

## Bitola – from Eyalet capital to regional centre in the Republic of Macedonia

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### Abstract

In the past nine hundred years Bitola has undergone a string of administrative and political rises and falls. In the course of the 16th century the city grew to have a very large population and become a huge economic and geopolitical centre of the large province of Rumelia in the Ottoman Empire. However, as a result of some overwhelming political and military events that played out during the 20th century (the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the Balkan wars, WW1, WW2 and other economic, political, technical and technological developments that occurred in the world and in the country) Bitola was reduced to a mere local city in economic, geopolitical and population terms. The immediate economic and population expansion of Bitola is presented through an exact numeric and cartographic overview of spatial-temporal changes in the city's development in the past two centuries. For the purposes of rendering a more accurate image, we have compared Bitola's population, administrative and geopolitical role with a number of major Balkan cities.

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### Introduction

As an urban municipality, Bitola has a multi-millennial history filled with periods of rise and fall. But the most significant period of time was the 19<sup>th</sup> century because it was a time of many social events that had as their result the demographic and economic progress of the city. Bitola was the administrative seat of the *Eyalet* of Rumelia, i.e. the Rumelia province, for the first few decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the European part of the Ottoman Empire Bitola was a significant administrative, political and economic centre, so according to its significance

it was ranked fifth after Istanbul, Thessaloniki, Bucharest and Edirne. The rise of the city (ranking it 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> place) lasted almost a century. It was a period of rapid economic, educational and cultural development and a time when Bitola, under significant European influence, became a centre of exceptional military and strategic importance. However, events at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards caused this prominent provincial centre to be turned into to a mere border city with limited development - a state lasting an entire century.

#### Working methods

The historical events in the geopolitical and social life on the Balkan peninsula in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century resulted in immense demographic and economic changes in this geographical area. In this context, we will look into the causality of the rise and fall of the city of Bitola as an administrative political, economic and cultural centre at that time. Our research procedure used multiple scientific-research methods which served the purpose of developing a more relevant analysis. More specifically, the methods used were historical, geographical, cartographical and statistical, including also the analytical method and the comparative method. Thus, a combined spatial-temporal overview was developed, identifying the changes in Bitola in particular, but also those occurring more widely across the territory of the Balkans.

**Bitola in the 10<sup>th</sup> century (a short overview)** Different periods of development can be identified in the multi-millennial existence of Bitola as an urban settlement. However,

particular attention should be paid to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries due to the fact that during the 19<sup>th</sup> century Bitola was the centre of multiple events favouring the economic and demographic rise of the city.

Significant population growth can be seen in Bitola during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1805 it had a population of 15,000; in 1838 the population grew to 40,000; in 1856 to 46,000; in 1889 to 50,050, reaching 60,000 in 1900. This means that in the course of 1805 - 1856 (in 50 years) the population increased by 31,000 or 206.7%, and in the course of 1856 – 1900 it increased by 14,000 or 34.4%. The total population growth of Bitola in the 19<sup>th</sup> century amounted to 45,000 which is a growth of 400% meaning that the city grew four times (Dimitrov 2005: 7). Population growth in Bitola led to a variety of changes to urban organisation and life in the city. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the city started to transform from a typical oriental settlement into a city with a mixed urban and architectural structure which arose as a result of cultural influences from the East and West. One of the reasons for those changes was Bitola's designation as the seat of the Rumelia *Eyalet* (a province in the Ottoman Empire) in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which was one of the most significant delegations of the Sultan's power in European Turkey.

The new military-strategic, administrative-political and communication significance that Bitola gained was also due to historical events occurring in the region as a whole, such as the uprisings in Albania, the independence of Greece etc. In this way, and at a time of the Tanzimat reforms in 1835, Bitola became the regional capital of the Rumelia *Vilayet*, a seat of Rumeli – Valisi, and with the Sultan's Hatiserif of the 21<sup>st</sup> June 1836 Bitola was officially designated as the main seat of power in Rumelia (Poljanski 1972: 203). Previously Rumelia encompassed all the territories of Macedonia, Thrace and Moesia (Matkovski 1992: 344), covered 124,630 km<sup>2</sup>, and its seat or capital kept changing. At first it was Edirne (Adrianople), then Sofia and the final one was Bitola or Monastir (*Ursinus 1991*).

In 1836, Rumelia was partitioned into three new *eyalets* (Figure 1): Salonica, Edirne and the Rumelia *eyalet* centred on Bitola/Monastir (*Inalcik 1995; Birken 1976*).

#### The administrative-political role of Bitola in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

In 1844, Bitola, as the seat of Rumelia, administered an area of 48,907 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 2,700,000. The Ottoman Empire, in 1844, covered an area of 2,938,365 km<sup>2</sup>, and had a population of 35,350,000, of which 325,805 km<sup>2</sup> (amounting to 11.1% of the entire area) lay in Europe and had a population of 15,500,000 (amounting to 43.8% of the total population). Thus, Rumelia and its area covered 1.7% of the entire territory of the Ottoman Empire, and 15.0% of the European part of the Empire. Based on its population, Rumelia comprised 7.6% of the Empire, that is, 17.4% of the European part of the Empire (Matkovski 2000: 253-255, 346; excerpt from the travel book of James Lewis Farley from 1861-1869). Under its management were: the present day Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, parts of Albania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro and Greece (Table 1, Figure 2). Administratively, Rumelia was divided into multiple *vilayets* (the *vilayets* of Bitola, Skopje, Salonica etc.). The *Vilayet* of Bitola was composed of 5 *sanjaks*: Bitola, Prizren, Skopje, Debar and Scutari.

