

PROMULGATION OF LAWS AND PRESIDENTIAL VETO POWER IN COMPARATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL LAW: CONTINUING VETO AND LEGISLATIVE CONTINUITY IN NORTH MACEDONIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the constitutional role of the President in the promulgation of laws, the limits of presidential veto power, and their implications for legislative continuity from a comparative constitutional law perspective. The analysis focuses on Article 75 of the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia, which regulates the promulgation procedure and the President's authority to promulgate or return legislation.

The research employs a comparative, normative, and functional methodology. The constitutional framework of North Macedonia is examined in light of the constitutional systems of Serbia, an EU candidate country, and of Slovenia and Hungary, both EU Member States. The central hypothesis is that, although the Macedonian Constitution does not confer an explicit absolute veto power upon the President, it creates a normative gap by conditioning the entry into force of legislation upon presidential promulgation without providing an effective mechanism to address a refusal to act.

The findings demonstrate that, despite the constitutional obligation of the President to promulgate a law once it has been reconsidered and re-adopted by Parliament, the constitutional framework lacks an institutional safeguard capable of ensuring legislative continuity in the event of presidential non-compliance. As a result, a veto designed to be merely suspensive may, in practice, produce the effects of a continuing veto or a de facto absolute veto. The study further explores the legal implications of presidential inaction, namely situations in which the President neither exercises the veto power nor promulgates the law, creating a form of constitutional silence with uncertain legal consequences.

The article concludes that a constitutional reform combining reasoned veto requirements, constitutional review mechanisms, clear procedural deadlines, and alternative promulgation procedures would strengthen legislative continuity while preserving the constitutional balance between Parliament and the President. In this respect, the study contributes to the literature by introducing the concepts of continuing veto and constitutional silence into the debate on legislative continuity in parliamentary systems.

Keywords: Presidential Veto, Promulgation of Laws, Continuing Veto, Constitutional Silence, Legislative Continuity, Constitutional Deadlock, Comparative Constitutional Law, North Macedonia.

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Citation:

Korbayram A. Promulgation of Laws and Presidential Veto Power in Comparative Constitutional Law: Continuing Veto and Legislative Continuity in North Macedonia // Adam Alemi. – 2026. – Vol. 28. – No. 2 (108). – P. 150–162. – DOI: 10.48010/f49h1856

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Received: 15/03/2026

Accepted: 05/06/2026

Published online: 30/06/2026

Салыстырмалы конституциялық құқықтағы заңдарды жариялау және президенттің ветосы: Солтүстік Македониядағы ветоның жалғасуы және заңнамалық сабақтастық

Аңдатпа. Бұл зерттеуде салыстырмалы конституциялық құқық тұрғысынан Президенттің заңдарды жариялаудағы конституциялық рөлі, президенттік veto құқығының шектері және олардың заңнамалық сабақтастыққа ықпалы қарастырылады. Талдау Солтүстік Македония Республикасы Конституциясының 75-бабына бағытталған. Аталған бап заңды жариялау рәсімін және Президенттің заңға қол қою немесе оны қайта қарау үшін қайтару өкілеттігін реттейді.

Зерттеуде салыстырмалы, нормативтік және функционалдық әдіснама қолданылады. Солтүстік Македонияның конституциялық-құқықтық жүйесі Еуропалық Одаққа кандидат ел болып табылатын Сербияның, сондай-ақ Еуропалық Одаққа мүше мемлекеттер саналатын Словения мен Венгрияның конституциялық жүйелерімен салыстырыла отырып зерделенеді. Зерттеудің негізгі гипотезасы мынаған негізделеді: Македония Конституциясы Президентке нақты абсолютті veto құқығын бермегенімен, заңның күшіне енуін президенттік жариялаумен шарттастыру арқылы нормативтік олқылық қалыптастырады, ал Президент әрекет етуден бас тартқан жағдайда оны еңсерудің тиімді тетігін қарастырмайды.

Зерттеу нәтижелері Парламент заңды қайта қарап, қайта қабылдағаннан кейін Президенттің оны жариялауға конституциялық міндеті болғанына қарамастан, қолданыстағы конституциялық құрылымда Президенттің талапты орындамауы жағдайында заңнамалық сабақтастықты қамтамасыз ететін институционалдық кепілдік жоқ екенін көрсетеді. Соның салдарынан тек кейінге қалдырушы сипатта болуы тиіс вето іс жүзінде жалғасушы ветоның немесе де-факто абсолютті ветоның салдарын туындатуы мүмкін. Сонымен қатар мақалада Президенттің әрекетсіздігінің құқықтық салдары, яғни Президент вето құқығын пайдаланбай әрі заңды жарияламайтын жағдайлар талданады. Мұндай жағдай құқықтық салдары белгісіз конституциялық үнсіздік түрін қалыптастырады.

Мақалада уәжделген вето талаптарын, конституциялық бақылау тетіктерін, нақты рәсімдік мерзімдерді және баламалы жариялау рәсімдерін біріктіретін конституциялық реформа заңнамалық сабақтастықты нығайтып, Парламент пен Президент арасындағы конституциялық тепе-теңдікті сақтауға мүмкіндік береді деген қорытынды жасалады. Осы тұрғыдан зерттеу парламенттік жүйелердегі заңнамалық сабақтастық туралы ғылыми пікірталасқа жалғасушы вето және конституциялық үнсіздік ұғымдарын енгізу арқылы үлес қосады.

