best conceptualized by Bauböck, who distinguishes between these two terms. “‘Expatriate’ refers to citizens who live permanently outside their country of citizenship, whereas ‘diaspora’, being a less precise and more ideologically charged concept, is reserved for a specific type of collective identity that involves a strong sense of shared commitment to an external homeland and a narrative about a future return to this homeland.”³⁵

ii. Albanian-Macedonian Diaspora

In its electoral campaign, DUI used the term “Diaspora shqiptare” (in Albanian language) which translates into “Albanian diaspora” – when calling upon potential voters from abroad. To avoid misconceptions due to the multifocal aspect of the term “Albanian diaspora”, I will refer to the ‘Albanian-Macedonian diaspora’, specifically denoting: 1) the target population of the campaign: ethnic Albanians who reside outside of Macedonia, yet hold a Macedonian citizenship, and 2) the mobilized population who showed up to cast their vote in the 2013 local elections in Kichevo.

³³ Francesco Ragazzi, “The Croatian ‘Diaspora Politics’ of the 1990s: Nationalism Unbound?,” in *Transnational Societies, Transterritorial Politics: Migrations in the (Post-) Yugoslav Region*, ed. Ulf Brunnbauer, (Munich: Kraus PrePrint, 2009), 166.

³⁴ Francesco Ragazzi, “The Croatian ‘Diaspora Politics’ of the 1990s: Nationalism Unbound?,” in *Transnational Societies, Transterritorial Politics: Migrations in the (Post-) Yugoslav Region*, ed. Ulf Brunnbauer, (Munich: Kraus PrePrint, 2009), 166.

³⁵ Rainer Bauböck, “Stakeholder Citizenship and Transnational Political Participation: A Normative Evaluation of External Voting,” *Fordham Law Review* Volume 75, Issue 5, Article 4 (2007): 2426.

The terms ‘Albanian-Macedonian’ and ‘diaspora’ were first employed by Robert Pichler in his work on *Migration, Architecture and the Imagination of (Home)land. An Albanian-Macedonian Case Study* (ed. Brunnbauer, 2009), which is one of the very few scholarly works on ‘ethnic Albanians from Macedonia living abroad’. Pichler claims that “the concept of diaspora is related to that of the ethnically or ethno-cultural community.”³⁶ He defines diaspora nationalism as “an ideological movement to secure for a self-defined ethnocultural population collective autonomy, unity and identity by restoring its members to their historic homeland.”³⁷ Thus, the hyphenated term, with Albanian as its defining component (descriptive), suggests the importance of ethnic belonging of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora. Whereas the second part of the hyphenated term, ‘-Macedonian’ denotes the citizenship and country of origin.

In her analysis, Kristina Balalovska notes that in Macedonia, the term ‘diaspora’ is most commonly used when referring to “nationals residing abroad”. According to a research conducted in June 2011 by the above-mentioned author, a Macedonian Internet engine gives 2,397 results for the word “diaspora”. In contrast, “it gives only 425 results for the original Macedonian word ‘iselenistvo’, a noun denoting émigrés as a bounded group, despite this being the original Macedonian word.”³⁸ Preferring the term ‘diaspora’ over ‘a bounded émigré’ in Macedonia, is related to Tölölyan’s thesis that “[w]here once were dispersions... there now is diaspora” which is true in the case of the dispersed diaspora from Macedonia.

³⁶ Robert Pichler, “Migration, Architecture and the Imagination of Home(land). An Albanian-Macedonian Case Study,” in *Transnational Societies, Transterritorial Politics: Migrations in the (Post-) Yugoslav Region*, ed. Ulf Brunnbauer, (Munich: Kraus PrePrint, 2009), 216.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Kristina Balalovska, “Multiple voices of ‘Macedonian diaspora’: Politics and practices of (trans)national identities, national (re)constructions and state (re)ordering,” (PhD diss., Institut d’Études Politiques de Paris, 2013), 9.

3. History of the [Albanian]-Macedonian Diaspora

As mentioned earlier, the topics of emigration from Macedonia and the country's diaspora have not been scrutinized much in academia; unfortunately, the same can be said for the state institutions, in particular, the State Statistical Office, which has failed to collect official data regarding people who have emigrated from Macedonia. Most of the statistics come from databases of various International Organizations, such as the World Bank, or most recently, from European Union's Eurostat survey. Due to this lack of official data collected by domestic agencies, the numbers provided are often unreliable and manipulated.

i. Demographic Data

Notwithstanding the lack of official data regarding emigration from Macedonia, it is certain that the number of Macedonian citizens who have left from Macedonia in the last five decades is vast. Based on partially official data and studies by different local authors, from 1945 up to the present day, the number of citizens who have emigrated from Macedonia ranges from 525,000 to 540,000³⁹ – which constitutes more than 25% of the total population of 2,022,547.⁴⁰ Studies by local authors (Seadin Xhaferi, PhD) provide an approximation of the dynamics of migration of people who have left Macedonia from 1960s to date:

- 1) From 1961 to 1971 - the number of people who have emigrated ranges between 95,000 to 100,000 people;
- 2) From 1971 to 1981 - the number ranges approximately 70,000;
- 3) From 1981 to 1994 – the number ranges between 140,000 to 150,000

³⁹ Seadin Xhaferi, “Финансискиот потенцијал на иселениците и нивното вклучување во економијата на Република Македонија,” (The financial potential of the emigrants and their integration into the economy of Macedonia), (PhD diss., Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, 2004), 50.

⁴⁰ “Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Macedonia, 2002” last modified May, 2005, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/knigaXIII.pdf>.

4) After 1994 to 2013, the number is close to 50,000 citizens.⁴¹

On the basis of the data collected by the Council of Europe, a majority of them live in Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, Austria, France, Belgium, Netherlands, etc..⁴² Macedonian citizens have also emigrated overseas, especially to the United States, Australia, and Canada. The most recent statistics regarding emigrants from Macedonia was provided by Eurostat, which showed that from 1998 until 2011 – 230,000 persons have “officially” emigrated from Macedonia and have a regulated residence abroad.⁴³

In all the related documents and studies, the ethnic dimension of emigration from Macedonia has been nebulous. According to the 1994 census in Macedonia, the ethnic breakdown of migration is presented as follows: 62.6% Macedonian, 29.6% Albanian, 3.2% Turkish, 2.2% Roma, and others involved. But these figures are not accurate, because the number of the Albanian diaspora from Macedonia is estimated to be higher than it appears. If we analyze migration since 1981, emigration of ethnic Macedonians and members of other ethnic communities from Macedonia has been much lower, experiencing a negative trend; whereas emigration of Albanians from Macedonia has seen an upward trend. Only in this period, over 140,000 ethnic Albanians from Macedonia have left the country. These numbers can be confirmed by the censuses in the countries where there is a large Albanian-Macedonian diaspora. For example, in Switzerland there are 60,000 employees – citizens of Macedonia, out of which 80% constitute ethnic Albanians from Macedonia.⁴⁴

The motives for regular or irregular emigration of ethnic Albanian citizens of Macedonia vary from case to case; one common motive behind their emigration are the social and economic circumstances of the time, as well as the political and cultural oppression by

⁴¹ Xhaferi, “Финансискиот потенцијал на иселениците и нивното вклучување во економијата на Република Македонија,” 46

⁴² Xhaferi, “Финансискиот потенцијал на иселениците и нивното вклучување во економијата на Република Македонија,” 51.

⁴³ “Macedonian citizens massively emigrating from the country”, *Faktor*, May 11, 2013, accessed May 27, 2013, http://faktor.mk/archives/46965?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=makedonskite-gragjani-masovno-se-selat-vo-stranstvo

⁴⁴ “Les Sreangesrs en Suisse,” *Effectifs*, Decembre 1998, Q.18.

ethnic Macedonians – which dates back to Yugoslavia. For these reasons, a large number of ethnic Albanians from Macedonia gave up their land and emigrated to escape domestic pressures.

In their article, *The Political Economy of Interethnic Relations: Ahmeti's Village or the Macedonian Case*, the authors Knaus Gerald, Kristof Bender and Marcus Cox conducted an interesting study to fill in the gap of “hard data” regarding emigration dynamics of different ethnic communities from Kichevo.⁴⁵ The authors have randomly selected first-year students (1989/1990 academic year) from an ethnically mixed class at Kichevo's gymnasium “Mirko Mileski”, and followed up to see where they had ended up a decade later. The class consisted of 7 ethnic Albanians, 20 ethnic Macedonians and 4 ethnic Turks. 10 years later, 6 out of the 7 ethnic Albanians had left from Macedonia, whereas all of the 20 ethnic Macedonians were still in Macedonia (in fact, many of them were still living in Kichevo).⁴⁶ Although this study is too small to be representative of the whole population of Kichevo, it serves as a good basis to understand the diverging paths of the two ethnic communities in relation to emigration.

As mentioned earlier, exclusion of ethnic Albanians from the labor market during the socialist era, as well as discrimination in the economic sector have served as the push factors for members of the ethnic Albanian community from Macedonia. Exclusion and discrimination have served as the salient force behind these diverging paths of the two ethnic communities in relation to emigration. As pointed out in his book, *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad*, Gabriel Sheffer's argument supports this statement: “ethnic variations in migration follow from interethnic competition; in other words, the nature (and the ethnic

⁴⁵ Knaus Gerald et al., “The Political Economy of Interethnic Relations: Ahmeti's Village or the Macedonian Case,” in *Nationalism after Communism: Lessons Learned*, eds. Alina Mungiu-Pippidi and Ivan Krastev, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 107.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

composition) of migration in multiethnic societies is often the outcome of economic competition among ethnic groups.”⁴⁷

4. Research Methodology Applied in the Thesis

Researchers from a large milieu of academic backgrounds, such as political science, anthropology, sociology, history, and other social studies “have increasingly become engaged with the issues posed by a world in which millions of persons are ‘on the move.’”⁴⁸ Some of them have looked at these persons’ homelands, and some at their destination countries (or host countries), and another set of researchers have looked at the relationship which these people have maintained with their homeland from a destination country. Elucidating the connectedness (where existent) and their continuing relationships with their homeland (both real and imagined) is not an easy task, since ‘connectedness’ varies greatly from case to case, and from individual to individual.

The case study analyzed in this thesis, that is, the mobilization of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora for the local elections, was on-going as this dissertation was developing. Hence, in addition to the lack of scholarly articles on the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora and expatriate voting in Macedonia, there are no scholarly analyses on the topic of the 2013 local elections and the campaign surrounding this particular political process in Macedonia as of yet. The main materials used in the development of the heart of this thesis – the electoral campaign – are primary sources, both text and visuals, mainly based on internet sources.

⁴⁷ Gabriel Sheffer, introduction to *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), x.

⁴⁸ Andre Levy and Alex Weingrod, introduction to *Homelands and diasporas, holy lands and other places*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 4.

The methodology used to analyze these sources is critical discourse analysis which “centers on authentic everyday communication in institutional, media, political and other locations, and it regards both written and spoken ‘discourse’ as a form of social practice;”⁴⁹ a particular focus is put on core topics addressed in the electoral campaign of DUI. Since the targeted group of the campaign is a very specific one, it was easy to identify the rhetorical strategies used in addressing this group of people. The discourse analysis was limited to mainly these strategies, since there are a lot of primary sources. In addition, a specific attention was given to symbols and metaphors during the campaign.

The research methodology also includes an interview with the coordinator of the “Uskana 2013” project: a member of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora. The interview was conducted in an un-structured manner via direct interaction, and followed up via Skype and/or phone. Although this interview is not representative of the whole coordinative body of the “Uskana 2013” project, its qualitative assessment provides us with the general motive shared among all of the 125 coordinators. And last, the thesis incorporated some comparative empirical analysis of the voter turnout: the sources for analysis, which were yet to be published, were provided by the Director of the Political and Research Center “Liberta Institute Skopje” – Mr. Edmond Ademi.

The above-mentioned pertains to the analysis of the available sources which are related to the mobilization of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora, as well as its aftermath. As mentioned in the introduction, the structure of the thesis is organized in accordance to Eva Østergaard-Nielsen’s three-step approach to a “process oriented analysis of transnational political practices:”⁵⁰ a) the process of mobilization (the ‘why’); b) strategies and participation (the ‘how’); and c) the impact of migrant transnational practices on democratic processes in

⁴⁹ Ruth Wodak, et al., “The Discursive Construction of National Identity” in *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, Second Edition, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 8.