Bitola, apart from being the seat of the province of Rumelia, was also designated as its capital, while Thessaloniki - the main port of Macedonia – was the second city of Rumelia. According to James Lewis Farley (a British financial expert in the Ottoman Bank who lived in Turkey for a long time and knew the state of the Empire, and particularly of Macedonia): “Bitola was a large city in Rumelia and the capital of one of the rich *eyalets* (the Bitola *Eyalet*-Sanjak) in the European part of Turkey...

Salonica (Thessaloniki) was the main port of Macedonia, and second most important city in Rumelia (Matkovski 2000: 348; J. L. Fisher's travelogue from 1861 to 1869).

This situation remained unchanged until 1867, when the *eyalet* system was replaced by *vilayets*, and so 5 *vilayets* were formed out of the Rumelia *Eyalet*: Bitola, Salonica (1867-1912), Kosovo (Skopje; 1877-1913; among which the ethnic territory of Macedonia was divided), as well as Scutari and Elbasan (Figure 2).

During the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century Bitola strengthened its role as a *vilayet* (provincial) centre, thus annexing multiple smaller administrative units: *sanjaks*, *kazas* and *nahiyahs*. Towards the end of the 1850s and beginning of the 1860s the *Vilayet* of Bitola was partitioned into three *sanjaks*: Bitola, Ohrid and Korcha. The Bitola Pasha *Sanjak* was comprised of 11 *kazas*. The Bitola *Eyalet* had a population of 1,397,646 and the city of Bitola 46,000 (Senkevich 1967: 117; Sotirovski 1966: 189-190; Stamboliska 2005: 34).

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Bitola *Vilayet* covered a surface area of 32,000 km<sup>2</sup> and included Macedonian, Albanian and Greek territories with a total population of 800,000 – 900,000. It was made up of 5 *sanjaks* (the Bitola, Debar, Korcha, Elbasan and Serfiçe *sanjaks*) with a total of 22 (23) *kazas* and 26 (27) *nahiyahs*. The *Sanjak* of Bitola consisted of 5 *kazas* and 9-10 *nahiyahs*. Out of 708 settlements in total, 266 belonged to the Bitola *Kaza* (37.6%), while the remaining 442 settlements (62.4%) belonged to

the remaining *kazas* (Dimeski 1982: 81-87).

In the 1870s, the total area of the Macedonian territories (58,648 km<sup>2</sup> with a total population of 1,190,000) was divided into the following *sanjaks*: Salonica (Thessaloniki), Seres, Drama, Iskub (Skopje) and Bitola. Bitola, as the seat of the Bitola *Sanjak*, administered a surface of 18,440 km<sup>2</sup> (or 31.4% of the total surface of all Macedonian territories) and with a population of 379,000 or 31.8% of the total population living on all Macedonian territories (Matkovski 2001: 212; calculations according to travellers F. Hellward and L. Beck from around 1877).

### Economic development

Its new military and administrative position enabled the city of Bitola to rapidly develop, first as a craft and trade centre, and then also as a socio-political, educational, religious and cultural centre in the south-western part of Macedonia and in the Balkans as a whole. Therefore, Bitola quickly became the centre for making preparations for huge military actions to defend the area against more frequent attacks by looters, such as the one in 1806 when the city was plundered by Ali Pasha Yaninsky (Kjoropanov 1986: 19-20) and others in 1832 and 1833 etc.

### Artisanship

The most significant advance seen among all the economic sectors in the city was made by artisanship. The period of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was known as “the golden age of artisans” in Bitola. Thus in 1827 there were 30 *esnafs* (association of craftsmen) in Bitola (Bitoski 1966: 137-163) with over 70 different types of artisan craft (Konstantinov 1961: 163) and over 1400 shops and workshops (Turkish documents on Macedonian history 1958: 17-19).

According to data from the 1837/38 census, 70 types of *Bezisten* (covered market) with 86 shops, two pottery tile manufacturer, 30 watermills, 10 bakeries, 12 taverns, 2 12 inns, 4 *hamams* (Turkish baths) etc. (*Turkish documents history* 1996: 153-217) were recorded in Bitola. At that time citizens were directly connected to artisanship, and along with number supported by this activity amounted to nearly 8,000 nearly three quarters (75%) of the population of the city income from artisan shops (Dimitrov 2005: 9).

Trade also developed in parallel with the artisan industries 1838, there were over 800 tradesmen working in Bitola. Most inside the Ottoman Empire, but a few also traded with Western Europe, and Persia as well as India. (This is document from 1829, in which it states that the tradesman from Bitola traded “on land and sea with Western Europe, (*Turkish documents on Macedonian history* 1958: 53-56).

In 1862, artisanal products from Bitola were present at the International Exhibition in London. They were the result of the hard work of 2,065 shops, with about 140 types of different crafts and professions and over 70 *esnaf* organizations (Konstantinov 1961: 103-106). In 1876, the official Turkish records listed 1650 shops, 150 *magazas* (emporiums), 50 taverns, 37 watermills, 93 bakeries, 10 *kaféanes*, 5 tile manufacturers, 3 *magazas* for clothes, 25 taverns, 1 post office, 15 pharmacies, and 15 petroleum storage facilities in the Bazaar of Bitola,

### figure 1

Bitola *Vilayet* in Rumelia *Eyalet* in 1850

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Bitola – from eyalet capital to regional centre in the Republic of Macedonia

craft, 911 shops, a workshops, one *kaféanes* (cafés), on Macedonian 1,500 of the city's their families the people so that depended on in the city. In of them traded countries from supported by a Anastas Tsalis Persia and India“