Түйін сөздер: президенттік вето, заңдарды жариялау, жалғасушы вето, конституциялық үнсіздік, заңнамалық сабақтастық, конституциялық тығырық, салыстырмалы конституциялық құқық, Солтүстік Македония.

Промульгация законов и президентское вето в сравнительном конституционном праве: продолжающееся вето и законодательная преемственность в Северной Македонии

Аннотация. В настоящем исследовании рассматривается конституционная роль Президента в промульгации законов, пределы президентского права вето, а также их последствия для законодательной преемственности с позиции сравнительного конституционного права. Анализ сосредоточен на статье 75 Конституции Республики Северная Македония, которая регулирует процедуру промульгации и полномочие Президента подписывать закон либо возвращать его на повторное рассмотрение.

В исследовании применяется сравнительная, нормативная и функциональная методология. Конституционная система Северной Македонии рассматривается в сопоставлении с конституционными системами Сербии – страны-кандидата на вступление в Европейский союз, а также Словении и Венгрии, являющихся государствами – членами Европейского союза. Центральная гипотеза исследования заключается в том, что, хотя Конституция Северной Македонии не предоставляет Президенту явно выраженного абсолютного права вето, она создает нормативный пробел, поскольку вступление закона в силу ставится в зависимость от президентской промульгации, при этом не предусматривается эффективный механизм реагирования на отказ Президента от действия.

Результаты исследования показывают, что, несмотря на конституционную обязанность Президента промульгировать закон после его повторного рассмотрения и повторного принятия Парламентом, конституционная система не содержит институциональной гарантии, способной обеспечить законодательную преемственность в случае невыполнения Президентом своих обязанностей. В результате вето, которое по своему замыслу должно иметь лишь отлагательный характер, на практике может производить последствия продолжающегося вето или фактически абсолютного вето. В исследовании также анализируются правовые последствия президентского бездействия, то есть ситуации, при которых Президент не использует право вето и одновременно не промульгирует закон, тем самым создавая форму конституционного молчания с неопределенными правовыми последствиями.

В статье делается вывод о том, что конституционная реформа, сочетающая требования мотивированного вето, механизмы конституционного контроля, четкие процедурные сроки и альтернативные процедуры промульгации, могла бы укрепить законодательную преемственность, одновременно сохраняя конституционный баланс между Парламентом и Президентом. В этом отношении исследование вносит вклад в научную литературу, вводя понятия продолжающегося вето и конституционного молчания в дискуссии о законодательной преемственности в парламентских системах.

Ключевые слова: президентское вето, промульгация законов, продолжающееся вето, конституционное молчание, законодательная преемственность, конституционный тупик, сравнительное конституционное право, Северная Македония.

Introduction

In democratic constitutional systems, the legislative process does not end with the adoption of a law by parliament. In many constitutional orders, legislation must also pass through the stage of promulgation before it can acquire legal force and become enforceable. The constitutional significance of promulgation has long been debated within constitutional theory. While some scholars

regard promulgation as a merely formal and declaratory act, others consider it a constitutive element of the legislative process, without which a law cannot enter into force. Consequently, the constitutional role of the head of state in the promulgation process remains one of the most important issues in the relationship between legislative continuity and executive participation in law-making.

The constitutional framework of the Republic of North Macedonia presents a particularly note-

worthy example in this regard. According to Article 75 of the Constitution, laws are promulgated by a decree signed by both the President of the Republic and the President of the Assembly. The President possesses the authority to return a law to Parliament for reconsideration. However, once Parliament adopts the law again in accordance with the constitutional requirements, the President is under a constitutional obligation to sign the decree of promulgation. Despite this obligation, the Constitution does not explicitly regulate the legal consequences of a presidential refusal to sign the law after parliamentary reconsideration.

This constitutional silence creates a significant normative and institutional problem. Although the constitutional system formally recognizes only a suspensive veto, the absence of an effective mechanism capable of overcoming presidential refusal to promulgate legislation may produce the practical effects of a continuing veto. In such circumstances, the legislative process may become dependent upon the will of a single constitutional actor, thereby creating tension between parliamentary supremacy, legislative continuity, and the constitutional position of the President. The issue therefore extends beyond a technical question of promulgation and raises broader concerns regarding the functioning of parliamentary democracy and the rule of law.

Despite the extensive constitutional literature on presidential veto powers, most studies have focused on the distinction between absolute and suspensive vetoes, the balance between executive and legislative powers, and the political implications of presidential intervention in the legislative process. Comparatively less attention has been devoted to situations in which a constitution formally limits the President to a suspensive veto while simultaneously lacking an effective mechanism for resolving a refusal to promulgate legislation following parliamentary reconsideration. Consequently, the possibility that a formally limited veto may generate the practical effects of a continuing veto has received only limited attention in comparative constitutional scholarship, particularly in relation to North Macedonia.

The present study seeks to address this gap in the literature. Unlike existing studies that primarily examine presidential veto powers through the lens of executive-legislative relations, this research focuses on the constitutional consequences of the absence of a mechanism capable of ensuring legislative continuity after parliamentary reconsideration

of a law. The novelty of the study lies in conceptualizing the North Macedonian promulgation problem through the framework of a continuing veto and evaluating it through a comparative constitutional analysis of Serbia, Slovenia, and Hungary. While Serbia relies on a substitution mechanism, Slovenia minimizes the possibility of institutional conflict through a parliamentary constitutional design, and Hungary employs constitutional judicial review as a safeguard against legislative deadlock. Examining these models provides an opportunity to evaluate alternative constitutional solutions applicable to the North Macedonian context.