⁵⁰ Eva Østergaard-Nielsen, “The Politics of Migrants’ Transnational Political Practices,” *Center for Migration Studies of New York* Volume 37, Number 3 (2003): 765.

the country of origin (the ‘then what’). This methodology fits in perfectly when analyzing the mobilization of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora, since it has evolved in a multiple stage process. Each one of the three “steps” of analysis will be further elaborated in the introductory section of the chapters dedicated to them.

i. Homeland Politics

“Migrants (and refugees)⁵¹ may mobilize around a whole host of issues, the main types of which are immigrant politics, homeland politics, emigrant politics, diaspora politics and translocal politics.”⁵² According to Østergaard-Nielsen, ‘Homeland politics’ concerns migrants’ “political activities pertaining to the domestic or foreign policy of the homeland”, whereas ‘Diaspora politics’ – “grouped as another subset of homeland political practices” – pertains to those groups that are excluded from participating in the political system of their homeland.⁵³

The author adds that recent events have given ‘diaspora politics’ a “wider connotation in line with the more inclusive definitions of the concept of ‘diaspora’.”⁵⁴ And finally, another subset of homeland politics is translocal politics, which are defined as “initiatives from abroad to better the situation in local communities of origin.”⁵⁵ All of these definitions overlap in the case of transnational political practices of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora in the local elections, hence, one research methodology will not be enough to assess the politics which took place/are taking place between the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora and Macedonia. For practical purposes, the 2013 local elections are referred to as solely ‘Homeland politics.’

⁵¹ When citing Eva Østergaard-Nielsen, I adopt her terminology verbatim, whereas when applying her methodological method for the purposes of my study, ‘migrants’ translates into Albanian-Macedonian diaspora.

⁵² Eva Østergaard-Nielsen, “The Politics of Migrants’ Transnational Political Practices,” *Center for Migration Studies of New York* Volume 37, Number 3 (2003): 765.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 763.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

III. The Process of Mobilization (Why?)

The first set of questions in Eva Østergaard-Nielsen's 'three-step' approach to analyzing transnational political practices "focuses on the determinants for transnational political orientation."⁵⁶ This set of questions is mainly ensued from two dilemmas: "When and why do some migrants engage in transnational political activities while others do not?"⁵⁷ The central aim of this section is to understand why "principles of trust and solidarity are constructed across national territories as compared to those which are entirely locally-based and maintained" – a question formulated by Smith⁵⁸.

In trying to answer 'Why?' do transnational political activities take place, Østergaard-Nielsen acknowledges that "the mobilizing role of sending countries should not be underestimated."⁵⁹ Hence, this chapter will focus on the mobilizing role of DUI, and the motives for constructing principles of trust and solidarity across borders during the local elections in 2013.

'Sending country actors' can be governments, but also political parties – as it is the case in this thesis. Østergaard-Nielsen gives examples of Turkish political parties such as Milli Hareket Partisi or the religious Saadet Partisi, "who frequently send their leaders to Western Europe to rally support."⁶⁰ In order to contextualize the motives of DUI to mobilize the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora for the local elections in Municipality Kichevo, this section will: provide a brief historic overview of the events which lead to the decentralization process; define the decentralization process and its principles; and finally, analyze the significance attached to winning in Municipality Kichevo.

⁵⁶ Eva Østergaard-Nielsen, "The Politics of Migrants' Transnational Political Practices," *Center for Migration Studies of New York* Volume 37, Number 3 (2003): 765.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 767.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

5. Decentralization Process: Local Self-Government and New Territorial Organization

“As a result of complex history of division, regional ambitions and manipulations by outsiders, the region occupied by modern-day Macedonia has been subject to repeated and competing territorial claims.”⁶¹ As a consequence of these historic disputes and shifts in borders, modern-day Macedonia is home to a multiplicity of ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. During Tito’s multinational ideology of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, these diverse ethnic communities of Macedonia co-existed rather peacefully – or at least, that is the *prima facie* impression.

Along with Tito’s death and other concomitant events of the 1980s, this harmonious co-existence in Macedonia got replaced by escalating ethnic and national consciousness, especially among its ethnic Albanian citizens. As a response to this growing nationalism, “the Macedonian political elites took up a homogenizing project through policies aimed at ‘standardizing’ national identity and gradually eroding the institutional foundation sustaining ethnic diversity.”⁶² Fast forward to 1991, Macedonia gained its independence by peacefully seceding from Yugoslavia, whilst the question of the position of the minority ethnic groups of Macedonia remained nebulous. The long lasting struggle for recognition and rights, initiated by the largest minority in Macedonia, the ethnic Albanians, brought the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001.

After a six month armed insurgency between the Albanian National Liberation Army (NLA) and the Macedonian state in 2001; international intervention – i.e. the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe – halted the confrontation through the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement on August 13, 2001. The Agreement

⁶¹ Graham Holliday, “From Ethnic Privileging to Power-Sharing: Ethnic Dominance and Democracy in Macedonia”, in *The Fate of Ethnic Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, European Centre for Minority Issues, 2005, 141.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 143.

was signed by the President of Macedonia and representatives from the largest ethnic Albanian and ethnic Macedonian political parties. Francois Leotard and James Pardew, who represented the international community, were monitoring the whole process and they signed the Agreement as well. The aim of this Agreement was to end the conflict, but also “to create an ethnically inclusive plural democracy in Macedonia.”⁶³

One of the major pillars of the Ohrid Framework Agreement was implementing a reformed process of decentralization which would grant ethnic Albanians self-government rights. Decentralization in the Macedonian context is defined as “a low-level form of autonomy instituted primarily to accommodate Albanian demands for a greater participation in regions where they constitute a majority.”⁶⁴ The Law on Local Self-Government was passed without disputes, whereas “the Law on Territorial Organization of Municipalities was preceded by long lasting ethnic disputes.”⁶⁵ As an implication of the Law on Territorial Organization of Municipalities, a number of new municipalities were drawn up to accommodate different demands along ethnic lines; hence, in 2004, the number of municipalities was decreased from 123 to 84.

What did the decentralization process mean in practice? According to the Ohrid Framework Agreement and the new laws, it meant that a wide range of competences were transferred from central to local level and the new municipalities gradually took over functions previously performed by central government:

“These municipal competencies, prescribed in the Law on Local Self-Government include: child protection, collecting taxes, urban and rural planning, managing

⁶³ Jenny Engstrom, “Multi-ethnicity of Bi-nationalism? The Framework Agreement and the Future of the Macedonian State”, *Journal of Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Issue 1/2002, accessed April 24, 2012 on <http://www.ecmi.de/fileadmin/downloads/publications/JEMIE/2002/nr1/Focus1-2002Engstrom.pdf>, 2.

⁶⁴ Florian Bieber, introduction to *One Decade after the Ohrid Framework Agreement: Lessons (to be) Learned from the Macedonian Experience*, eds. Marija Risteska and Zhidas Daskalovski, (Skopje: FES and CRPM, 2011), 19.

⁶⁵ Přemysl Rosůlek, “Macedonia in 2011 – on the way towards stabilization or before the new ‘grand’ agreement?,” in *One Decade after the Ohrid Framework Agreement: Lessons (to be) Learned from the Macedonian Experience*, eds. Marija Risteska and Zhidas Daskalovski, (Skopje: FES and CRPM, 2011), 80.

primary health care, primary and secondary education, social welfare services, communal activities (comprising water supply, sewerage, public hygiene, waste administration, public transportation, construction and maintaining local roads), sport and recreation and all cultural activities, as well as local economic development.”⁶⁶

Hence, whoever administers with a municipality is endowed with the above-mentioned competencies.

i. “Ethnic Cantonization”: The Importance of Kichevo

According to some scholars, the contingency of the new territorial organization was “ethnic cantonization” which undermined the civic principle of the decentralization process.⁶⁷ With the new territorial organization, some regions with dominant ethnic Albanian inhabitants were attached to municipalities with dominant ethnic Macedonian inhabitants, thus changing the inter-ethnic balance in favor of the former. “This scared ethnic Macedonians, especially in municipalities of Lozovo, Rostushe, Centar Zhupa, Struga, Kichevo, and mainly in the capital of Skopje, which officially became a bilingual city.”⁶⁸ According to scholar Přemysl Rosůlek, such and similar territorial re-arrangements gave an impression that “Macedonians lost their unilingual Skopje and became minorities in several new municipalities.”⁶⁹ This is a personal opinion of the author and does not necessarily reflect the overall reaction of ethnic Macedonians to the new territorial organization.

The process of decentralization and the laws which followed from it encountered a variety of responses, especially from the media. One memorable media report was made by *Dnevnik* – a daily newspaper – right after the Law on Territorial Organization of Municipalities was passed in 2004. The daily carried an alarming headline that “The

⁶⁶ Ivana Boskovska, “The Decentralization Process in Macedonia”, *Analytical* – Vol. 3, Issue 1, accessed May 27, 2013, http://www.analyticalmk.com/files/03-2010/Ivana_BOSKOVSKA.pdf, 2.

⁶⁷ Přemysl Rosůlek, “Macedonia in 2011 – on the way towards stabilization or before the new ‘grand’ agreement?,” in *One Decade after the Ohrid Framework Agreement: Lessons (to be) Learned from the Macedonian Experience*, eds. Marija Risteska and Zhidas Daskalovski, (Skopje: FES and CRPM, 2011), 80.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Government is Secretly Dividing Macedonia”, adding that “Skopje and Struga had been sacrificed while Kichevo was saved temporarily.”⁷⁰ Only after reading the whole text can the reader understand that the meaning of ‘sacrificed’ and ‘saved’ in the headline mean ‘sacrificed to’ and ‘saved from’ ethnic Albanians living in Macedonia.

According to Kamelia Dimitrova, such “ethnic conspiracies have a long tradition on the Macedonian political scene [and the media], where the condemnations that the ruling party is ‘selling out’ or ‘dividing the country’ have often been used by Macedonian and Albanian opposition political parties to mobilize the electorate.”⁷¹ Nevertheless, using words such as ‘sacrificed’ and ‘saved’ in a newspaper article which describes the effects of the new territorial organization, provides a presumptive ground on how the rhetoric around municipal elections is shaped: as a zero sum game. When one side wins, the other one loses, and *vice versa*; and this applies to territory, competencies, power, etc.

6. Recent Demographic Changes

According to the last official census from 2002, the ethnic structure of the population of Macedonia is composed of 64.8% Macedonians, 25.17% Albanians, 3.85% Turks, 2.66% Roma, 1.78% Serbs, 0.84% Bosniaks, 0.48% Vlachs and 1.04% in the category “other”.⁷² The subsequent census was officially initiated on October 1st, 2012, and it was interrupted several

⁷⁰ Kamelia R. Dimitrova, “Municipal Decisions on the Border of Collapse: Macedonian Decentralisation and the Challenges of Post-Ohrid Democracy,” *Southeast European Politics* Vol. V, No. 2-3, accessed May 27, 2013 <http://www.seep.ceu.hu/archives/issue52/dimitrova.pdf>, 178.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Biljana Kotevska, “Effective Political Participation of the Small(er) Ethnic Communities in Local Self-Government in the Republic of Macedonia: The Impact of the Ohrid Framework Agreement”, Centre for Regional Policy Research and Cooperation “Studiorum”, Skopje: 2001, accessed April 24, 2012 on [http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00006492/01/CRPRC_Studiorum_Effective_participation_of_minorities-study\(ENG\).pdf](http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00006492/01/CRPRC_Studiorum_Effective_participation_of_minorities-study(ENG).pdf) p. 9

days before its completion.⁷³ According to Risto Karajkov's article published online at *Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso*, the reason for this abrupt termination of the population registration "came as a result of increasing tensions between the two major partners in the government, the VMRO-DPMNE⁷⁴ led by Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and the DUI of Ali Ahmeti."⁷⁵ The public closely followed the politicized debate between the two leaders regarding the census, whereas its failure resulted in the loss of 14 million euros.