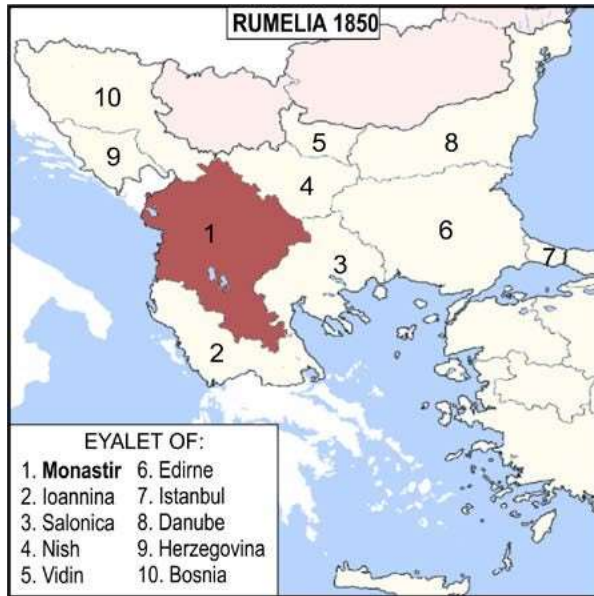


table 1

figure 2  
Bitola Vilayet in Rumelia 1885-1900

Source: own elaboration based on World history...

Bitola – a vilayet (province) seat, from 1836 to 1912 (comparison with other border vilayets)  
Source: own elaboration based on Monastir Vilayet, Salonica Vilayet, Kosovo Vilayet and Scutari Vilayet

Vilayet	Period	Surface km <sup>2</sup>	Population (year)
Rumelia with Bitola as its seat	1836	124,630	8,000,000 (estimate)
	1844	48,907	2,700,000 (1844)
Bitola	1858–1862	33,000	1,397,646 (1862)
Bitola	1874–1877	32,000	1,069,789 (1911)
	1879–1912	30,000	900,000 (1912)
Salonica	1867–1912	33,500	1,347,915 (1911)
Skopje – Kosovo	1877–1913	30,000	1,602,949 (1911)
Scutari	1867–1913	13,800	349,455 (1911)
Yanina	1867–1913	47,400	560,835 (1911)

2,000 artisans in Bitola and 1,000 tradesmen meaning more luxury houses, around ten consular residencies, few that both groups together supported nearly 15,000 people Orthodox Churches, a Catholic church, baths, storehouses which was almost a third (33-35%) of the city. It can therefore be claimed, with certainty, that in the first decades and there was ongoing construction of new streets, bridges of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Bitola was a strictly artisan city, while, as a public aqueduct, public taps and fountains, a city for the remainder of the century it acquired the epithet park, a library, hotels, factories, a home for orphans and

“an artisan and commercial city” (Dimitrov 2005: 13). the poor, a railway (1894), multiple photography studios, various associations, many residential houses in old

although there weren't any factories, which amounted to a total of 2,054 active economic entities in Bitola (Petkova 1993/1994: 138).

#### **Trade**

In 1865, there were 40 bigger and 340 smaller tradesmen operating in Bitola, however some foreign tradesmen were also involved, as well as branches of many trade houses. Many trading companies from Bitola had their subsidiaries in Thessaloniki, Vienna, Peshta, Leipzig, Berlin, Trieste, Venice, London, Paris, Marseille, Zadar, Sarajevo, Belgrade, Sophia, Plovdiv, Scutari, Tsarigrad, Alexandria and other important trade centres. Intensive export-import trading relations were maintained with Russia, France, England, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, Italy, Prussia (Germany), Egypt, Persia, India and other countries (Zografski 1967: 362; Poljanski 1972: 203-219).

Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were over

The total number of people employed in the industrial sector in Bitola was over 2,000 people. Up to 10,000 people i.e. 20% of the entire city population, found their means of support, either directly or indirectly, in the city's industry. All in all, towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century half of Bitola's population obtained their means of support through craft shops, trade or industry (Dimitrov 2005: 22).

#### **Building industry**

In the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, building was another industry that underwent intensive development, and this is when the construction of brick and stone buildings and structures began. Two large barracks were built (1838/1848), also two post-offices (1848), a military gymnasium (1882), a state *konak-saraj* (1886), hundreds of shops, warehouses, workshops, a few banks, three military and four civilian hospitals, multiple schools, a theatre (1898), training of the the Dragor river by embankments (1896), a few orthodox churches (1830, 1863, 1870), many

the construction of two factories: one for the production of beer and spirits and the other for the production of oil (Zografski 1967: 472-476). They were followed a bit later by the opening of a state printing house, as well as a few textile and knitwear factories, candy and Turkish delight factories, tile factories etc.

The first industrial factories in Bitola appear in 1883. In 1897, there were already 12 textile factories and 8 water-powered flour mills in operation. It is not surprising then that towards the very end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Bitola's industry consisted of 24 industrial factories, including 3 flour mills, 1 brewery, 2 other food companies, 4 textile factories, 8 wood working factories, 4 printing house, 1 leather and sole factory and 1 tile production factory (Zografski 1967: 144).

offices (first the Austrian and then the Turkish post office opening in 1848). The year 1861 marked the beginning of the operation of Bitola's postal and telegraph lines, one of them starting in Bitola, through Skopje, Pristina to Belgrade; another from Bitola through Thessaloniki to Tsarigrad; then from Bitola through Korcha to Yanina, and Bitola was also a city of transit of the telegraph line connecting England to India (Dimitrov 1998: 55-56).

#### **Education**

All throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century Bitola was an important education centre with twenty boys and girls schools, as well as a cultural centre with a theatre, libraries, music, sport and other associations. It was also

a city that participated in many exhibitions and fairs, a city

### Banking

The size of the city is also evident from its banking systems, quarters etc. This says a lot about the city also being represented through the subsidiaries of the Ottoman Bank (1863), the Thessaloniki bank (1888), the Ottoman Agricultural bank – Zirat bank (1893), other smaller banks and multiple private bookmakers (Zografski 1967: 467).