Accordingly, this study aims to determine whether the constitutional requirement of presidential promulgation creates a structural vulnerability within the legislative process of North Macedonia and whether the existing constitutional framework may transform a suspensive veto into a de facto continuing veto. Through doctrinal constitutional analysis and comparative constitutional inquiry, the study seeks not only to explain the existing constitutional arrangement but also to develop normative proposals capable of strengthening legislative continuity and preventing constitutional deadlock in parliamentary democracies.

Problem Statement

The main problem addressed in this study is whether the constitutional framework of North Macedonia contains a normative gap concerning the promulgation of legislation after parliamentary reconsideration. More specifically, the research examines whether the absence of an explicit constitutional mechanism addressing presidential refusal to promulgate a law may allow the President to exercise a de facto continuing veto, thereby threatening legislative continuity and parliamentary supremacy.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Can a law acquire legal force in the absence of presidential promulgation?
2. Is promulgation a constitutive element of the legislative process or merely a formal and declaratory act?
3. Does the constitutional framework of North Macedonia permit the transformation of a suspensive veto into a de facto continuing veto?
4. Which comparative constitutional mechanisms are capable of preventing legislative deadlock in similar circumstances?

Hypothesis

The principal hypothesis of this study is that, although the Constitution of North Macedonia does not formally grant the President an absolute veto power, the constitutional requirement of presidential promulgation, combined with the absence of an alternative enforcement mechanism, creates a normative gap capable of producing the practical effects of a continuing veto. Consequently, a constitutional conflict may arise between the formal limits of presidential authority and the principle of legislative continuity. The study further hypothesizes that comparative constitutional models, particularly those adopted in Serbia, Slovenia, and Hungary, provide institutional safeguards capable of preventing such constitutional deadlock and may therefore offer valuable guidance for future constitutional reform in North Macedonia.

Methodology

This study employs a comparative constitutional law methodology, combining doctrinal legal analysis with a functional comparative approach. It examines the constitutional role of promulgation, presidential veto powers, and the consequences of presidential refusal to promulgate legislation within the constitutional framework of North Macedonia. The analysis focuses on the potential transformation of a suspensive veto into a continuing veto and the implications of constitutional silence for legislative continuity. A comparative assessment is conducted with Serbia, Slovenia, and Hungary, selected for their distinct constitutional responses to similar institutional challenges. The study is both explanatory and prescriptive, offering normative reform proposals based on comparative constitutional experience.

1. The Constitutional Position of the President in North Macedonia

Historically, the veto power emerged from the monarchic traditions of medieval Europe, where rulers perceived themselves as the ultimate guardians of justice and retained the authority to reject proposals submitted by representative assemblies. Owing to its close association with monarchical power, however, the legitimacy of the veto became increasingly contested following the American and French Revolutions, leading to significant constitutional debates regarding its scope and justification [1].

In contemporary constitutional democracies, the presidential veto constitutes an important mechanism of constitutional control. It enables the head of state to request a reconsideration of legislation that is considered legally deficient, politically problematic, or potentially inconsistent with constitutional principles [2]. Modern constitutional theory regards the veto not merely as a technical review instrument but also as a safeguard designed to protect constitutional order, prevent hasty legislation, and encourage broader political deliberation [1, s. 8-9]. In this respect, the veto reflects the principles of checks and balances and the separation of powers that lie at the core of liberal constitutionalism [3, s. 185].

The democratic rationale of the veto rests on the assumption that parliamentary majorities do not always produce the most appropriate or constitutionally sound outcomes. By requiring legislative reconsideration, the veto may contribute to broader consensus-building, particularly in matters affecting the constitutional structure of the state [4]. Nevertheless, the exercise of this power should be supported by objective and legally defensible reasons rather than personal or political preferences. Otherwise, the neutrality of the President as a constitutional arbiter may be called into question [2, s. 163].

Some constitutional scholars have argued that veto powers should be exercised subject to countersignature by the relevant minister or prime minister in order to enhance democratic accountability and reduce institutional tensions between the executive and the legislature. This position appears persuasive, particularly because repeated cycles of veto and parliamentary reaffirmation may not only delay the legislative process but also undermine the institutional prestige of the presidency itself. A distinction must also be drawn between a suspensive veto and a mere power of reconsideration. A suspensive veto exists where Parliament must satisfy a special or qualified majority in order to re-adopt legislation following presidential objection [2, s. 164].

Where the President returns a law to Parliament for reconsideration, and Parliament is required to re-adopt the law by a qualified majority, the presidential power is generally characterized as a suspensive veto [2, 2024]. In such cases, once Parliament re-adopts the law with the required majority, the President is constitutionally obliged to approve and promulgate it. The President's role in this process does not constitute a legis-

lative function. Rather, the President must either approve the law or return it for reconsideration. The power of reconsideration, although similar to a suspensive veto, should be distinguished from it. A number of scholars argue that where Parliament may re-enact the law without meeting any special or qualified majority requirement, the presidential intervention should be regarded not as a veto power but merely as a power of reconsideration. Teziç describes this situation as the “absence of a qualified majority requirement” [5, s. 57], whereas Anayurt refers to it as the “absence of a majority different from that required for the initial adoption of the law” [4, s. 466]. Accordingly, if a law may be re-adopted in the second vote under the same voting requirements applicable during its initial adoption, the President’s authority cannot be considered a genuine veto. Rather, it constitutes a mechanism designed to encourage Parliament to reconsider the legislation [5]. Under a power of reconsideration, Parliament is not required to secure a qualified majority when re-adopting legislation that has been returned by the President. Once the law is adopted again, the President is under a constitutional obligation to promulgate it [3].

The Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia (1991) employs the term “reconsideration” rather than “veto”. The President is empowered to return laws to the Assembly for renewed consideration. In this regard, Article 75 provides that a law which is deemed wholly or partially unsuitable for promulgation may be returned to the Assembly together with the reasons for such decision. The same provision also allows the President to return constitutional amendment laws for further consideration. Notably, the Constitution does not expressly use the term “veto.” Instead, the presidential power is formulated as the authority to return legislation for reconsideration. Furthermore, the President is constitutionally obliged to sign the promulgation decree when a law has been adopted by a two-thirds majority of the total number of Members of Parliament (Constitution, Art. 75(5)).

Research indicates that, under the Macedonian constitutional order, laws enter into force through promulgation by the President and subsequent publication in the Official Gazette. At the same time, the President is entitled to return legislation to Parliament for reconsideration. However, the Constitution fails to address the consequences of a presidential refusal to promulgate a

law after it has been reconsidered and re-adopted by Parliament. In other words, although the Constitution expressly requires the President to sign the promulgation decree in such circumstances, it provides no mechanism for enforcing that obligation [6; 7; 8].

Against this background, the primary objective of this article is to identify possible solutions to this constitutional gap through a comparative constitutional analysis.

The central problem lies in the absence of a clearly defined promulgation deadline and the lack of constitutional guidance regarding the procedure to be followed where the President fails to act. These uncertainties create a significant normative gap and legal ambiguity within the constitutional framework. More importantly, such a framework raises concerns that the presidential power of reconsideration may evolve into a “continuing veto” or even produce the effects of a de facto “absolute veto.” Such a result would be difficult to reconcile with the fundamental principles of parliamentary democracy and constitutional government [9].

2. Promulgation as a Constitutive Element of the Legislative Process

The process by which laws enter into force in the constitutional system of North Macedonia generally reflects the logic of a parliamentary system. However, it also contains distinctive features concerning the powers vested in the President. Under the Constitution of 1991, legislative authority belongs to Parliament, yet the entry into force of legislation is made conditional upon presidential promulgation [10]. As a result, promulgation cannot be regarded as a merely formal stage of the legislative process. Rather, it becomes a constitutive element of law-making itself [11].

Pursuant to the relevant constitutional provisions, a law adopted by Parliament may enter into force only after it has been promulgated by a decree signed by the President. Laws are promulgated by decree, and the decree of promulgation must be signed by both the President of the Republic and the Speaker of Parliament (Constitution, Art. 75). The President may refuse to sign the decree of promulgation. In constitutional doctrine, this authority is generally characterized as a suspensive veto. However, once Parliament re-adopts the law, the President becomes constitutionally obliged to sign and promulgate it [12].

At this point, the constitutional framework reveals a significant ambiguity. The Constitution does not specify the legal consequences of a presidential refusal to sign a law that has already been reconsidered and re-adopted by Parliament. Consequently, a mechanism that is formally designed as a limited suspensive veto may, in practice, evolve into an instrument capable of obstructing the legislative process altogether [13].

As widely recognized in constitutional doctrine, a law cannot enter into force in North Macedonia without a promulgation decree signed by the President. This constitutional requirement makes promulgation an essential component of the legislative process rather than a mere formality. Consequently, it reinforces the President's role within the law-making procedure. In practice, this constitutional design creates the possibility that presidential inaction may operate as a *de facto* veto. Where no effective constitutional mechanism exists to overcome a continued refusal to sign, the President may impede the finalization of the legislative process despite the will of the parliamentary majority [14].

The most significant consequence of this constitutional design is the emergence of a potential institutional deadlock, referred to in this study as the "continuing veto problem". A law that has been duly adopted by Parliament in accordance with constitutional procedures may nevertheless fail to enter into force solely because it lacks the President's signature. Such a situation has the potential to undermine the principle of legislative supremacy. In a parliamentary democracy, legislative authority ultimately belongs to Parliament, and the executive should not be able to permanently obstruct the implementation of the parliamentary will [15; 16].

On the other hand, the only mechanism foreseen in the Constitution against such behavior by the President is the impeachment process, which requires a high majority. However, this mechanism is extremely exceptional and difficult to implement in practice, and is far from being an effective and quick tool for resolving the deadlock that arises in the legislative process. Therefore, the current constitutional arrangement is insufficient to resolve the problem that arises when the President refuses to publish a law [17].

Viewed from this perspective, the legal nature of promulgation departs from the traditional understanding of parliamentary government and indirectly grants the President a significant

degree of influence over the legislative process. This is particularly noteworthy in a constitutional system where the Presidency is generally associated with limited and largely symbolic powers [18]. Accordingly, the relationship between the scope of the presidential veto power and the legal character of promulgation warrants renewed constitutional scrutiny [19].

3. The Continuing Veto Problem in North Macedonia

In parliamentary republics, heads of state are entrusted with various constitutional powers and responsibilities concerning the executive branch, as well as their relations with the legislative and judicial branches. In the Republic of North Macedonia, the powers and duties of the President are primarily regulated in Article 84 of the Constitution of 1991, located under the second heading of Chapter III. However, it cannot be argued that this provision contains an exhaustive list of presidential competences. Additional powers and responsibilities are dispersed throughout the Constitution and must therefore be assessed within the broader constitutional framework [18].