Assessing the number of people in Macedonia is a politicized topic; as a matter of fact, it is an "ethno-political"⁷⁶ issue. Members of DUI insisted that the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora be counted in the census, whereas members of VMRO-DPMNE responded negatively to this request, and the lack of consensus terminated the census. Maximizing the number of ethnic Albanians in the outcome of the census would mean more rights allocated to this community. The Ohrid Framework Agreement entitles specific rights to any ethnic community which reaches the threshold of 20% of the entire population within an administrative unit.

Conspicuously, counting the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora in the census was not the sole problem. "Ethnic Macedonians have expressed fears of 'demographic swamping' due to comparatively higher fertility rates and traditionally larger families of Albanian Macedonians."⁷⁷ In other words, some authors have suggested that ethnic Macedonians fear that one day they will become a minority in Macedonia.⁷⁸ Recently collected data show that in the third quarter of 2012, municipalities with predominant ethnic Albanian inhabitants have

⁷³Risto Karajkov, "Census Fails in Macedonia," *Osservatorio balcani e caucaso*, October 20, 2011, accessed May 23, 2013, <http://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Regions-and-countries/Macedonia/Census-fails-in-Macedonia-105372>.

⁷⁴ Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity

⁷⁵ Risto Karajkov, "Census Fails in Macedonia".

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ Mary Frances Rosett Lebamoff and Zoran Ilievski, "The Ohrid Framework Agreement in Macedonia: Neither Settlement nor Resolution of Ethnic Conflict" (paper presented at the International Studies Association Conference, San Francisco, California, March 26-29, 2008), accessed May 27, 2013 http://humansecuritygateway.com/documents/ISA_Ohridframework.pdf, 7.

⁷⁸ Mary Frances Rosett Lebamoff and Zoran Ilievski, "The Ohrid Framework Agreement in Macedonia: Neither Settlement nor Resolution of Ethnic Conflict"

contributed positively to the natural growth of the population, whereas the opposite can be said for municipalities with a majority of ethnic Macedonians.⁷⁹ In fact, during the first nine months of 2012, thirty municipalities with predominant ethnic Macedonian inhabitants have reported higher death rate than birth rate.⁸⁰ Hence, this accounts for the second reason on why the census of 2012 did not take place.

Although the census failed, alongside with DUI's request of counting the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora as part of the population of Macedonia, the party's leadership succeeded in engaging the diaspora in a domestic political process. Although one cannot claim that there is a direct correlation between VMRO-DPMNE's rejection to count in the diaspora in the census with that of DUI's mobilization efforts, there is a conspicuous message which was sent by DUI's leadership after the failed census: that the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora is and will remain a vital part of domestic politics, and congruently, of the ethnic Albanian community of Macedonia.

7. "Local Geo-Political Engineering"

Three months prior to the elections, in December 2012, several newspapers announced that a new wave of territorial organization awaits Municipality Kichevo. At that point, Kichevo had a dominant ethnic Macedonian population. The newest territorial organization meant that four neighboring municipalities: Oslomej, Zajas, Drugovo and Vraneshtica, would be attached to Municipality Kichevo, and all five municipalities would constitute a single municipality, decreasing the previous number of municipalities in Macedonia from 84 to 80.⁸¹ Oslomej and

⁷⁹ "Tetova's population increases, Bitola's decreases," *Koha*, November 21, 2012, 2.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ "Conflict of ethnic concepts for the local elections in Kichevo?," *Plusinfo*, November 11, 2012, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://www.plusinfo.mk/vest/65840/Dojche-Vele-Sudir-na-etnichki-koncepti-i-za-lokalnite-izbori-vo-Kichevo>.

Zajas are municipalities with a predominant ethnic Albanian population, which means that the new territorial organization would change the proportion between ethnic Albanians and ethnic Macedonians in the newly comprised Municipality Kichevo.

This “local geo-political engineering”, a term employed by journalists of *Deutsche Welle*, was a political consensus between DUI and VMRO-DPMNE, which was agreed upon during the last local elections in 2009 and put into practice in early 2013 – several months before the elections. As mentioned in the introduction, the “old”⁸² Municipality Kichevo constituted an ethnically mixed municipality, with the two largest ethnic communities being ethnic Macedonian (53,5%) and ethnic Albanian (16,5%). With the new territorial organization, Zajas increased these percentages by 211 ethnic Macedonians and 11,308 ethnic Albanians; Oslomej by 110 ethnic Macedonians and 10,252 ethnic Albanians; Drugovo by 2,784 ethnic Macedonians and 155 ethnic Albanians; and Vraneshtica by 1,033 ethnic Macedonians and 10 ethnic Albanians.⁸³

Taking into consideration the numbers accounted in the official census of 2002, this means that in the “new” Municipality Kichevo, as of 2013, there are 20,278 ethnic Macedonians and 30,927 ethnic Albanians. Hence, the ethnic ratio between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians in the “new” Municipality Kichevo is 35,7% ethnic Macedonian to 54,5% ethnic Albanian.

Why then did the leadership of DUI need the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora to vote in Kichevo, if ethnic Albanians constitute a majority in the “new” Municipality Kichevo? The best explanation is the fact that, in Kichevo and the surrounding municipalities (now constituting a single municipality), a prodigious number of ethnic Albanians has emigrated – whilst many of them still hold on to their Macedonian citizenship. Hence, officially, they are

⁸² “Old” municipality Kichevo and “new” municipality Kichevo are employed by the author to distinguish between municipality Kichevo before and after the new territorial organization of 2013, where four other municipalities were attached to it.

⁸³ “Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Macedonia, 2002” last modified May, 2005, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/knigaXIII.pdf>, 34-35.

part of the above-mentioned 54,5% of the total population of Kichevo accounted in the census in 2002 – although they are not physically present, that is, residents of Kichevo.

During my field trips to Kichevo, I came to acknowledge that in every ethnic Albanian household in Kichevo, there is either a close relative or a distant relative who has emigrated or temporarily resides abroad. Not to mention that many houses in the area are empty. This is also a “common estimate, both by municipal officials and many ethnic Albanian citizens”, that “nearly in every household in rural areas and every second household in the town has at least one family member working abroad.”⁸⁴ Whereas during summer, “the Albanian quarter bustles with activity, and Cadillacs and other impressive cars with Chicago and Alaska license plates are parked along the sidewalks.”⁸⁵ These personal accounts are indispensable for grasping the situation of emigration from Kichevo – taking into consideration the lack of official data.

To demonstrate this discrepancy in the official numbers of the census (which disregards those who have emigrated), an article in *Macedonian International News Agency* (MINA) wrote that in the 2013 local elections, “Although Zajas and Oslomej are small villages of roughly 15,000 people put together, they somehow muster[ed] 16-18,000 votes, which is impossible any way one looks at it.” The additional number of votes was most probably cast in by members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora, not to disregard that proxy voting, that is, voting on behalf of a family member, is a popular phenomenon during elections in Macedonia.

⁸⁴ Knaus Gerald et al., “The Political Economy of Interethnic Relations: Ahmeti’s Village or the Macedonian Case,” in *Nationalism after Communism: Lessons Learned*, eds. Alina Mungiu-Pippidi and Ivan Krastev, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 124.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 105.

Hence, the three main motives behind the mobilization of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora for the 2013 local elections, which also answer the set of ‘*why*’⁸⁶ questions posed by Eva Østergaard-Nielsen in her three-step approach are: 1. Demographic: the aspiration that an ethnic Albanian mayor has control over the local governance of the large ethnic Albanian community in Kichevo; 2. Historic: “taking back” what is deemed as belonging to ethnic Albanians – which was historically usurped by force and manipulation on part of ethnic Macedonians; 3. Power: with the decentralization process, many important competencies which shape the life of the citizens of Kichevo were allocated to local-government level, hence, whoever administers with Municipality Kichevo, also has a hand on these competencies; 4. Diaspora: by engaging them in domestic political practices, DUI also aimed to strengthen ties with the members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ “When and why do some migrants engage in transnational political activities while others do not?; Why principles of trust and solidarity are constructed across national territories as compared to those which are entirely locally-based and maintained?, etc.”

⁸⁷ To be elaborated in Chapter VI on Conclusion and Remarks.

IV. The Strategies and Participation (How?)

The second set of questions posed by Eva Østergaard-Nielsen in her three-step approach to analyzing transnational political practices focuses on “how migrants’ transnational political practices are articulated and received within and across the political institutional context in both the sending country and receiving country?”⁸⁸ “How” in Østergaard-Nielsen’s three-step approach relates to “How is political connectedness organized across borders to guarantee commitment and motivate social action?”⁸⁹ Hence, this chapter will mainly focus on the campaign of DUI, as well as the campaign initiated by 125 coordinators of the “Uskana 2013” project, which created a palpable political connectedness between the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora and the 2013 local elections in Kichevo.

Organizational patterns of members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora and the members of DUI, are central components when analyzing how connectedness is formed in transnational political space; or as it relates to this study, how connectedness is formed between Switzerland and Kichevo, between Germany and Kichevo, between the United States and Kichevo, etc. “Associations, organizations and federations represent the institutionalization of ethnic, religious, and party political currents and movements from the homeland as well as the situation in the host-country.”⁹⁰ The main question here is “how is it that such organizations go about trying to influence politics? Which strategies and means do they use?”⁹¹ Although incommensurable, these networks have been considered central actors in shaping transnational political practices. In the thesis, this section will look at how DUI and “Uskana 2013” shaped politics on municipal level through the help of the diaspora.

⁸⁸ Eva Østergaard-Nielsen, “The Politics of Migrants’ Transnational Political Practices,” *Center for Migration Studies of New York* Volume 37, Number 3 (2003): 769.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

Before looking into *how* this ‘connectedness’ between homeland and diaspora is formed, one needs to conceptualize ‘connectedness’. According to Pnina Werbner, “there are powerful currents that sweep back and forth between homeland and diaspora.”⁹² She adds that these ‘currents’ are not solely based on memories of a “once-upon-a-time past, but are due, more profoundly, to the fact that ‘many diasporas are deeply implicated both ideologically and materially in the nationalist project of their homeland’.”⁹³ As we will see later in this chapter, members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora feel this deep implication, whereas members of DUI, are aware of this ‘connectedness’, hence, they sought out “help” from the diaspora in order to win in Kichevo.

8. Engaging the Diaspora

In her book, *Between State and Nation: Diaspora Politics and Kin-State Nationalism in Hungary*, Myra A. Waterbury analyses why and how states in Eastern Europe choose to engage “co-ethnic populations abroad”.⁹⁴ She also looks at the consequences of these state actions on “regional stability, interethnic relations and minority integration, domestic political development, and the project of the European Union integration.”⁹⁵ She acknowledges the negative consequences “that extraterritorial membership, such as voting rights, dual nationality, or other benefits granted by the kin-state may have on the state’s sovereignty and regional relations”, as some “elites manipulate ethnic ties to justify nationalist claims and their own political agendas.”⁹⁶

⁹² Andre Levy and Alex Weingrod, introduction to *Homelands and diasporas, holy lands and other places*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 9.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Myra A. Waterbury, *Between State and Nation: Diaspora Politics and Kin-state Nationalism in Hungary*, (Pelgrave Macmillan, 2010), 3.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 2.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Although her book concentrates on how the state of Hungary engages ethnic Hungarians living in neighboring countries, as well as the implications of these actions, she provides a very good methodological framework of why and how *states* engage their diasporas which can be applied to other cases, as well as the case study of this thesis. Her methodology is applicable to *political parties* acting out as actors of engagement since she elaborates on the agency of political elites in transnational political practices.

Waterbury argues that engaging the diaspora on part of the kin-state has “a specific political and strategic purpose” and is mainly driven by:

“the interests and perceptions of political elites who want to control three sets of resources represented by ethnic diasporas: the extraction of material resources for economic gain; the utilization of those abroad as a culture-linguistic resource to be used in defining the boundaries of national identity; and as political resource to help create or maintain legitimacy and support for kin-state elites.”⁹⁷

“The Albanian economic engine is fuelled almost entirely by remittances. By conservative estimates, the modern-day migrant workers send home or spend more than 16 million euros in Kichevo annually.”⁹⁸ Hence, the first set of resources outlined by Waterbury, which are the material resources, apply to this study as well. Remittances play a significant role in motivating political elites from Macedonia to opt for increasing the diaspora’s engagement, not only in the domestic economy, but also in its politics.