### Industry

The first manufacturing workshops in Bitola date from 1860 and 1864, when a Swiss company from Zurich started work of two post

with around ten consuls, a cosmopolitan city bringing the orient and Western Europe together.

All of these data lead us to the conclusion that for the major part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Bitola was one of the leading artisan capitals in the Ottoman Empire, after Tsarigrad, Thessaloniki, Smirna, Alexandria, Baghdad and Damascus. In European Turkey however, Bitola ranked third for development of the economy and craftsmanship, just behind Tsarigrad and Thessaloniki, and finally it ranked first in the boundaries of the Balkan Peninsula, as a leading city – the very capital of artisan-

<sup>72</sup>ship throughout the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century. Bitola's leading position at that time is an undisputable fact.

The words of the British politician and diplomat Henry Lear bear testimony to the economic rise of Bitola in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1839, while strolling through town, he noticed the following: "Bitola is a large city and the capital of Rumelia... the city markets are huge and well stocked with home and foreign goods and products" (Matkovski & Angelkova 1974: 236-237).

A similar comment stands in the report of the British consul in Bitola, John A. Lonwort, from 1852, who among other things noted the following "...even more than any other city I have seen on the

neighbourhood units as well as new apartment complexes, quarters etc. This says a lot about the city also being represented through the subsidiaries of the Ottoman Bank (1863), the Thessaloniki bank (1888), the Ottoman Agricultural bank – Zirat bank (1893), other smaller banks and multiple private bookmakers (Zografski 1967: 467). There was a significant improvement in the transport connections of Bitola during the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which was due to the construction of roads towards Thessaloniki, Prilep and Ohrid, as well as the

mainland, it has the presence of commercial movement, renewal and prosperity" (Poljanski 1982: 148-150).

Edward Spenser, who visited Bitola in 1850, remarked among other things that "The city is the seat of the Vezir of Rumelia and has a population of 50,000, modern public buildings, infantry barracks, a hospital, a palace for the Vizier and others, it has a European look, a multitude of mosques, narrow streets and wooden houses, a monastery...various caravans pass through the city, with camels, mules and leather, commercial activity of Spanish Jews who are said to be immensely rich,...there are also Armenians, Greeks leading the commerce in the city,... cutlery of Australian production, English produce, forks, spoons, British silver, selling of British produce,...a picnic in the city..." (Matkovski 1992: 50-60).

Data on the population of Bitola, compared to other cities of the Balkan Peninsula, also speak in context of what is described above (Table 2, Figure 3, Figure 4).

Bitola, in certain years during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had a larger population than many European cities that are far more populated

and famous today. It is evident from the data above that Bitola ranks fifth by population density in the Balkans in the 1800-1869 period, but ranks among the top ten cities due to its size in the 1870-1900 period (Figure 4). Compared to some European cities it can be concluded that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Bitola was larger than a number of cities such as Kiev, Kharkiv, Minsk, Bern, Bratislava, Krakow, Belgrade, Sofia and many others.

#### **Bitola in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (a short overview)**

The first and second decade of the 20th century featured some events in the Balkans and in Macedonia that impeded Bitola's rise. These include the following historical events: the Ilinden uprising in 1903; the Balkan wars in 1912 and 1913; the partition of Macedonia in 1913 and WW1 from 1914 to 1918, which together caused a drastic geopolitical, economic and population decline of Bitola. These events basically limited Bitola's further economic and geopolitical development.

So in Bitola, the 20<sup>th</sup> century started by a change of "rulers", meaning that the Turkish people left the historical scene in 1912 after 530 years of rule in Bitola and Macedonia in general, and were followed by the Serbs who took over from 1912 to 1914, and the Bulgarians and Germans who arrived in Bitola from 1914 to 1918.

After the Ilinden uprising, the Balkan Wars, and especially during WW1 and as a result of constant bombing, Bitola underwent the heaviest economic and population decline ever. The population decreased from about 60,000 to 23,000 – a decrease of 61.7%, meaning that Bitola suffered an almost complete exodus of the city's population.

From 1919 to 1941 Bitola was part of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1919-1929), which then changed the name to

#### **table 2**

The population of Bitola compared to other cities of the Balkan peninsula in the course of the 19th century Source: Relevant census data for each city

the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929-1941). In 22 years, in spite of the border barrier towards the South and Thessaloniki, Bitola achieved a significant economic and population growth, so in 1937 its population reached 33,024 (Grujoski 1971: 67; Dimitrov 1998: 83, 86). In the 1921–1931 period, Bitola was the centre of Bitola County with an area of 5,803 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 176,732 (Table 3). From 1931 to 1941 Bitola was the centre of a significantly smaller area of 1,798 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 65,164 (Table 4, Figure 5).

During WW2 (1941-1944) the city was under Bulgarian and German rule and the city at that time had a population of 28,405 (Dimitrov 1998: 68, 83, 87). But in spite of that, Bitola remained the centre of the Bitola area which covered an area of 6,442 km<sup>2</sup> and had a population of 250,000 (about 25% of the area and 22.7% of the population in relation to today's territory of the Republic of Macedonia).