In relation to Parliament, the President possesses several important constitutional powers. In addition to the authority to nominate candidates for certain public offices, the President has the right and duty to address Parliament at least once a year. The President also promulgates laws and, most importantly, exercises a suspensive legislative veto by returning a law to Parliament for reconsideration. If Parliament subsequently re-adopts the law by an absolute majority, the President is constitutionally obliged to sign the promulgation decree. However, where a law has been adopted by the constitutionally required two-thirds majority, the President is not entitled to exercise this veto power [7].

In addition to these powers, and of particular relevance to the present study, the President is vested with the authority to issue promulgation decrees and to return laws to Parliament for renewed consideration through the exercise of a suspensive veto:

Article 75 - Laws are declared by promulgation. The promulgation declaring a law is signed by the President of the Republic and the President of the Assembly. The President of the Republic may decide not to sign the promulgation declaring a law. The Assembly reconsiders the law and the

President of the Republic is then obliged to sign the promulgation in so far as it is adopted by a majority vote of the total number of Representatives. The President is obliged to sign a promulgation if the law has been adopted by a two-thirds majority vote of the total number of Representatives in accordance with the Constitution [20].

According to Article 75(1) of the Constitution, laws are promulgated by decree (указ-ukaz). The decree of promulgation must be signed by both the President of the Republic and the Speaker of Parliament. The President may decide not to sign the promulgation decree. In such a case, Parliament reconsiders the law. If the law is re-adopted by a majority of the total number of Members of Parliament, the President is constitutionally obliged to sign the decree. The same obligation applies where the Constitution requires the law to be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the total number of Members of Parliament (Constitution, Art. 75(2)). Accordingly, once a law has been adopted, the President may either promulgate it or return it to Parliament for reconsideration. The presidential veto power includes not only the authority to object to legislation but also the right to provide reasons for that objection [21].

Another constitutional provision of particular relevance to the present study is Article 52 of the Constitution. Under this provision, laws and other normative acts must be published before entering into force. Such acts must be published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia no later than seven days after their adoption. As a general rule, laws enter into force on the eighth day following publication. Exceptionally, however, Parliament may determine that a law enters into force on the day of its publication. Laws and other normative acts are not retroactive, except where retroactive application operates in favour of citizens [10].

Relying on this provision, the Speaker of Parliament at the time ordered the publication of the Law on the Use of Languages in the Official Gazette after it had been adopted for a second time by Parliament, despite the absence of the President's signature [22]. Although no constitutional review was initiated in relation to this issue, two opposing interpretations emerged. The first view argues that, on the basis of Article 52, the Speaker acted within his constitutional authority and that the law validly entered into force. The second view relies on Article 75 and maintains that promulgation by decree requires the Pres-

ident's signature, that no alternative constitutional authority exists to replace the President in this process, and therefore that the law could not validly enter into force without presidential promulgation.

The Constitution leaves the decision to provide reasons for a veto largely to the discretion of the President. Nevertheless, where reasons are provided, this is generally regarded as a positive practice consistent with the principles of democracy and the rule of law [23]. The veto power represents a form of direct presidential intervention in the legislative process. It functions as a constitutional mechanism through which the President may prevent the enactment of legislation considered inconsistent with constitutional principles or the broader constitutional order [24].

From the perspective of constitutional theory, the presidential veto serves two principal functions. First, it enables the head of state to participate, albeit indirectly, in the legislative process. Second, it provides a mechanism of constitutional oversight aimed at preventing potential abuses by the legislative and executive branches [25]. Since the adoption of the Constitution in 1991, Macedonian Presidents have exercised their veto powers on a variety of legislative matters. An exception is Georgi Ivanov, who served two presidential terms and did not invoke the veto power during the period between 2009 and 2015 [8].

In 2018, during Ivanov's presidency, the Law on the Use of Languages became the subject of a constitutional controversy when the President refused to sign the promulgation decree. Subsequently, an opinion was requested from the Venice Commission. For the purposes of the present study, the significance of this case lies in the fact that the Law on the Use of Languages was published and applied in practice despite the absence of the President's signature. The Venice Commission later examined the law with regard to its substantive content. This episode constitutes a remarkable example of the tension between constitutional norms governing promulgation and actual constitutional practice in North Macedonia.

According to Škarikj, the Constitutional Court concluded that no extraordinary circumstances existed that would justify the use of an expedited legislative procedure. Consequently, the application of an urgent legislative process was not considered legally necessary in the circumstances of the case [25].

Another interpretation, with which the author concurs, focuses on the conclusions reached by the Venice Commission. The Commission did not issue a wholly negative opinion on the Law on the Use of Languages. However, it expressed concerns that certain provisions were excessively broad, insufficiently precise, and difficult to implement in practice. Particular criticism was directed at the provisions relating to the judiciary. (Opinion No. 946/2019, CDL-AD(2019)033). According to the Venice Commission, the introduction of full bilingualism in judicial proceedings could impose unrealistic obligations on public institutions, slow down judicial processes, and potentially affect the right to a fair trial [26; 27]. It should be emphasized, however, that the request submitted to the Venice Commission and the subsequent review concerned the substantive content of the law rather than its formal constitutionality. Therefore, the question of whether the Law on the Use of Languages could validly enter into force without a presidential signature was not examined by the Commission. This distinction is crucial for the purposes of the present study, as the constitutional controversy addressed here relates not to the substance of the legislation, but to the legal consequences of promulgation without presidential approval.