Diasporas also have a “culture-linguistic function”, which makes them strategic actors in “state-building, national identity construction, and cultural reproduction.”⁹⁹ “Ethnic diasporas can serve prominently in the construction of national myths, which are used to legitimize nationalist political agendas, and the modes of inclusion and exclusion that

⁹⁷ Myra A. Waterbury, *Between State and Nation: Diaspora Politics and Kin-state Nationalism in Hungary*, (Pelgrave Macmillan, 2010), 6.

⁹⁸ Knaus Gerald et al., “The Political Economy of Interethnic Relations: Ahmeti’s Village or the Macedonian Case,” in *Nationalism after Communism: Lessons Learned*, eds. Alina Mungiu-Pippidi and Ivan Krastev, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 105.

⁹⁹ Waterbury, *Between State and Nation: Diaspora Politics and Kin-state Nationalism in Hungary*, 7.

designate who will have access to political power and the resources of the state.”¹⁰⁰ In its electoral campaign, political members of DUI repeatedly mentioned the prominent role that the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora plays in the local elections. DUI’s agenda will be elaborated in the upcoming sections, but it is important to mention that the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora was seen as a key player in ethnic identity construction and cultural reproduction in Kichevo, as well as a designator of who will have access to political power and the resources of the state. Although Waterbury deals with the state of Hungary as the actor of mobilization, her methodology can be modified to fit an analysis of politics at local level.

It is also important to look at the different stages of the relationship between a diaspora and its homeland. During Tito’s reign, diaspora’s were not welcomed in Yugoslavia – there were particularly strict regulations about political exiles. “With the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the peoples of Yugoslavia and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, hoped that their diasporas might contribute guidance and, more pointedly, financial succor for the transitions out of socialism.”¹⁰¹ Today, this has changed; former Yugoslav countries take pride in their diasporas, especially, after their involvement in the wars in the region. The same applies to Macedonia: members of different ethnic communities take pride in their ethnic brethren who reside abroad. This pertains to political elites particularly, since they see it as an responsibility to maintain ties with people who have hold on to their cultural identity (ethnic identity), and who have resisted assimilation in host countries.

“Reframing a discourse of the national (or ethnic) identity that invokes those beyond the border can provide a unique source of legitimacy for political actors.”¹⁰² This is especially applicable at times of political transformation, as it was the case during the local elections in

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Paul Hockenos, introduction to *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism & the Balkan Wars*, (Ithaca&London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 4.

¹⁰² Myra A. Waterbury, *Between State and Nation: Diaspora Politics and Kin-state Nationalism in Hungary*, (Pelgrave Macmillan , 2010), 8.

Kichevo – when for the first time this municipality gained an ethnic Albanian mayor. Political members of DUI considered the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora as the key population for local transformation. “Reaching out to those abroad and establishing cross-border ties based on ethnic kinship is a way for governments and political parties to redefine the bases of their legitimacy, particularly at times of economic or political crisis.”¹⁰³

i. Diaspora Engagement Policies: Citizenship

Although the fourth chapter of the thesis is mainly dedicated to the campaign of DUI and the “Uskana 2013” project, it is important to briefly look at the legal structures of Macedonia which are related to diaspora engagement, for they provide a reasonable basis on ‘how’ diasporas are engaged in political processes.

The direct individual political engagement of members of the diaspora, such as voting, “is largely dependent on the extent to which such right is granted by the sending country authorities.”¹⁰⁴ In the official site of the Agency for Emigration¹⁰⁵, there is a hyperlink which forwards the visitors to the ‘Laws’ section. As it can be seen from the website, there are no specific laws which directly target members of the diaspora: the laws posted in the website are general laws about taxes, investments, and citizenship.

Hence, Macedonian citizenship is what gives members of the diaspora the right to engage in domestic politics. “Political rights present a central component of the institution of modern citizenship: voting is often now the only significant right in modern democracies that distinguishes the citizen from the alien; it also served, historically, to mark the divide between

¹⁰³ Myra A. Waterbury, *Between State and Nation: Diaspora Politics and Kin-state Nationalism in Hungary*, (Pelgrave Macmillan, 2010), 8.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ “Emigration Agency of the Republic of Macedonia”, <http://www.iselenickistrani.gov.mk/>.

citizen and subject.”¹⁰⁶ According to Waterbury “citizenship is the most powerful, and controversial, type of diaspora engagement policy that has become prevalent in post-communist Europe.”¹⁰⁷ Although she talks about ‘ethnic citizenship’ which is given by kin-states to co-nationals residing in, mainly, neighboring countries, the same applies for Macedonia and it’s diaspora which resides abroad (not only in neighboring countries).

“Citizenship incentivizes and instrumentalizes identity, trading rights, benefits, and mobility for diaspora members in exchange for loyalty and participation in the political, economic, and identity projects of the kin-state.”¹⁰⁸ Signing the Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001 led to significant changes in the Law on Citizenship. As Balalovska has noted, these changes of the Law on Citizenship in 2004 “re-bordered” who constitutes the Macedonian nation by being more inclusive, especially towards ethnic Albanians who have emigrated.¹⁰⁹ Prior to 2004, Article 11 of the Law on Citizenship stated that “an alien who has reached 18 years of age may acquire citizenship... by naturalization, if that is of a special scientific, economic, cultural and national interest, and that particularly for all Macedonians by origin who live outside of the borders of the Republic of Macedonia.”¹¹⁰ In 2004, this Article was changed and ‘all Macedonians by origin’ was dropped: this change was made in accordance to the provisions of the European Convention on Nationality.

The Law on Citizenship also provides a definition of who constitutes an ‘emigrant’:
“An emigrant, in the sense of this law, shall be considered a citizen of the Republic of Macedonia who has emigrated from the Republic of Macedonia to another state, exclusive of his mother country, regardless of the sex, race, color of skin, national and social origin,

¹⁰⁶ Peter J. Spiro, “Perfecting Political Diaspora” *NYU Law Review* Vol. 81:207, (2006), 209, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://www.nyulawreview.org/sites/default/files/pdf/12.pdf>.

¹⁰⁷ Waterbury, *Between State and Nation: Diaspora Politics and Kin-state Nationalism in Hungary*, 161.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Kristina Balalovska, “Multiple voices of ‘Macedonian diaspora’: Politics and practices of (trans)national identities, national (re)constructions and state (re)ordering.” (PhD diss., Institut d’Études Politiques de Paris, 2013), 232.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

political and religious belief, property and social status.”¹¹¹ By increasing the scope of who constitutes the ‘Macedonian nation’, and who constitutes an ‘emigrant’, the scope of political engagement of the diaspora was increased as well.

Scheduled to be implemented starting in 2013, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Macedonia initiated a project for issuing passports (biometric) in the United States, Canada, Australia, Europe, and New Zealand. The Ministry informed all citizens of Macedonia, who reside temporarily or permanently in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Federal Republic of Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, France, Great Britain, Switzerland, Italy, Austria and Slovenia that they can now apply for passports through the consular missions of Macedonia in the above-mentioned countries.¹¹² The official call, which provided detailed information on where and how to apply for a passport, was made available on November 22, 2012 – on the official website of the Ministry. That is, four months prior to the local elections. This initiative, taken by the Government of Macedonia, clearly demonstrates the willingness to engage members of the diaspora in the local elections, given that, only those citizens holding a biometric passport were eligible to vote.

ii. Resolution on Migration Policy of Macedonia

Chapter four is dedicated to looking at the actions and strategies undertaken by members of a *political party* in mobilizing members of a diaspora and engaging them in local politics. In order to understand the capacity of a political party for diaspora engagement, one needs to look at a country’s migration policy framework, as well as the specific action

¹¹¹ Ibid., 232-233.

¹¹² “Прием на барања и издавање на пасоши во Европа, САД, Канада и Австралија и Нов Зеланд во 2013 година,” (Admission of requests for the issuance of passports in Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand in 2013), *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Macedonia*, <http://mfa.gov.mk/?q=node/1712>.

programs of Government-related institutions regarding a country's diaspora. These projects and programs, as it is the case with the initiative for issuing passports in diplomatic representations of Macedonia, are utilized by political parties in their search for political support from abroad. Hence, acknowledging these institutions is crucial for understanding the grounds on which political parties operate for diaspora engagement and mobilization.

Pursuant to Article 68, paragraph 2 of the Constitution of Macedonia, the Macedonian Parliament adopted the 'Resolution on Migration Policy of the Republic of Macedonia'.¹¹³ The need to adopt a consistent migration policy was a result of intensified international migration which has affected Macedonia as well. The basic determinants for this migration policy are: the changes in intensity and nature of emigration and immigration in the country and their impact on the demographic and socio-economic development of the country; Macedonia's geopolitical position which is regarded as a crossway for several European migration flows; the need and desire of the Government to comply with European Union's legislation on migration and asylum as part of the Euro-integration process, etc.

The Resolution has a specific section dedicated to policy area with regards to the diaspora, in which the following activities are foreseen: establishing and maintaining an administrative unit for the registration of the population (census); introducing an automatic service for evidencing citizens (births, marriages, deaths, etc.); taking measures to implement the obligatory registration of citizens upon entry or exit from Macedonia; and finally, mapping the diaspora and creating a categorized database of its members.

The main aim of the Resolution with regards to the diaspora is to create a consistent policy framework which will assist in strengthening the ties of Macedonia with its diaspora because it acknowledges the development potential of emigration. The Resolution considers those people who have left Macedonia for temporary residence and employment abroad as

¹¹³ "Резолуција за миграциона политика на Република Македонија" (Resolution on Migration Policy of the Republic of Macedonia), accessed May 27, 2013, http://www.sobranie.mk/WBStorage/Files/REZOLUCIJA_MIGRACIONA_POLITIKA.doc.

diaspora as well. The Resolution appoints several state institutions as responsible for the implementation of the policies. The Emigration Agency of the Republic of Macedonia is assigned as the most prominent institution in relation to the country's diaspora.¹¹⁴

iii. The Emigration Agency of the Republic of Macedonia

During the recent years, governments of developing countries have become increasingly interested in their diasporas. More and more, diasporas have been considered as agents for development by their governments. "Aware of this potential, some developing countries have established institutions to more systematically facilitate ties with their diasporas."¹¹⁵ Although Macedonia's Government is not a fully diaspora-centered government, it has established several institutions which deal with the country's diaspora. There are different levels where such an institution can operate: on national/federal level and/or local level.¹¹⁶ On national level, in addition to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia (and its specialized institutes dealing with the diaspora), the most important institution is the Emigration Agency of the Republic of Macedonia (hereafter, referred to as the Emigration Agency).

The activities of the Emigration Agency are outlined in its Strategic Plan (adopted on September 26, 2011) which is in accordance with the statutory responsibilities of the Emigration Agency, the Program of the Government, the Resolution on Migration Policy of the Republic of Macedonia, and the migration profile of Macedonia for 2009-2014. As

¹¹⁴ "Резолуција за миграциона политика на Република Македонија" (Resolution on Migration Policy of the Republic of Macedonia), accessed May 27, 2013,

http://www.sobranie.mk/WBStorage/Files/REZOLUCIJA_MIGRACIONA_POLITIKA.doc.

¹¹⁵ Dovelyn Rannveig Agunias, introduction to *Closing the Distance: How Governments Strengthen Ties with their Diasporas*, ed. Dovelyn Rannveig Agunias, (Washington D.C.: Migration Policy Institute, 2009), 1.

¹¹⁶ Ibid 2

presented in the Emigration Agency's official website¹¹⁷, the Strategic Plan is expected to be implemented through five sets of activities: which are divided into separate programs with specific activities, all of which are under the jurisdiction of the Emigration Agency. It is important to note that there is no consistent use of terminology throughout the text of the Strategic Plan, hence 'migrant', 'emigrant', 'diaspora' are used incoherently, possibly, implying one meaning. For the purposes of this thesis I will adopt only their use of the term 'emigrant', since it makes a correlation with the name of the Agency itself.