After WW2, from 1944 to 1991 (a 47-year period), one part of Macedonia, as a federal unit, first named Narodna (People's) and afterwards known as Socijalistichka (Socialist) Macedonia, formed part of the PFRY i.e. SFRY. This was a time of rapid economic and population growth when, despite intense emigration, Bitola became the second city in the SR of Macedonia with a population of 84,002 according to the census of 1991 (Dimitrov 1998: 83, 91-101). At the same time, again based on its popula-



Place	Name of city		Population
9 7	Bitola	1889 1900	50,050 around 60,000
1	Istanbul	1895	900,000
4 4	Thessaloniki	1870 1890	90,000 118,000
2 2	Bucharest	1877 1889	177,646 282,071
6	Edirne	1900	68,661
5 5	Subotica	1880 1890	62,556 74,250
3	Athens	1896	123,000
8	Belgrade	1878	50,000
11 16	Skopje	1878 1892	30,000 34,152
10 13	Zagreb	1880 1890	30,830 40,268
8	Belgrade	1878	50,000
15 10	Sofia	1880 1892	20,501 46,628
19	Sarajevo	1878	20,000
26	Tirana	1890	14,000
16	Ljubljana	1890	30,505
23	Pristina	1890	16,000
15	Varna	1887	25,256
20 17	Novi Sad	1870 1890	19,301 24,717
16 15	Plovdiv	1880 1892	24,053 36,033
18	Nish	1890	19,877
21	Split	1890	18,483
13	Russe	1880	26,163

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<b>12</b>	<b>Rijeka</b>	<b>1880 1900</b>	<b>27,904</b>
<b>9</b>			<b>51,419</b>
<hr/>			
<b>14</b>	<b>Patras</b>	<b>1896</b>	<b>37,985</b>
<hr/>			
<b>8</b>	<b>Timișoara</b>	<b>1900</b>	<b>53,033</b>
<hr/>			
<b>14</b>	<b>Craiova</b>	<b>1898 1900</b>	<b>39,000</b>
<b>11</b>			<b>45,438</b>
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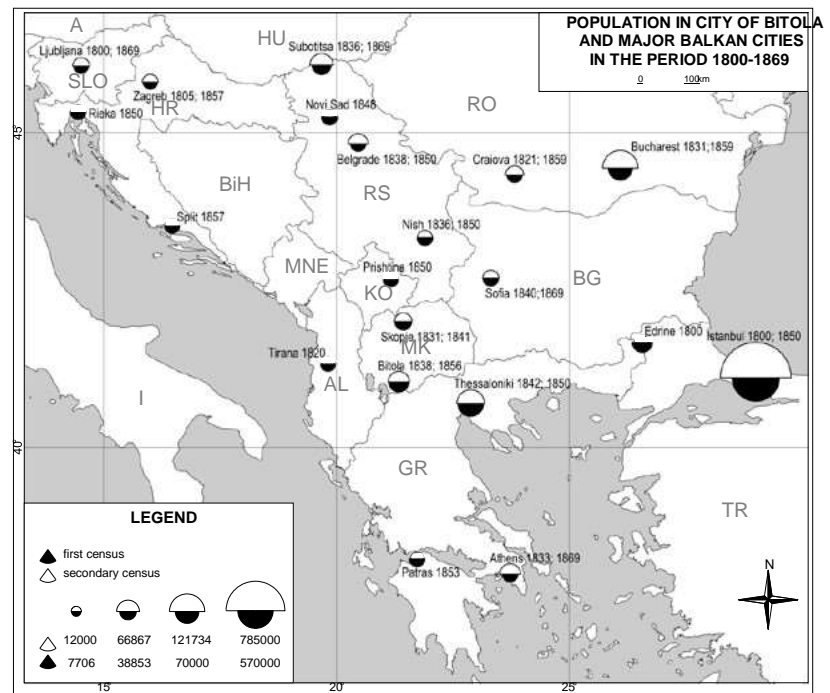
## 1800 - 1869

Place	Name of city		Population
5	Bitola	1838	40,000
5		1856	46,000
1	Istanbul	1800	570,000
1		1850	785,000
2	Thessaloniki	1842	70,000
3		1850	80,000
3	Bucharest	1831	60,587
2		1859	121,734
4	Edirne	1800	40,000
6	Subotica	1836 1869	32,984
4			57,556
11	Athens	1833 1869	14,000
6			44,500
12	Belgrade	1838 1850	12,963
6			40,000
9	Skopje	1831 1841	22,960
9			25,095
14	Zagreb	1805 1857	7,706
10			16,657
12	Belgrade	1838 1850	12,963
6			40,000
16	Sofia	1840 1869	15,000
10			19,000
	Sarajevo		
15	Tirana	1820	12,000
17	Ljubljana	1800	10,000
8		1869	22.600
17	Pristina	1850	12,000
	Varna		
10	Novi Sad	1848	18,530
	Plovdiv		
9	Nish	1836 1850	16,000
14			12,000
13	Split	1857	12,417
	Russe		
12	Rijeka	1850	15,000
11	Patras	1853	15,854

10	Timișoara	1847 1869	18,103
7			32,725
12	Craiova	1821 1859	13,000
7			30,000

**figure 3**

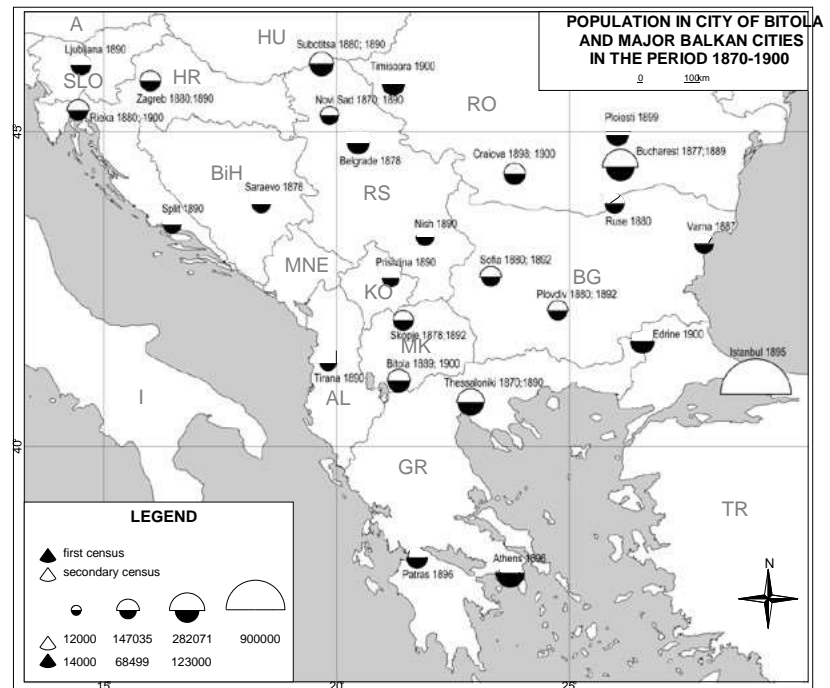
Population in the city of Bitola and major Balkan cities in the period 1800-1869  
Source: own elaboration based on relevant census data