On the other hand, a significant normative gap arises where the President neither exercises the veto power by returning a law to Parliament for reconsideration nor approves its promulgation by signing the decree. The Constitution does not provide a clear deadline or an explicit mechanism governing such a situation. Consequently, important constitutional questions emerge as to whether an implied time limit may be inferred from other constitutional provisions and what legal consequences should follow from this form of presidential inaction or "constitutional silence." These issues remain highly relevant within contemporary constitutional law. A useful point of comparison may be found in the United States Constitution. Under the American constitutional framework, where the President neither vetoes nor signs a bill, it automatically acquires legal force after ten days, provided that Congress remains in session. In this sense, the U.S. Constitution treats presidential silence as implied approval rather than as an obstacle to the legislative process. However, as noted by Škarikj, following the change in the parliamentary majority in 2017, the President adopted a markedly different ap-

proach that lacked a clear constitutional basis [28, p. 335-337]. In practice, the suspensive veto was transformed into what effectively resembled a "pocket veto," despite the absence of an express constitutional provision authorizing such a mechanism [8; 29].

This development became particularly visible in relation to the 2018 Law on the Use of Languages and the Law Ratifying the Prespa Agreement signed between North Macedonia and Greece on 17 June 2018 concerning the long-standing name dispute. In both cases, the laws were ultimately published in the Official Gazette without the President's signature and solely on the basis of the signature of the Speaker of Parliament. These events illustrate the practical consequences of the constitutional uncertainty surrounding promulgation and provide a concrete example of how constitutional silence may generate institutional tensions within the legislative process.

Although both laws were re-adopted by Parliament with an absolute majority, no promulgation decree was issued. According to some scholars, this situation stems from deficiencies in the constitutional regulation of the veto institution. In particular, the Constitution does not specify the period within which the President must sign the promulgation decree after a presidential veto has been overridden by an absolute majority in Parliament [30]. Siljanovska-Davkova similarly argues that, according to the wording of Article 75 of the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia, a suspensive veto can neither evolve into a pocket veto nor acquire the characteristics of an absolute veto [31].

Nevertheless, following the entry into force of the Prespa Agreement, President Ivanov refused to sign several promulgation decrees on the grounds that the legislation referred to the new constitutional name of the state, "Republic of North Macedonia".

Some authors have defended Ivanov's position by arguing that it was supported by an existing constitutional practice. According to this view, the first deviation from the constitutional framework occurred in 1997, when President Kiro Gligorov refused to sign the promulgation decree of the Criminal Procedure Code, despite the fact that the law had been adopted by a two-thirds majority and was therefore not subject to a suspensive veto. A second example occurred in 2001, when President Boris Trajkovski refused to promulgate a law concerning parliamentary privileges

after it had been reconsidered and re-adopted by Parliament. These two cases have been cited as constitutional precedents capable of providing a degree of justification for Ivanov's conduct.

Such an interpretation, however, remains controversial. The actions of Gligorov and Trajkovski occurred during periods in which their respective political parties were in government. By contrast, Ivanov's refusal took place under conditions of political cohabitation and significantly intensified tensions between the Presidency and the parliamentary majority. In this respect, the case appears to support the argument that Presidents tend to exercise veto-related powers more assertively when the government lacks a strong parliamentary majority.

Indeed, the limited parliamentary support enjoyed by the SDSM-led government and its inability to consistently secure the constitutionally required two-thirds majority reduced the likelihood of meaningful political or constitutional consequences for presidential non-compliance. This consideration was particularly relevant in the context of a potential impeachment procedure, since the temporary formation of a two-thirds majority during the constitutional amendment process did not necessarily guarantee the existence of the same majority for the purpose of holding the President constitutionally accountable [30].

4. Comparative Constitutional Models

A. Serbia

The first constitutional model examined within the comparative framework of this study is that of the Republic of Serbia. In response to difficulties similar to those experienced in North Macedonia (problems that can be traced to the actions of Presidents Kiro Gligorov in 1997, Boris Trajkovski in 2001, and Gjorge Ivanov during the period 2018–2019) several scholars have suggested that the Serbian constitutional solution deserves particular attention. Among them, Todorovska argues that the "Serbian model" may provide an appropriate institutional response to the constitutional uncertainties surrounding presidential refusal to promulgate legislation [32]. Indeed, Article 113 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia establishes a clear mechanism designed to prevent legislative deadlock. The provision states: "If the National Assembly decides to vote again on a law returned by the President of the Republic for reconsideration, the law shall be adopted

by a majority of the total number of deputies. The President of the Republic shall be obliged to promulgate the re-adopted law. If the President of the Republic fails to issue the decree of promulgation within the constitutionally prescribed period, the decree shall be issued by the President of the National Assembly" [33].

Promulgation of laws - Article 113- The President of the Republic shall be obliged to issue a decree on promulgation of laws or to return the law for reconsideration with a written explanation to the National Assembly, within maximum 15 days from the day of adoption of the law, that is, not later than within seven days, if the law has been adopted by emergency procedure.

If the National Assembly decides to vote again on the law, which has been returned for reconsideration by the President of the Republic, the law shall be adopted by the majority vote from the total number of deputies.

The President of the Republic shall be obliged to promulgate the newly adopted law.