The five sets of activities in the Strategic Plan are: reintegration of emigrants from Macedonia; promoting cultural development of emigrants; improving the status and the rights of emigrants from Macedonia; informing emigrants about the current events in Macedonia; and last, strengthening the ties between Macedonia and its emigrants. The fourth set of activities is the most relevant to this thesis, as it proposes "to create conditions for participation of emigrants in the public and the political life of Macedonia, through participation in the electoral process, as well as the realization of active and passive voting rights."¹¹⁸

Although, many of the activities proposed in the Strategic Plan are yet to be implemented, political parties such as DUI can take advantage of these activities and policies when establishing transnational ties for political purposes. But, do they? Following closely the work of the Emigration Agency, I have come to acknowledge that this institution mainly deals with the ethnic Macedonian diaspora, whereas eliminating the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora from its activities. For example, in the Third Annual Conference of Emigrant Organizations, which was organized by the Emigration Agency, none of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora organizations participated. Although the explanation for this remains unknown, the invitation

¹¹⁷"Програма," (Program), *Emigration Agency of the Republic of Macedonia*, accessed May 27, 2013
<http://www.makemigration.com/iselenistvoweb/index.php?page=47>

¹¹⁸"Стратешки план на Агенцијата за иселеништво," (Strategic Plan of the Emigration Agency), *Emigration Agency of the Republic of Macedonia*, accessed May 27, 2013,
<http://www.makemigration.com/iselenistvoweb/index.php?page=46>.

for the Fourth Annual Conference of Emigrant Organizations hints a clue: the Agency for Emigration invites all “*Macedonian* Emigrant Organizations and Associations...”¹¹⁹ without elaborating on ‘Macedonian’ – does it denote citizenship? Or ethnic affiliation?

Hence, the work of DUI and other ethnic Albanian political parties who have created ties with the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora complements the work of the Emigration Agency, which [indirectly] has excluded the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora from its work. Political parties can benefit, however, from the policy framework set up by state institutions regarding the diaspora. In the case of the local elections, DUI benefited from citizenship and the “active and passive” voting rights of emigrants.

9. The Campaign

Elections are a crucial part of every democratic society. “They [elections] provide citizens with the opportunity to determine how their interests can best be served,”¹²⁰ whereas an electoral campaign is the medium between citizens and elections. “In order to translate the general will of the electorate into representative government, it is necessary that all parties and candidates be able to put out their manifestos – the political issues and their proposed solutions – freely to the electorate during the electoral campaign.”¹²¹ In other words, electoral campaigns are a two-fold communication tool: they inform citizens, but also acquire information from them. Political scientists have dedicated much work on how to analyze a

¹¹⁹“Покана за учество на Четврта годишна конференција на иселеничките организации во Република Македонија” (Invitation to participate on the fourth annual conference of emigrant organizations of the Republic of Macedonia), accessed May 27, 2013, <http://www.makemigration.com/iselenistvoweb/index.php?page=38>.

¹²⁰ Judith S. Trent and Robert V. Friedenberg, “Communication and Political Campaigns: A prologue,” in *Political Campaign Communication: Principles and Practices*, Sixth Edition, (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), 3.

¹²¹ “Democratic Electoral Campaigns”, IDEA, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://www.idea.int/publications/ies/upload/9.%20Democratic%20electoral%20campaigns.pdf> , 55.

campaign: how to grasp the strategies and tactics incorporated in the campaign of a political party.

As mentioned above, this thesis deals with the electoral campaign of the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) targeting the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora, aimed at mobilizing voters for the 2013 local elections in Kichevo. Hence, it is necessary to draw a line between the campaign ‘abroad’ and the campaign ‘at home’, although the similarities and differences between the two will be overlooked in the thesis due to space and time limitations. After presenting the material from the primary sources such as campaign materials, Electoral Program, etc., this section will concentrate on the discourse surrounding the campaign in the media.

The primary sources are video materials acquired from the Radio Television Uskana (a local TV station in Kichevo) as they accompanied political members of DUI during their visit trips to countries with a large electorate among the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora. The secondary sources are newspaper articles and reports on the campaign, both in Macedonian and Albanian language newspapers. The section will be divided into two sub-sections which will highlight the different campaigning currents: the campaign of DUI, and the campaign initiated by members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora for the same purpose: to mobilize as many voters as possible for the local elections in Kichevo.

i. The Campaign of the Democratic Union for Integration

Information about the Overall Electoral Campaign:

The official electoral campaign for the 2013 local elections in Macedonia was initiated on March 4, 2013, after midnight. The “promotion” of candidates for mayors and councilors in eighty municipalities lasted for twenty days. On March 23, one day prior to the elections,

there was a pre-election silence. After a boycott in the Parliament by the oppositional Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), whose members requested an extension of the deadline for submitting the lists of candidates for mayors and councilors, a settlement was reached and the final date to submit the lists was set to March 8, 2013.¹²²

In Macedonia, the campaign began with VMRO-DPMNE's promotion of the candidate for Mayor of Municipality Ohrid: Dr. Nikola Bakracheski.¹²³ VMRO-DPMNE's electoral campaign slogan was: "Choose achievements (deeds). Macedonia is loved with achievements."¹²⁴ On the other hand, VMRO-DPMNE's coalition partner, DUI, began campaigning in Municipality Gostivar by promoting its candidate Mr. Nevzat Bejta for mayor of this municipality. DUI's electoral campaign slogan was "Bashkë ndërtojmë." which in translation means "We build together."

DUI's Electoral Campaign Materials:

Internet and technology were intensively utilized by the Public Relations and marketing practitioners of DUI. Initially, the campaign gained its official website: www.bashkendertojme.mk, which has useful links to: news, list of candidates, programs, time schedules, videos, photos, and the like. The website also includes the official campaign song of DUI, named "Bashkë Ndërtojmë", the same as the main slogan of the campaign – uploaded via SoundCloud¹²⁵. The song is performed by the most popular ethnic Albanian singers from Macedonia, and one singer from Albania. Engaging pop-stars in political campaigns is a very common practice among political parties in Macedonia.

¹²² The initial deadline was February 16, 2013

¹²³ "Local Elections: The Campaign has Begun", *MKD*, March 4, 2013, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://www.mkd.mk/makedonija/partii/pochna-kampanjata>

¹²⁴ "Избери дела. Македонија се сака со дела"

¹²⁵ "Bashke Ndertojme", Soundcloud, accessed May 27, 2013, <https://soundcloud.com/bashkendertojme/bashkendertojme>

The song has an uplifting rhythm with segments of ethno-traditional music in between the choruses. The lyrics of the song start with “Albanian brothers, let’s proceed together in the path to knowledge”, whereas the chorus is “We build together, we celebrate together, we are happy together.” Another ebullient line is “I want to climb on top of a mountain and see the whole Arbëri” – ‘Arbëri’ is a term used to refer to the historic origin of Albanians, whereas in today’s terms, it symbolizes the oneness or unity of Albanians across borders (from the ‘top of mountains’ in Macedonia, one can see Kosovo and Albania).

The website also features a 356 page e-book of the Program for the Local Elections 2013 (hereinafter, referred to as the Program) of DUI. As one opens the e-book, the campaign song is repeatedly played in the background. The Program materials are divided into two main sections: the first one is the ‘Election Platform of DUI for the Local Elections 2013’, and the second one is dedicated to the electoral programs of each municipality in which DUI proposed a candidate. The e-book is available only in Albanian language: its text is eloquent, easy to understand, and engaging the reader. The text is written in first person plural narration, as the voice of DUI, whereas referring to the reader with ‘You’. These are strategies used by political parties for giving the impression of modesty and closeness to the citizens: that “we are one of you, we want to talk to you and hear you” impression. The e-book is decorated with vivid pictures of smiling families, graduating students, the Albanian flag, etc.

The growing popularity of the social networks among citizens of Macedonia, encouraged the candidates for mayors and councilors to campaign online, especially on Facebook and Twitter. Throughout the electoral campaign, the official fan page of DUI¹²⁶ was also actively utilized to inform its followers on events regarding the campaign and the elections. Pictures, songs, and videos of the campaign were posted on a day to day basis.

¹²⁶“Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim – DUI”, Facebook, accessed May 27, 2013
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Bashkimi-Demokratik-p%C3%ABr-Integrim-BDI/114081605319234>.

DUI's Electoral Program: on the Diaspora:

DUI's Electoral Program for the local elections in 2013 includes a detailed agenda on how municipalities can strengthen ties with the diaspora, or create ties where non-existent. It is not clear from the text as to whom this Program refers as a 'diaspora'. The elaborated agenda is included from in between pages 26 and 29, towards the beginning of the 365 page e-book, in the chapter named "The Municipality Closer to the Citizens"¹²⁷.

The Program considers the diaspora as having a multifunctional role in the social, economic, and political development of each municipality. As such, DUI puts a particular emphasis on these ties and prioritizes the diaspora. The diaspora is portrayed as having played a crucial role in "the preservation and stabilization of the Albanian family", alongside with the economic aspect of eliminating poverty among ethnic Albanians families. The Program also acknowledges the role of the diaspora in the "organization and support of the armed resistance"¹²⁸ – referring to the armed insurgency in 2001 where the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora was the topmost financier of the National Liberation Army.

The sub-chapter is named "Diaspora, the Potential of Municipalities" and lists all the acknowledgments on part of DUI with regards to the diaspora:

1. DUI thanks the diaspora for its contribution in all spheres of life;
2. DUI believes that the diaspora's significance is growing every year;

¹²⁷ "Programi", *Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim*, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://www.bashkendertojme.mk/programi/#/4>, 4.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

3. DUI is convinced that this potential (of the diaspora) and its interests should gain a representation in Macedonia, so that the benefits of the ties and cooperation are optimized for both sides.¹²⁹

The text continues by laying out a detailed plan of the measures that DUI will undertake to strengthen/establish ties between the diaspora and the municipalities. Acknowledging that the diaspora contributes to Macedonia's GDP with an influx of one billion euros annually (16% of the whole GDP of Macedonia)¹³⁰, the Program proposes the establishment of a Fund for Micro-investments which will mobilize these resources on municipal level, following the example of other European countries. Specifically, the Program proposes the following activities in relation to strengthening ties with the diaspora. The list includes eight other activities which are not mentioned here:

1. To build an interactive communication portal between the municipalities and the stakeholder members of the diaspora;
2. To create consultancy offices for the assistance and support of the members of the diaspora;
3. To encourage the alleviation of fiscal and administrative obligations, especially for those who want to invest in Macedonia;
4. To help and support the involvement of members of the diaspora in political structures.

A delicate use of terminology is made in the section where DUI proposes the institutionalization of the exchange of competences, stating that "DUI is aware of the role and contribution of the diaspora in the local and national development of the country", and considers members of the diaspora as "co-patriots who are a source of knowledge, education,

¹²⁹“Programi”, *Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim*, accessed May 27, 2013 <http://www.bashkendertojme.mk/programi/#/26>, 26.

¹³⁰“Programi”, *Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim*, accessed May 27, 2013 <http://www.bashkendertojme.mk/programi/#/28>, 28.

and political maturity.”¹³¹ The terms used in the Program, such as “national” and “co-patriot” are the translation of what the Program uses to refer to ethnic Albanians, and not to the general population of Macedonia. Hence, the definition of ‘diaspora’ provided by Paul Hockenos brings us closer to understanding what DUI means when utilizing the term ‘diaspora’, i.e.: “The generic definition is that a diaspora comprises those members of a common ethnic-national group living outside the borders of their native home territory. The two key criteria are ethnicity and foreign residency.”¹³²

The previous Electoral Program for the local elections in 2009 does not mention the diaspora. Hence, this elaborative agenda is an original initiative taken by DUI for the local elections in 2013. The Program was presented to members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora during the field trips aimed at mobilizing them. I believe that the Program is greatly responsible for the success of mobilization of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora during the local elections, since for the first time it showed preparedness and organization on part of a political party to engage the diaspora in homeland affairs.