**figure 4**

Population of the city of Bitola and major Balkan cities in the period 1870-1900 Source: own elaboration based on relevant census data, it ranked 18<sup>th</sup> in the SFR of Yugoslavia, and ranked 35<sup>th</sup> in the Balkans (Table 4, Figure 6).

In the period from 1944 to 1991 the role of Bitola as a territorial administrative centre changed a number of times. In the period from 1945 to 1951, it was the centre of Bitola County and covered an area of 1,798 km<sup>2</sup> or 7.0% with a population of 90,295 or 7.8% according to the census of 1948. In the period from 1952 to 1960 it was responsible for 2241 km<sup>2</sup> or 8.7% with a population of 121,546 or 9.3% according to the census of 1953. In the period from 1961 to 1965, Bitola was the centre of the Bitola County, covering 4154 km<sup>2</sup> or 16.1% with a population of 235,382 or 16.7% according to the census of 1961 (Dimitrov & Oggenovski 2009: 90-92).

From 1965 to 1995 Bitola was the centre of the Municipality of Bitola, which covered an area of 1,798 km<sup>2</sup> or 7.0% with a population of 124,512 or 7.5% according to the census of 1981 and 108,203 or 5.6% according to the census of 1994 (Dimitrov & Oggenovski 2009: 95-99).



With the new administrative divisions applying in the period from 1995 to 2004, Bitola governed a very small area of only 233 km<sup>2</sup> or 0.9% of the surface of the Republic of Macedonia with a population of 95,385 or 4.7% of the total population, according to the 2002 census. With the most recent administrative territorial divisions introduced in 2004/5 Bitola governed 792 km<sup>2</sup> or 3.1% of the territory of the Republic of Macedonia with a population of 95,385 or 4.7% of the total population of the Republic of Macedonia (Dimitrov & Oggenovski 2009: 101-106).

A significant improvement of Bitola as the centre of an administrative unit of territory is achieved by NUTS, the regional divisions of the Republic of Macedonia, from 2008 when Bitola becomes the centre of the Pelagonia statistical planning region, and the regional town of a region with an area of 4,710 km<sup>2</sup> or 18.3% of the Republic of Macedonia with a population of 238,136 or 11.8% of the total population according to the census from 2002 (Dimitrov & Oggenovski 2009: 109-110).

In 1991, the Republic of Macedonia obtained its independence and sovereignty, and Bitola, in spite of its demographic, economic and other problems and with a population of 74,550 is still the second biggest city in the country on the basis of its population.

In the absence of a relevant census, according to our own estimate in 2015 and due to trends in natural change and emigration, the population of Bitola varies between 70,000 and 80,000, which places it third by size in the Republic of Macedonia, just behind Skopje and Kumanovo, while on a Balkan level it is somewhere between 45<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> place (Table 4, Figure 7).

**The urban-territorial and economic-functional development of bitola in the 20th century**

In addition to the impacts on the population and administrative division of territory, Bitola in the 20th century is characterised by extreme urban-territorial and economic-functional developmental features. Because of historical developments (the Macedonian Ilinden Uprising in 1903, the Balkan Wars 1912/13, the WW1 1914-1918), Bitola declined from a city with about 60,000 inhabitants in 1900, to one of around 27,000 in 1921. In the intervening period (with Bitola lying on the front line of the WW1),

845 houses were burnt, 619 buildings were demolished, and 696 buildings and 119 houses were damaged (Dimitrov & Oggenovski 2009: 126).

**table 3**

Bitola – centre of administrative divisions over the past 200 years \*  
In 2008, a division using NUTS regions was implemented in Macedonia; in this division Bitola is a center of a region with an area of 4710 km<sup>2</sup>, but data about population is from 2002 as this is the last official census data available for the Republic of Macedonia  
Source: State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia, population censuses 1948-2002 and Dimitrov 1998: 86, 94, 113.

But the previous significance of Bitola was an incentive for the development of new administrative-political, territorial and economic functional structures. This development began to take place during the Serbian colonisation of the Vardar part of Macedonia from 1918-1941, and in particular continued to be evident after the WW2. Thus Bitola, despite the mass emigration of the population (mainly overseas to the United States, Canada and Australia) witnessed a growth in population (with the immigration of the young rural population) and urban-territorial spread. The urban area of the city previously about 20 km<sup>2</sup>, extended to about 26 km<sup>2</sup>, or by 23% (Dimitrov & Oggenovski 2009: 126) following the 1960s and especially the 1970s. The reason was accelerated industrialisation, development of the REK thermal power plant in the 1970s, the construction and development of line and institutional infrastructure, so according to the economic-functional arrangements, only governmental administrative (legislative and executive) institutions and a clinical centre are today absent in Bitola. Accordingly, it maintains the epithet of a regional centre of second rank and function (after the capital Skopje) in the Republic of Macedonia. There are university institutions in Bitola, and the diplomatic and consular missions have been renewed (as in the period before the Balkan Wars of 1912-13).

The resolution of urban overcrowding in Bitola (and in general in the cities of the Republic of Macedonia) is possible with better organisation of agricultural production and ranking, the urban and infrastructural arrangement of the rural environment, and by dispersion of the vital institutional infrastructure to larger rural centres.