If the President of the Republic fails to issue a decree on promulgation of the law within the deadline stipulated by the Constitution, the decree shall be issued by the Chairman of the National Assembly [34; 35].

According to Todorovska, the adoption of such a mechanism in North Macedonia would produce important constitutional and political benefits. On the one hand, the President would be relieved of the political and moral responsibility associated with the potential consequences of the legislation. On the other hand, the Speaker of Parliament would be able to demonstrate to the public that the institutional will of the legislature cannot be rendered ineffective through presidential inaction [32].

B. Slovenia

The second comparative example is found in Article 91 of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, entitled "Promulgation of Laws." Under this provision, laws must be promulgated by the President of the Republic no later than eight days after their adoption. Following the adoption of a law and prior to its promulgation, the National Council may, within seven days, request that the National Assembly reconsider the legislation. Upon reconsideration, the law is re-adopted by a majority of all deputies unless the Constitution requires a higher majority. The second decision of the National Assembly is final. The most note-

worthy aspect of this constitutional arrangement is that the power to initiate legislative reconsideration is not vested in the President but in the National Council, which functions as the upper chamber of the Slovenian constitutional system. Consequently, the President does not possess a classical political veto power. Instead, the presidential role is largely confined to the formal act of promulgation. In this respect, the Slovenian model differs significantly from that of North Macedonia [36].

Slovenia Constitution (CONSTITUTION Official Gazette RS, Nos. 33/91-I, 42/97, 66/2000, 24/03, 69/04 and 68/06) in Article 91 (Promulgation of Laws) Laws, are promulgated by the President of the Republic no later than eight days after they have been passed. The National Council may within seven days of the passing of a law and prior to its promulgation require the National Assembly to decide again on such law. In deciding again, a majority of all deputies must vote for such law to be passed unless the Constitution envisages a higher majority for the passing of the law under consideration. Such new decision by the National Assembly is final.

The Slovenian model is particularly noteworthy from the perspective of North Macedonia because it does not grant the President a strong veto power in the classical sense. Instead, the constitutional framework is designed to preserve the logic of parliamentary government.

Pursuant to Article 91 of the Constitution of Slovenia, laws must be promulgated by the President within eight days of their adoption. However, the President does not function as an independent political veto actor. The power of suspensive veto is vested not in the President but in the National Council (Državni svet), an institution that performs functions comparable to those of a second chamber [37].

The National Council may request the reconsideration of a law that has already been adopted. If Parliament subsequently re-adopts the law by an absolute majority, the legislative procedure is finalized and the President becomes constitutionally obliged to promulgate it [38]. Accordingly, the possibility of a President refusing to sign legislation for a second time or effectively creating a "pocket veto" is extremely limited within the Slovenian constitutional framework. The President primarily performs the role of a formal promulgation authority. The system is therefore structured in a manner that safeguards legislative continuity and prevents institutional obstruction.

In this respect, the Slovenian model represents the opposite of the constitutional difficulties observed during the Ivanov presidency in North Macedonia. The constitutional architecture of Slovenia prevents the transformation of a suspensive veto into a more powerful form of obstruction, preserves the supremacy of Parliament, and treats promulgation primarily as a technical and administrative act rather than a substantive instrument of political control [39].

C. Hungary

Finally, the Hungarian model regulates the promulgation of laws and the exercise of presidential veto powers under Article 6 of the Constitution of Hungary. When a law is submitted for presidential consideration, the President has three constitutional options: to promulgate the law, to return it to Parliament for reconsideration through the exercise of a political veto, or to refer it to the Constitutional Court for a review of its constitutionality. If the President chooses to exercise the political veto, Parliament may reconsider the legislation and re-adopt it either in its original form or with amendments. Once Parliament has re-adopted the law, the President may not exercise a second political veto [13].

The most significant feature of the Hungarian model is the existence of constitutional safeguards designed to prevent legislative deadlock. Following the re-adoption of a law, the President may only refer the legislation to the Constitutional Court. If the Court determines that the law is consistent with the Constitution, the President is constitutionally obliged to promulgate it. Conversely, if the Court finds the legislation unconstitutional, the law cannot enter into force. In this way, the Hungarian constitutional framework prevents the President from indefinitely refusing promulgation and thereby obstructing the legislative process. As a result, the suspensive veto cannot evolve into a continuing veto or produce the effects of a de facto absolute veto [40].

5. Discussion and Comparative Constitutional Models and Proposed Solutions for North Macedonia

A. Discussion

The analysis conducted in this study demonstrates that the constitutional framework of North Macedonia contains a structural ambiguity concerning the promulgation of legislation. Although

Article 75 of the Constitution formally establishes only a suspensive presidential veto, the constitutional text does not provide a clear mechanism for addressing situations in which the President refuses to promulgate a law after it has been reconsid-

ered and re-adopted by Parliament. As a result, a normative gap emerges between the constitutional obligation imposed upon the President and the absence of an institutional mechanism capable of enforcing that obligation [23].