In addition, it is imperative to mention that DUI won the right to governance in majority of the municipalities among the ethnic Albanian bloc during the previous local elections in 2009. Consequently, DUI’s 2013 campaign started off with the motto “You trusted us with the governments in majority of the municipalities, and we are proud of what we have achieved.”¹³³ Building upon the experience from the previous ‘successful’¹³⁴ campaign for the local elections, this year’s campaign can be considered as even more thriving. Both the campaign materials and the campaign speeches evocated confidence and consistency; in addition, the capacity and the scope of the campaign were increased as the

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Paul Hockenos, introduction to *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism & the Balkan Wars*, (Ithaca&London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 7.

¹³³ “Programi”, *Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim*, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://www.bashkendertojme.mk/programi/#/6>, 6.

¹³⁴ Success in this context is used as a unit of measurement for who got the most votes.

target population grew by incorporating the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora. I believe that the above-mentioned factors (as well as finances) provide a reasonable basis for DUI opting to extend the campaign to the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora.

“Kichevo is Ours!”

“Kichevo is Ours!” and “the time is now, to take Kichevo back!”¹³⁵ are the two slogans most commonly used by the political leaders on their field-trips to different countries in Europe (mainly, in Western Europe) and in the United States. These slogans were very often adopted *verbatim* in media accounts on the campaign of DUI abroad. According to journalists from the daily *Dnevnik*, prior to the elections, the atmosphere in Kichevo was tense, as “Macedonians are afraid to lose Kichevo, whereas Albanians are awaiting to win it”¹³⁶. The article continues with the statement: “although the inter-ethnic relations in the city are stable, for members of both communities [ethnic Albanian and ethnic Macedonian], it is of an utmost importance that the new Mayor of Kichevo is a member of “their”¹³⁷ community. The use of “our”, “their”, “us”, “them” – in both the speeches and the media reports on the campaign is a rhetorical strategy.

In his article “What does ‘we’ mean? National deixis in the media”, Pille Petersoo questions the ardor of national media (particularly newspapers) to use the deictic expression ‘we’ as a means of national identity formation. In the above-mentioned example, journalists from *Dnevnik* (written in Macedonian) adapt the terms by using quotation marks, indicating that there is dissimilarity between the writer and the person he/she is reporting on. Petersoo’s argument is valid for the oral campaign of DUI as well, since “our” and “we” were used to set

¹³⁵ The video materials used for the research methodology of this thesis were provided by the Radio Television “Uskana” based in Kichevo – in the form of CD’s. The video’s can also be found on the Facebook page of RTV Uskana.

¹³⁶ “Macedonians are afraid to lose it, Albanians are waiting to win Kichevo”, *Dnevnik Online*, November 11, 2012, accessed May 27, 2013

<http://www.dnevnik.com.mk/default.asp?ItemID=FD2BF4115B7BBB439FE2834763AE8A82>

¹³⁷ Ibid.

ethnic boundaries, by distancing one ethnic community from the other. In the campaign, these terms are applied strategically to denote “ownership” over something (over Kichevo); hence the willingness of the audience to get what is “theirs” is affected positively.

In their electoral campaign abroad, political members of DUI referred to Kichevo as “Uskana” which is the city’s ancient Albanian name. In his speeches, Ali Ahmeti stressed that Uskana belongs to ethnic Albanians, because it has a predominant ethnic Albanian population and because historically, it belonged to ethnic Albanians. In addition, he stressed the importance of these particular local elections with statements such as “now is the time to get Kichevo back from those who forcefully took it from ‘us’ by manipulating with votes and demography throughout the years.”¹³⁸ The speeches contained phrases such as “now is the time”, “this is the moment”, and other oral strategies to designate some sort of emergency of the situation. This emergency pertains to the discrimination that ethnic Albanians have experienced under the governance of ethnic Macedonians, hence “now is the time” to change this flow of events for the benefit of ethnic Albanians.

During the electoral campaign abroad, DUI made sure to bring Albanian flags and other national symbols to the meetings with the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora. Ali Ahmeti, in one of his speeches stressed the importance of having the Albanian flag waved in front of Kichevo’s Municipality building¹³⁹. In the context of Macedonia, which is home to people from diverse ethnic [and religious] backgrounds, the utilization and the significance attached to national symbols is a complex phenomenon. Symbols are given so much significance by agents because they serve as ethnic demarcation on the municipal level, and broader: putting up a flag in front of an administrative building means that the devotees of that flag are also those in power. In 1995, Rufi Osmani, the Mayor of the Municipality Gostivar (a city with a large ethnic Albanian population) was imprisoned for 5 years because he displayed the

¹³⁸ Video materials provided by RTV Uskana.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

Albanian flag in front of the municipality building. Today, municipalities with an ethnic Albanian mayor have the right to display the Albanian flag.

“31 Airplanes to Win in Kichevo”

Izet Mexhiti, the Vice-President of DUI, addressed the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora in Italy stating: “We need 31 airplanes to win Kichevo. You should all become part of the victory in Kichevo”.¹⁴⁰ This estimation of how many votes (“planes”) are needed for the ethnic Albanian candidate to win in Kichevo was provided by the Political and Research Center “Liberta Institute Skopje”. The Institute’s analysis states that: taking into consideration the results from the local elections in 2009, Municipality Kichevo, together with Vraneshtica, Drugovo, Zajas and Oslomej (now all constituting one municipality) had a total voter turnout of 24,502. Out of this number, 14,544 were ethnic Macedonian voters whereas 8,309 were ethnic Albanian.

But there is a catch: in 2009, there were candidates from other ethnic Albanian political parties, hence, out of the 8,309 ethnic Albanian voters, only 60% voted for DUI. The analysis continues with a prognosis: In order for DUI to win in 2013, all these votes should be combined, that is, they should not be split among several ethnic Albanian parties, and in addition, another 6,235 votes are required. The balance of voter turnout among ethnic Albanians and ethnic Macedonians can be achieved if the voter turnout of ethnic Albanians is increased, and if the diaspora is engaged to close the 6,235 gap of votes. Translated in transportation means, the Institute estimated that 31 airplanes or 125 buses full of people are required for the ethnic Albanian candidate to win the elections in Kichevo.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ “Izet Mexhiti calling emigrants: vote and become part of the victory of the Albanian Kichevo”, *Maxim*, November 13, 2012, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://maxim.mk/medziti-gi-povika-pechalbarite-glasajte-i-bidete-del-od-pobedata-na-albansko-kichevo>.

¹⁴¹ “Liberta Institute: DUI will need 31 airplanes to win in Kichevo”, *Tocka News and Entertainment*, November 13, 2012, accessed May 27, 2013, http://tocka.com.mk/1/80036/liberta-institut-na-dui-ke-mu-trebaat-31-avion-za-pobeda-vo-kicevo?utm_source=daily.mk.

Relevant to this section are the ethnic coalitions formed prior to the local elections in Kichevo. Ethnic Albanian political parties from the opposition front decided not to propose a candidate in Kichevo so that the votes would not split. The leader of the Democratic Party of the Albanians (DPA) was quoted saying “We will support DUI in Kichevo, and our votes should go to their candidate”¹⁴² despite of the fact that DPA and DUI have an inimical relationship in the Parliament. The same happened among the ethnic Macedonian political parties, when the oppositional SDSM decided not to propose a candidate either. Hence, the elections were between two candidates: one representing the ethnic Albanian community, and the second representing the ethnic Macedonian community.

ii. Profile of the Candidates for Mayor of Kichevo

This section will briefly look at the profiles of the two candidates for Mayor of Kichevo during the local elections of 2013. The information is accumulated from the biographies presented in the official websites of the candidates. The ethnic Albanian candidate, proposed by DUI, was Fatmir Dehari – born in the village of Serbica, Kichevo, on September 17, 1974. He finished his studies at the University of Prishtina in 1998. During 2001, he was a high officer among the National Liberation Army: he participated in the armed insurgency of 2001 in Macedonia. From 2002 to 2006, he was the Vice Minister of Interior¹⁴³.

Dehari joined DUI’s political leader Ali Ahmeti on several campaign trips to meet with the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora. During the campaign in Chicago, he was reported stating that: “if one embarks on a journey from Tirana - through Struga, Kichevo, Tetovo, Gostivar, Chair – to reach Kumanovo, that person will be greeted by Albanian mayors

¹⁴² “Thaqi: Cooperation with DUI only in Kichevo,” *Gazeta Lajm Maqedoni*, November 6, 2012, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://lajmpress.com/lajme/maqedoni/16490.html>.

¹⁴³ “Fatmir Dehari Biography,” Fatmir Dehari Official Webpage, accessed May 27, 2013 http://www.fatmirdehari.com/Fatmir_Dehari.html.

throughout the trip. That is the dream of every Albanian; that is one Albania".¹⁴⁴ This statement was interpreted as irredentist by several media's; after harsh criticism by national newspapers, Dehari gave an official clarification that he was misunderstood, and that he was not alluding to Greater Albania. Instead, he was referring to the region where the Albanian language and flag are in official use¹⁴⁵.

Greater Albania, as a notion, first appeared after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, when the Congress of Berlin decided to give some Albanian regions to the Principality of Montenegro. This proved to be the spark that led to the birth of Albanian nationalism. Greater Albania has never existed administratively, but it has always been in the imagination of the constituent Albanian populations divided in several countries in the Balkans. Thus, it is the main symbol which unites all Albanians living in Kosovo, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia and Greece (along with language). In several instances, DUI's campaign was believed to have been incorporating irredentist/separatist messages which directly or indirectly called Albanians for unity across borders: a unity which can be achieved if ethnic Albanian inhabited municipalities are also governed by ethnic Albanians.

Blagoja Despotoski was the ethnic Macedonian candidate proposed by VMRO-DPMNE. He was born in 1958 in Kichevo. He served as the Mayor of Kichevo from 2009 until 2013. He was not very active during the campaign, but gave numerous statements after Dehari won the elections in Kichevo. Despotoski's main supporter was the Prime Minister of Macedonia, Nikola Gruevski, who participated in the promotion of the candidacy of Despotoski in Kichevo.

¹⁴⁴ "Video: Dehari is talking about Greater Albania, DUI says he was misunderstood," NetPress, December 3, 2012, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://www.netpress.com.mk/mk/vest.asp?id=123406&kategorija=3>.

¹⁴⁵ "Video: Dehari is talking about Greater Albania, DUI says he was misunderstood," NetPress, December 3, 2012, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://www.netpress.com.mk/mk/vest.asp?id=123406&kategorija=3>.

10. The Campaign of the Albanian-Macedonian Diaspora: “Uskana 2013”

In academia, more attention is paid to why homelands devote energy to create or strengthen bonds with their diasporas, whereas, as Gabriel Sheffer puts it: “It is less obvious why diaspora members are willing to invest substantial effort and resources in creating elaborate organization dedicated to nurturing transnational relationships.”¹⁴⁶ He suggests that they do so for two reasons: first, “to promote the well-being and ensure the continuity of their communities in their host countries”; and second, “to increase their ability to extend support to beleaguered homelands.”¹⁴⁷ DUI cannot be deemed the sole actor responsible for the mobilization of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora for the local elections. The Albanian-Macedonian diaspora throughout their host countries got active as well.

“Uskana 2013” is the name of the project initiated by members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora, mainly from Switzerland, with the goal of mobilizing voters from the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora to win over Kichevo. The main activity of the “Uskana 2013” project was to organize the travel of those willing to travel to Kichevo to vote for the local elections. Similar to DUI, they created their own program and organized various activities. They opened up an official website, and Facebook group for the promotion of the project. According to the official website of the project¹⁴⁸, their slogan was “for a better future, I vote Uskana” (Uskana is the ancient name of Kichevo).

The website also includes the song/hymn of the project, named “Retrieval to Uskana”. Some lyrics from the song are: “You, Uskana, we will never leave alone; here we are, coming from abroad across mountains”, and also “Our beloved Uskana, the time has come, for your

¹⁴⁶ Gabriel Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 26.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ “Uskana 2013”, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://uskana.org/>

freedom”; “Dear Uskana, you were ours, you are ours, and you will remain ours forever”¹⁴⁹
This song was written several years ago, and it was adapted for the purposes of the campaign.
Coincidentally, the lyrics suited the campaign objective very well.