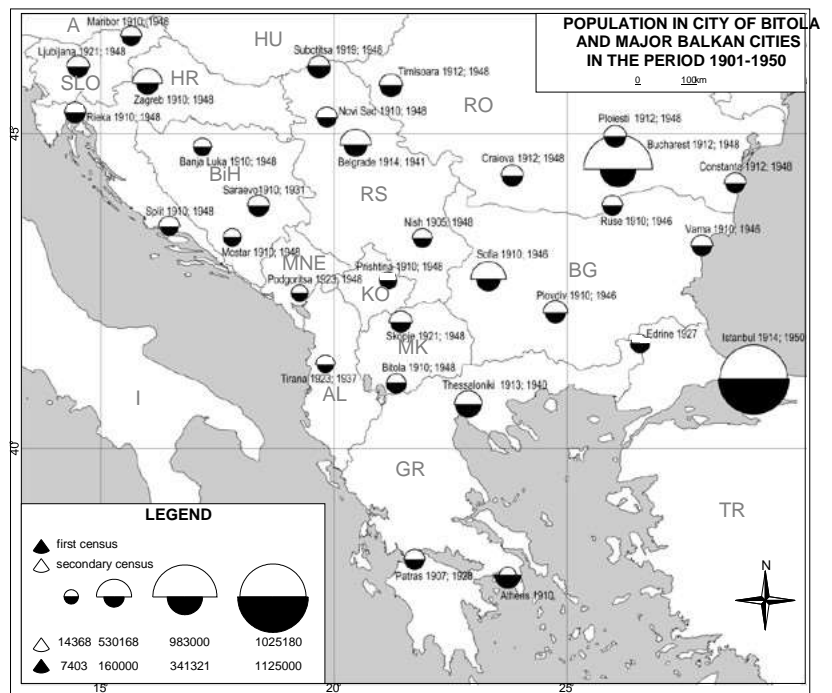
**Conclusions and recommendations**

In the past 200 years, Bitola has known intensive economic, geopolitical and population changes. From the data presented it is obvious that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Bitola's geopolitical, strategic and administrative political position (a centre in the western provinces of the Ottoman Empire)

75

Bitola as a centre of:	Period in years	Surface	Population
		km <sup>2</sup>	(year)

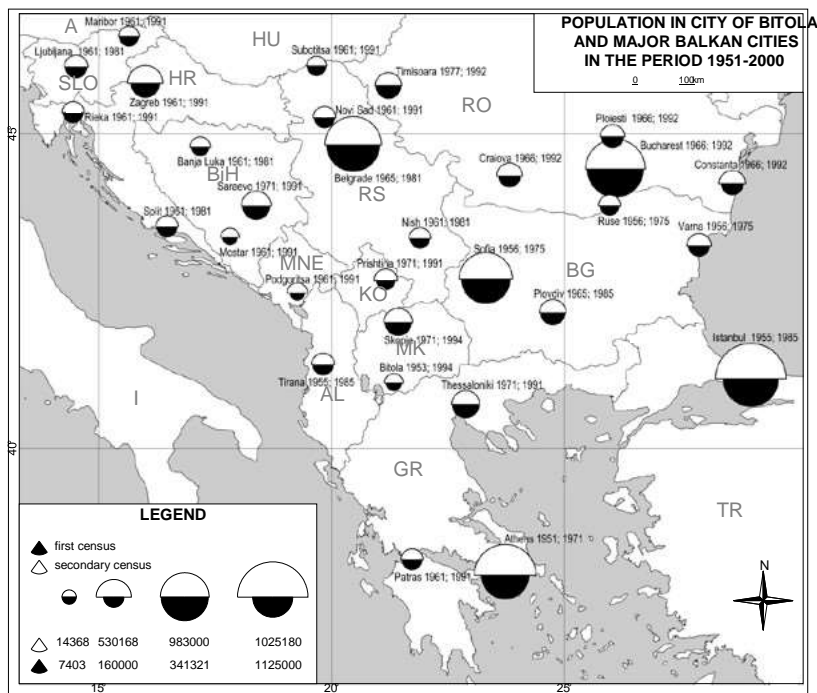
Rumelia Eyalet	1836–1844	48,907	2,700,000 (1844)
	1858–1867	33,000	1,397,646 (1862)
Bitola Vilayet/Sanjak	1890–1900	32,000	1,069,789 (1900)
	1903–1910	32,000	900,000 (1910)
	1912	32,000	663,027 (1912)
Bitola Srez (larger arrounding area)	1921–1931	5,803	176,732 (1921)
	1931–1941	1,798	65,164 (1931)
Bitola Area (Bitola, Brod, Krushevo, Prilep, Ohrid, Resen, Demir Hisar.)	1941–1944	6,442	250,000 (estimate)
Bitola county (1953 –Bitola, Demir Hisar.) (1961 – Bitola, Demir Hisar, Krushevo, Prilep)	1945–1948–1951	1,798	90,295 (1948)
	1952–1954–1960	2,241	121,546 (1953)
	1961–1962–1965	4,154	235,382 (1961)
			111,581 (1961)
Municipality of Bitola	1965–1971–1981–1994– 1995	1,798	124,512 (1971)
			137,636 (1981)
			124,003 (1991)
			108,203 (1994)
	1996–2002–2004	233	95,385 (2002)
Pelagonia Region (Bitola, Resen, Demir Hisar, Prilep, Dolneni, Novaci, MMgila, Krushevo, Krivogashtani.)	since 2008 (new administrative division)*	4,710	238,136 (2002)