Table 1 - Comparative Constitutional Models for Promulgation of Laws

Criterion	Serbia	Hungary	Slovenia
Explicit substitution mechanism (Speaker promulgates the law)	✓ Yes	✗ No	✗ No
Constitutional judicial safeguard	Limited	✓ Strong	✗ No specific mechanism at this stage
Possibility of presidential resistance after parliamentary reconsideration	None	None	None
Presidential veto power	✓ Yes (return for reconsideration)	✓ Yes (return for reconsideration and referral to the Constitutional Court)	✗ No
Authority entitled to request reconsideration of a law	President	President	National Council of Slovenia
Final authority in the legislative process	Parliament	Parliament + Constitutional Court	Parliament
Type of constitutional model	Direct solution	Indirect (judicial) solution	Parliamentary supremacy model

From a constitutional theory perspective, this finding raises important questions regarding the relationship between promulgation and legislative continuity. If promulgation is regarded as a constitutive element of the legislative process, the refusal of the President to sign a law may effectively prevent the completion of the legislative procedure, despite the existence of a renewed parliamentary majority. In such circumstances, the practical impact of presidential inaction may extend beyond the limits of a traditional suspensive veto and begin to resemble the effects of an absolute veto. Consequently, the distinction between suspensive and absolute vetoes becomes less clear when a constitutional system lacks safeguards capable of ensuring the finalization of the legislative process.

The comparative analysis further demonstrates that democratic constitutional systems generally seek to prevent such outcomes through various institutional mechanisms. Serbia relies on a substitution mechanism, Slovenia minimizes the possibility of conflict through its parliamentary design, and Hungary employs constitutional judicial review as a safeguard against institutional deadlock. Despite their differences, these models share a common objective: preserving legislative continuity after Parliament has reaffirmed its legislative will. The existence of such safeguards in comparable constitutional systems highlights the relative vulnerability of the North Macedonian constitutional framework.

As previously noted, the veto power should function as an exceptional and conciliatory constitutional instrument rather than as a mechanism of continuous political confrontation. Repeated cycles of veto and legislative reaffirmation not only diminish the efficiency of the law-making process but may also weaken the President's role as a neutral constitutional arbiter. For this reason, scholarly proposals advocating the limitation of veto powers through a countersignature requirement deserve serious consideration.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the constitutional framework of North Macedonia formally recognizes only a suspensive presidential veto. Nevertheless, the absence of an explicit mechanism governing the consequences of a presidential refusal to promulgate legislation creates a normative gap capable of generating the practical effects of a continuing veto. Consequently, the constitutional problem is not the existence of presidential veto power itself, but rather the lack of institutional safeguards ensuring legislative continuity once Parliament has reaffirmed its legislative will.

B. Comparative Constitutional Models and Proposed Solutions for North Macedonia

Ba. Substitution Model - (Serbia)

The Serbian constitutional framework provides an explicit solution to potential legislative deadlock. Although the President is entitled to return legislation for reconsideration, a law that has been

re-adopted by Parliament cannot be blocked indefinitely. Where the President fails to comply with the constitutional duty to promulgate the law, the promulgation decree may be issued by the Speaker of the National Assembly. Accordingly, the Serbian model represents an institutional substitution mechanism that ensures legislative continuity while preventing a suspensive veto from evolving into a continuing or de facto absolute veto.

Bb. Structural Prevention Model - (Slovenia)

The Slovenian constitutional framework does not confer a classical veto power upon the President. Instead, the authority to initiate legislative reconsideration is vested in the National Council. The President's function is primarily confined to the formal promulgation of legislation and does not permit the obstruction of the legislative process. As a result, the Slovenian model preserves legislative continuity through a constitutional design that reinforces parliamentary supremacy while maintaining the President within a limited and largely ceremonial constitutional role.

Bc. Judicial Safeguard Model - (Hungary)

Under the Hungarian constitutional framework, the President may either return legislation to Parliament for reconsideration or initiate constitutional review before the Constitutional Court. Nevertheless, once Parliament re-adopts the law or the Court determines that it is consistent with the Constitution, the President is under a constitutional obligation to promulgate it. Consequently, the presidential veto remains strictly suspensive in nature, and the possibility of transforming it into a continuing veto or a de facto absolute veto is institutionally excluded. The Hungarian model therefore provides an important safeguard for legislative continuity by resolving constitutional disputes through judicial review rather than political confrontation.

General Assessment

The comparative analysis demonstrates that democratic constitutional systems do not leave the consequences of presidential refusal unresolved. Whether through substitution mechanisms, structural limitations on presidential intervention, or judicial safeguards, each system provides a constitutional pathway capable of preserving legislative continuity. The absence of such a mechanism in North Macedonia constitutes the principal normative gap identified in this study.

Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that the constitutional problem in North Macedonia does

not stem from the existence of presidential veto power itself, but rather from the absence of an effective mechanism to address presidential refusal after parliamentary reconsideration. While a limited suspensive veto may contribute to legislative scrutiny, its repeated use and the emergence of a veto–reconsideration cycle may generate institutional tensions and undermine the constitutional position of the President.

For this reason, the exercise of veto power should be accompanied by a reasoned justification, thereby ensuring transparency and preventing its transformation into a purely political instrument. Furthermore, the Hungarian model demonstrates that constitutional review prior to promulgation may provide a valuable legal alternative by transferring disputes from the political arena to constitutional adjudication.

At the same time, the Slovenian experience illustrates the importance of clear constitutional deadlines, which reduce uncertainty and prevent procedural deadlock. The Serbian model, on the other hand, offers an institutional safeguard through an alternative promulgation mechanism capable of preserving legislative continuity.

Accordingly, North Macedonia does not necessarily need to adopt a single foreign model in its entirety. Rather, a hybrid constitutional solution combining reasoned vetoes, constitutional review mechanisms, clearly defined deadlines, and an alternative promulgation procedure would provide a more balanced framework capable of protecting both parliamentary supremacy and constitutional stability.

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