The project “Uskana 2013” was initiated by a group of volunteers who formed the coordinative body of 125 participants. The coordinators are all from Kichevo, and they were all appointed to organize the return of members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora from different cities across Europe, but mainly from Switzerland. The detailed information about this project were acquired from an interview with one of the main coordinators, Mr. Munir Mehdiu who was born and raised in Kichevo and during his early adulthood moved to Switzerland.

i. Interview with the Coordinator of “Uskana 2013”

The interview was conducted in April, in an unstructured manner after the election results were revealed. Mehdiu is also the owner of the Radio Television Station “Uskana” in Kichevo. My first question to Mehdiu was about the results, and the win of DUI, to which he immediately corrected me and said: “It wasn’t DUI’s win; citizens of Kichevo won”. To my question on who gave the idea to initiate this project, he said “it was several members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora who thought that this initiative was necessary in order to win in Kichevo”. And by winning, he means the appointment of an ethnic Albanian as the new Mayor of Kichevo.

According to Mehdiu, the coordinators started the campaign and activities for the mobilization four months prior to the elections. The coordinative body would meet every weekend all around Switzerland to talk about the project. The main activity of the

¹⁴⁹ “Rikthim në Uskanë”, Soundcloud, accessed May 27, 2013, <https://soundcloud.com/uskana2013/rikthimi-uskana>

coordinators was to organize the travel of those willing to vote in the local elections in Kichevo: this included accumulating lists of members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora who have Macedonian citizenship; checking whether they have biometric passports, and if not, assisting them in getting one; and last, finding travel agencies which would provide them discount for the tickets.

To my question as to what was the motivation to mobilize voters in Kichevo and the overall motivation to vote on these local elections, he replied “the well-being of our families, and the people we have left behind, depended from these votes”. He told me about people who had left their jobs and families and traveled all the way to Macedonia; stayed one day or more, and came back after casting their votes. To my surprise, the financing of these travels were provided by the diaspora voters themselves. The sponsoring travel agency provided a discount of 15 francs from each ticket.

When asked about the benefits they (members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora) will receive now that the ethnic Albanian candidate became the new Mayor of Kichevo, he replied: “we emigrated from Kichevo because we couldn’t find jobs and because we were discriminated there; we did this for the young people there and to stop their emigration from Kichevo.” In addition, Mehdiu said he hopes that with Dehari, as the new Mayor, investing in Kichevo will be made easier for the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora. And finally, he praised the people from Kichevo as being “special” because they are hard-working and dedicated to the well-being of Kichevo like no other population is for its homeland.

V. The Impact of Transnational Practices (Then what?)

The third set of questions posed by Eva Østergaard-Nielsen in her three-step approach to analyzing transnational political practices focuses on the leverage of these practices. Her analysis is shaped by bifurcation of effects of these transnational practices on *the sending country* and the effects they have on *the receiving country*. Given that this thesis looks at the homeland-diaspora relations, this chapter will incorporate Østergaard-Nielsen's methodology on the effects of transnational practices on the "sending country" only. "Transnational political networks enter political processes at local, national and international levels as actors in their own right: and as such, the observation raises as many questions as it answers"¹⁵⁰.

Østergaard-Nielsen proposes to look at questions such as: "What makes some transnational political networks more influential than others? And how do we go about measuring this influence? When, if at all, do migrants' transnational political activities bring about change? Who benefits from migrants' transnational political practices? What are the consequences for the role of the state in domestic and international politics?"¹⁵¹ In the third step of her approach to analyzing transnational political practices, the author mainly looks at the "change" that these practices bring about. She also elaborates on how change can be measured: mainly by looking at how transnational political practices contribute to democratic political processes.

Hence, this chapter will adopt Østergaard-Nielsen's methodology to answer questions related to the aftermath of the mobilization of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora for the local elections in Kichevo; the effect it had on other municipalities, and the effect it had on the overall democratic political processes in Macedonia. Crucial to this chapter is the fact that the

¹⁵⁰ Eva Østergaard-Nielsen, "The Politics of Migrants' Transnational Political Practices," *Center for Migration Studies of New York* Volume 37, Number 3 (2003): 774.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

thesis was written two months after the local elections which took place on March 24, 2013, limiting the possibility to measure the above-mentioned “change” caused by transnational practices. The materials used in this chapter are mainly newspaper articles reporting on the immediate actions and reactions which followed in the post-elections phase in Kichevo and beyond.

11. Voter Turnout Analyzed

In order to understand the importance of the votes cast by members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora in the local elections in Kichevo, it is important to look at the general voter turnout in the municipality. This section will also compare the voter turnout of the local elections in 2013 with that in the local elections in 2009.

The analysis of the Political and Research Center “Liberta Institute Skopje” assessed the voting trends of the ethnic Albanian electorate by looking at how ethnic Albanians voted in seven electoral cycles: the 2005 local elections; the 2006 parliamentary elections; the 2008 parliamentary elections; the 2009 local elections; the 2009 presidential elections; the 2011 parliamentary elections; and the 2013 local elections. The number of votes analyzed is taken from the official results published by the State Electoral Commission. The Institute’s analysis points out that the legitimacy of the votes, which is very often contested, is not taken into consideration when presenting the assessment.¹⁵²

The results in Kichevo were expected, states the above-mentioned analysis, taking into consideration the preparedness of Kichevo’s ethnic Albanians to elect an ethnic Albanian mayor for the first time after seventy years. With the help of the votes from the diaspora, as well as owing to the pre-electoral ethnic coalitions, DUI’s candidate for mayor Fatmir Dehari

¹⁵² “Analysis of the Albanian Electorate: Voter Turnout Surprising,” Political and Economic Research Center - Liberta Institute, document provided by the Institute’s Director Mr. Edmond Ademi

won with 18,552 votes, whereas VMRO-DPMNE's candidate Blagoja Despotoski received 16,222 votes and was not re-elected as Mayor of Kichevo.

The voter turnout in the local elections in 2013 in Kichevo was much larger than that of the local elections in 2009: in the previous local elections, Kichevo's voter turnout combined with that in Vraneshtica, Drugovo, Zajas and Oslomej (now comprising the 'new' Municipality Kichevo) consisted of 8,309 votes from ethnic Albanians, and 14,544 votes from ethnic Macedonians. This means that the total voter turnout (both ethnic Albanian and ethnic Macedonian voters) in the 2013 local elections in the 'new' Municipality Kichevo increased by 11,891 votes compared to the 2009 local elections. The voter turnout of ethnic Albanians increased for 10,243 votes in 2013 compared to the 2009 local elections, whereas the voter turnout of ethnic Macedonians increased for 1678.

The analysis provided by the Political and Research Center "Liberta Institute Skopje" does not bifurcate the voter turnout between domestic voters (residents of Kichevo) and voters from the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora. I used two sources to acquire an approximate number of voters from the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora. The first source was Munir Mehdiu – the coordinator of the "Uskana 2013" initiative, who claimed that approximately 8700 members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora traveled to Kichevo on Election Day. The second source was a member of DUI, working in the sector for diaspora relations. He chose not to disclose his name. According to him, there are 13,000-14,000 members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora with the right to vote in Kichevo. These are the approximate numbers provided by him, disaggregated in accordance to their host countries:

- Switzerland: from a total 7,000 eligible voters, 3,500 came to vote in Kichevo
- Germany: from a total 1,600 eligible voters, 700 came to vote
- Austria: from a total of 1,100 eligible voters, 800 came to vote
- The United States: no data on the number of eligible voters, 250 came to vote

-Sweden: 160 came to vote

-France: 60 came to vote

-Kosovo: 100 came to vote

According to this source, the total number of people from the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora, ranges from 5,500 to 6,000.¹⁵³ Taking into consideration the difference of voter turnout in 2009 and 2013, and the two sources, it can be said that the number of people from the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora who came to vote in the elections ranges from 5,000 to 8,000. These numbers can be translated to state that without the votes of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora, Fatmir Dehari would not have been elected as Mayor of Municipality Kichevo.

i. Impact of Expatriate Voting on Domestic Voter Turnout

It is hard to claim the existence of a linear causality between the expatriate voting which took place in Kichevo and the increased domestic voter turnout. Yet, the numbers show a visible correlation. Although there is no official data on expatriate voting in the 2009 local elections in Kichevo, unofficial sources claim that members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora did not participate in those elections (these sources do not exclude the possibility that very few came to Kichevo to vote). Hence, the official voter turnout statistics in Kichevo for the 2009 local elections encompass only domestic voters (residents of Kichevo). Of the total voter turnout in 2009 – 8,309 were from ethnic Albanians (again, domestic voters). But only 60% of them voted for DUI, which means 4,985 voters. In the 2013 local elections DUI received 18,552 votes, which means 13,567 more votes than those in 2009. If we take out the number

¹⁵³ Taken from the interview with Munir Mehdiu: one of the coordinators of “Uskana 2013”.

of voters from the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora (5000-8000), that means that during the local elections, the number of domestic voters increased for 5567 to 8567 votes.

This phenomenon was pointed out in the interview with Munir Mehdiu, the coordinator of “Uskana 2013”. He claimed that domestic residents of Municipality Kichevo were encouraged to vote once they saw that people (from the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora) were traveling hundreds, sometimes thousands of kilometers to vote. Whereas all that the domestic residents had to do was walk or drive several minutes to the place of where the voting took place.¹⁵⁴

12. Following the Election Results in Kichevo

Celebrations:

The election results for Municipality Kichevo were revealed the same day on which the elections were held, around 11 PM. DUI’s Fatmir Dehari was elected the new Mayor of Municipality Kichevo. The election results were interpreted as “Historic Victory” by journalists from the Albanian news portal *Panorama*.¹⁵⁵ The article includes a picture of Fatmir Dehari carried on the shoulders of two males, and an ebullient crowd around him. This celebration was later taken to the city center in Kichevo, where a crowd of several thousand ethnic Albanians greeted the new Mayor of Kichevo. A stage was put in place for the speeches and for an entertainment program which followed after the speeches on behalf of the ‘victory’. The city center was colored in black and red as many of the people who joined in the crowd to celebrate were carrying the Albanian national flag; some even dressed to match the colors of the flag.

¹⁵⁴ Taken from the interview with Munir Mehdiu: one of the coordinators of “Uskana 2013”.

¹⁵⁵ “Historic victory, after 70 years, Albanians get Kichevo,” *Panorama*, March 26, 2013, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://www.panorama.com.al/2013/03/26/fitore-historike-pas-70-vitesh-shqiptaret-marrin-kercoven/>.

The celebrations continued the next day on March 25, 2013. Despite of rainy weather conditions, a large crowd gathered again in the city center of Kichevo. Fatmir Dehari began the celebration program with his speech, as the large screen behind him was showing the cheering crowd around him. The first row in the crowd was reserved for DUI's political leader Ali Ahmeti and other top officials. Dehari began his speech by expressing gratitude: "Thank you a lot! Thank you a lot! I thank the Local Headquarters of DUI, our diaspora, my friends, the youth, brothers, sisters, mothers; I thank the Head of the Central Headquarters of DUI, the ministers, the Parliament Members, other mayors; our friends from Skopje, Kumanovo, Tetovo, Struga, Gostivar".¹⁵⁶

Dehari continue his speech by saying: "Good afternoon, good night my beloved Kichevo; from today on we will talk in Albanian forever, we will govern in Albanian; Congratulations for our historic victory which I dedicate to the martyrs."¹⁵⁷ He reserved his expression of gratitude to Ali Ahmeti, DUI's leader, for the end, after which the whole crowd applauded cheerfully.

As it can be seen from the speech, gratitude to the diaspora is reserved for the very beginning, right after Dehari thanks the Local Headquarters of DUI in Kichevo. Without the votes of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora, Dehari would not have been able to win. Acknowledging the contribution of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora on this 'victory' was very well accepted by Albanian diaspora organizations, who wrote several articles, such as the one titled "Kichevo was saved by the 'emigrants'." In addition, members of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora who were present during the celebrations gave statements expressing

¹⁵⁶ "BDI-Concert Kichevo", Youtube, March 25, 2013, accessed May 27, 2013
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qw0x2KWL3Dc>.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

their happiness for having participated in such a “historic moment”, some even compared the joy of this ‘victory’ with that when Kosovo became independent in 2008.¹⁵⁸

Albanian Flag Raised in Municipality Kichevo:

Fatmir Dehari was officially appointed Mayor of Kichevo on April 3, 2013 in a grand gala in front of the municipality building. He received his certificate for a four-year mandate by the Municipal Electoral Commission. On the same day, the Albanian flag was raised in front of the municipality building, and the old name sign of the municipality was replaced with a bilingual sign to include Albanian language.

One newspaper article wrote that several other Albanian flags were raised on twenty meter masts on the highway from Kichevo to Zajas¹⁵⁹. Although Dehari contested these claims, Albanian flags were raised all around Kichevo in the sign of the ‘victory’. In addition, several incidents were reported by the police about people who tried to take down the national flag of Macedonia. These events were interpreted as provocative and based on nationalist motives. Yet, the political elite chose to remain silent.

Dehari Fires People on Ethnic Basis:

Another aftermath of the local elections in Kichevo were the protests of municipal staff, firefighters, inspectors and other officials who claimed that they were fired after Dehari came to power in Municipality Kichevo. They were told that their contracts had expired, but the protesters were sure that they were being fired on ethnic basis. One of the protesters claimed that: “none of our ethnic Albanian co-workers had been fired in this process.”¹⁶⁰ There is a

¹⁵⁸ “Kichevo celebrates Dehari’s victory”, *AlsatiM*, March 25, 2013, accessed May 27, 2013
http://time.ikub.al/7a854fa910/d5499cc3704501c12e2832de26d48330/Lajm_Kercova-feston-fitoren.aspx.

¹⁵⁹ “From Kichevo to Zajas, Albanian flags waved”, *Deneshen Vesnik*, accessed May 27, 2013
<http://denesen.mk/web/2013/04/19/od-kicevo-do-zajas-se-veat-albanski-znaminja/>.

¹⁶⁰ “People getting fired in Kichevo, the Mayor remains silent”, *Alfa MK*, accessed May 27, 2013,
<http://www.alfa.mk/News.aspx?ID=55184#.UaJ4idJHJz->.

conspicuous difference in the way that ethnic Albanian media and ethnic Macedonian media reported on the issue. While the ethnic Macedonian newspapers were writing in detail about the protests and interviewing the people who got fired, the ethnic Albanian newspapers remained rather quiet. Hence, the aftermath of the elections portray how politics in municipal level can be ethnicized: these and similar events increase the boundaries between the two largest ethnic communities in Kichevo, all the while challenging co-existence.

13. Reactions of Ethnic Macedonians to the Results in Kichevo

Nikola Gruevski, the Prime Minister of Macedonia as well as the party leader of VMRO-DPMNE, also campaigned in Kichevo in support of the candidacy of Blagoja Despotoski for Mayor of Kichevo. His campaign speech was largely shaped by Dehari's statement¹⁶¹ given several days prior to Gruevski's campaign in Kichevo. After expressing gratitude to VMRO-DPMNE's supporters in his speech to a large crowd in the city center in Kichevo, he addresses Fatmir Dehari for his statement:

“I cannot proceed without mentioning Dehari's offer. First, he presented a photo of himself holding a Kalashnikov [referring to a photo posted on Dehari's official Facebook page], and later he presented us his statement about his dream to have Albania from Struga to Kumanovo. With all due respect to Albanians in Oslomej, Kichevo, Zajas, Vraneshtica, I would like to advise Dehari two things: first, he will not frighten anyone with photos where he is holding a Kalashnikov – he did not frighten anyone in 2001 and he will not frighten anyone in the future. And second, if Fatmir Dehari wants to live in Albania, then, he has Albania he can go to [referring to the Republic of Albania]. This is Republic of Macedonia; Kichevo was and will remain Republic of Macedonia.”¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ : “if one embarks on a journey from Tirana - through Struga, Kichevo, Tetovo, Gostivar, Chair – to reach Kumanovo, that person will be greeted by Albanian mayors throughout the trip. That is the dream of every Albanian; that is one Albania”.

¹⁶² “Video: the speech of Gruevski in Kichevo,” *Kurir*, March 15, 2013, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://kurir.mk/makedonija/partii/107669-VIDEO-Govorot-na-premierot-Gruevski-vo-Kicevo>.

This is an example of how VMRO-DPMNE's members reacted to DUI's campaign in their own electoral campaign. Based on this speech and numerous articles written on VMRO-DPMNE's campaign, it can be concluded that the campaign followed a similar rhetorical strategy as the one in DUI: utilizing terminology which ethnicizes the campaign and the whole political process. Gruevski was reported saying: "100% [of ethnic Macedonians] should get out and vote, and let's show 'them' whose Kichevo really is."¹⁶³ After the campaign, Gruevski toured around Kichevo, when a group of people started shouting and whistling unpleasantly.

Reaction to the election results in Kichevo was manifested in VMRO-DPMNE's handling of the campaign for the second round elections in Struga. Municipality Struga was also one of the critical points in the electoral map in which there were ethnic coalitions, and only two candidates: one ethnic Macedonian (from VMRO-DPMNE) and one ethnic Albanian (from the Democratic Party of Albanians). The first round of elections was deemed invalid because neither of the candidates received more than 50% of the votes. Hence, a second round of elections was scheduled to take place on April 7, 2013.

Several days before the second round of elections in Struga, newspapers published stories about how "Macedonians are arriving by airplanes to vote [in Struga]."¹⁶⁴ Following the example of the mobilization of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora for the local elections in Kichevo, a group of people unknown to the public started organizing charter flights to "Save Struga" in the "Battle for Struga between Albanians and Macedonians."¹⁶⁵ According to local media sources, members of the ethnic Macedonian diaspora were provided free airplane tickets by the association of the Macedonian diaspora in Switzerland. This initiative failed to collect the necessary votes so that the ethnic Macedonian candidate won in Struga, as

¹⁶³ "Gruevski: 100% should get out to vote, to show whose Kichevo is", Kurir, March 14, 2013, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://kurir.mk/makedonija/vesti/107667-Gruevski-Izlezete-100-da-pokazeme-cie-e-Kicevo>.

¹⁶⁴ "Macedonians arriving by planes to vote in Struga", MKD, April 7, 2013, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://www.mkd.mk/makedonija/politika/makedonci-so-avioni-pristignuvaat-vo-zemjava-za-da-glasaat>.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

a result DPA's candidate Zijadin Sela (ethnic Albanian) was elected as the new Mayor of Struga.

The above-mentioned is an example of how transnational political practices which brought success to one political party (to DUI in Kichevo) were utilized by another political party, for the same purposes in another municipality. The reason why the former transnational political practices were more influential than the latter was the campaign of DUI: members of DUI started organizing the mobilization four months before the elections, whereas mobilization for the second round of elections in Struga was organized a couple of days before the elections.

In addition, it was the subtlety attached to the case of Kichevo during the campaign that made it more "important" than Struga. Both municipalities were in a similar situation during the elections: pre-election ethnic coalitions took place both in Kichevo and Struga; hence, both municipalities had only two candidates for mayors – one ethnic Albanian and one ethnic Macedonian; and last, both municipalities are ethnically mixed, and both have large emigrant population living abroad. To adopt the campaign's words, the "time is now" emergency rhetoric "saved" Kichevo, whereas the lack of emergency in the campaign of VMRO-DPMNE in Struga, got the municipality "sacrificed" to ethnic Albanians.

VI. Conclusion and Remarks

This thesis examined the mobilization of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora to vote in the 2013 local elections in Kichevo. Specifically, two actors of mobilization were analyzed: the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) and the “Uskana 2013” project. The methodological framework which shaped the research of the case study adapted Eva Østergaard-Nielsen’s ‘three-step’ approach to analyzing transnational political practices. Hence, the three main sets of questions which structured the body of the thesis were: 1) Chapter III – ‘Why’ was the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora mobilized?; 2) Chapter IV – ‘How’ was the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora mobilized?; and 3) Chapter V – ‘What then’ following these transnational political practices?

1) According to Knaus Gerald, *et al.*, “intense social drama of contemporary Macedonia is being played out in Kichevo.”¹⁶⁶ Like other parts of Macedonia, Kichevo has a deeply rooted ethnic coexistence, although ethnic Albanians, ethnic Macedonians, Roma, and members of other ethnic communities live separate lives.¹⁶⁷ In the municipality, there is a fierce competition for jobs and resources – mainly shaped along ethnic lines. Hence, the local elections in 2013 were very important in this aspect: the new Mayor of the municipality automatically acquires the authority over these jobs and resources, which “he”¹⁶⁸ can allocate to members of the ethnic community he represents. And he, in this case, Fatmir Dehari, would not have been elected if it wasn’t for the voters from the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora.

¹⁶⁶ Knaus Gerald et al., “The Political Economy of Interethnic Relations: Ahmeti’s Village or the Macedonian Case,” in *Nationalism after Communism: Lessons Learned*, eds. Alina Mungiu-Pippidi and Ivan Krastev, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 101.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 102

¹⁶⁸ In the local elections in 2012, both candidates for Mayor of Kichevo were males.

In addition to the economic and social benefits that the mayor gets to control, another major motive for electing an ethnic Albanian as Mayor, and thus, for mobilizing the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora was the aspiration to be governed by an ethnic *Albanian* Mayor. This meant that the Albanian flag would be waved in front of the municipality building for the next four years and the large ethnic Albanian community of Kichevo would be satisfied. The electoral map had several points where the elections were shaped along ethnic lines: Kichevo was one of them. The “struggle” between VMRO-DPMNE and DUI in Kichevo was intensified thanks to media reporting, which enhanced the ethnic character of the elections by drawing clear boundaries between the two communities.

And last, the third motive for the mobilization of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora to vote in the local elections was a combination of history and ties to the diaspora. In his electoral campaign Ali Ahmeti, the political leader of DUI, was quoted saying “Kichevo belongs to us, to Albanians, because historically we have been a majority there. In order to win it over we need the help of our diaspora in these elections.”¹⁶⁹ The rhetoric of the campaign consisted of portraying Kichevo as belonging to ethnic Albanians because: “they have been a majority in Kichevo throughout history”, and because “it was taken forcefully from their governance by ethnic Macedonians.” As a result of this usurpation, many ethnic Albanians were discriminated and oppressed, and had to emigrate from Kichevo. But most of them remained in close ties with Kichevo. So, these elections were the perfect moment to ‘pay-back’ for the support and remittances sent by the diaspora, by engaging them in a “historic” victory.

2) The mobilization of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora was made possible through the utilization of the available legal mechanisms, such as citizenship and in-country voting (ICV), and through the tool of electoral campaigning. The campaign for the mobilization of the

¹⁶⁹ “Conflict of ethnic concepts for the local elections in Kichevo?,” *Plusinfo*, November 11, 2012, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://www.plusinfo.mk/vest/65840/Dojche-Vele-Sudir-na-etnichki-koncepti-i-za-lokalnite-izbori-vo-Kichevo>.

Albanian-Macedonian diaspora for the local elections can be considered a success: the main objective of the actors behind this mobilization was to work towards electing the ethnic Albanian candidate as the new mayor in Kichevo. The synergy between DUI and the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora created a very organized, well thought campaign. The significance of the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora for the development of Kichevo and beyond is accentuated throughout the program of DUI. Whether this was only a strategy utilized by political elites for their gain is left to be seen in the future.

3) The election of Fatmir Dehari to the post of mayor of Municipality Kichevo had numerous immediate implications. The celebration which followed after the “victory”, including the speeches and the putting up of the Albanian flags came across negative reactions from the ethnic Macedonians. Again, this victory was achieved with the help of the voters from the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora, hence, this may aggravate the relations between the state of Macedonia and the Albanian-Macedonian diaspora. The long-term effects of this mobilization and the ‘victory’ as a result of the mobilization are left to be seen in the future.

For the first time in the history of independent Macedonia, the diaspora – and not only the Albanian-Macedonian, but also the ethnic Macedonian diaspora for the elections in Struga – is engaged in a domestic political process through an organized mobilization campaign. This opens the way to study the diasporas of the country closer, and to fill in the gap of literature on this topic.

VII. Bibliography

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