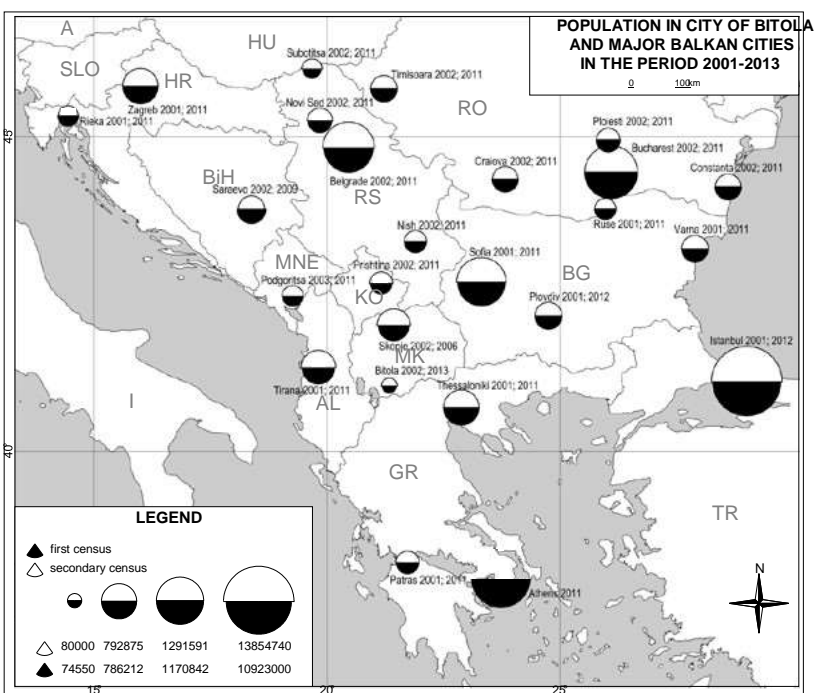


**figure 5**

Population of the city of Bitola and other major Balkan cities in the period 1901-1950 Source: own elaboration based on relevant census data



**figure 6**  
Population in the city of Bitola and other major Balkan cities in the period 1951-2000  
Source: own elaboration based on relevant census data



**figure 7**  
Population in the city of Bitola and other major Balkan cities in the period 2001-2013  
Source: own elaboration based on relevant census data

**table 4**

Population of Bitola and major cities in the Balkans in the period  
1901-2013

Source: Relevant Census data for each city



1901 - 1950			1951 - 2000			2001 - 2013		
Rank	Name of city/year	Population	Rank	Name of city/year	Population	Rank	Name of city/year	Population
13/27	Bitola	52,729	31/35	Bitola	37,564	37	Bitola	74,550
		27,000			65,035	44		from
		30,761			84,002	50		70,000 to
					77,464			80,000
1	Istanbul	1,125,000	1	Istanbul	1,258,000	1	Istanbul	10,923,000
1		983,000	1		5,475,000			13,854,740
4	Thessaloniki	157,889	7	Thessaloniki	345,799	6	Thessaloniki	786,212
6		215,788	8		412,60	7		790,824
2	Bucharest	341,321	1	Bucharest	1,366,684	3	Bucharest	1,926,334
2		1,025,180	2		2,064,474	3		1,883,425
20	Edirne	34,528	29	Edirne	102,345	28	Edirne	141,570
3	Athens	160,000	4	Athens	718,000	2	Athens	2,540,241
						2		4,013,368
6	Belgrade	100,000	2	Belgrade	1,000,000	4	Belgrade	1,232,731
4		340,000	3		1,480,000	4		1,659,440
18	Skopje	41,066	8	Skopje	312,300	9	Skopje	506,926
10		102,600	6		448,200	9		668,518
8	Zagreb	79,038	5	Zagreb	430,802	7	Zagreb	779,145
5		279,623	5		933,914	6		792,875
5	Sofia	102,812	3	Sofia	725,838	5	Sofia	1,170,842
3		530,168	4		1,066,299	5		1,291,591
7	Subotica	101,286	23	Subotica	75,036	36	Subotica	99,981
18		63,079	30		100,386	29		141,554
14	Sarajevo	51,919	6	Sarajevo	359,448	10	Sarajevo	416,497
14		78,173	7		527,049	13		305,242
35	Podgorica	13,000	33	Podgorica	35,054	30	Podgorica	136,473
32		14,368	27		117,875	26		156,169
37	Tirana	10,845	16	Tirana	108,200	8	Tirana	597,899
25		35,000	15		200,000	8		763,634
12	Ljubljana	53,294	12	Ljubljana	134,169	16	Ljubljana	274,826
		97,845			224,817			
31	Pristina	18,740	25	Pristina	69,514	27	Pristina	155,234
30		19,631	16		199,654	21		198,214

1901 - 1950			1951 - 2000			2001 - 2013		
Rank	Name of city/year	Population	Rank	Name of city/year	Population	Rank	Name of city/year	Population
17	Varna	41,419	15	Varna	120,345	14	Varna	312,889
15		76,954	13		253,039	11		334,870
21	Novi Sad	33,089	17	Novi Sad	102,469	19	Novi Sad	216,583
16		69,431	18		179,626	15		277,522
16	Plovdiv	47,981	10	Plovdiv	225,508	11	Plovdiv	338,153
8		126,563	10		342,131	10		339,077
27	Nish	21,946	22	Nish	81,250	24	Nish	173,724
21		49,332	21		161,374	23		183,544
22	Maribor	27,994	26	Maribor	82,560	30	Maribor	114,487
		62,677			119,828			
	Banja Luka	16,274		Banja Luka	50,650	21	Banja Luka	199,191
		29,627			123,937			
	Kragujevac	18,376		Kragujevac	52,792	25	Kragujevac	179,417
		31,412			87,764			
28	Split	21,407		Split	99,614	26	Split	178,102
		64,262			169,322			
	Russe	36,255		Russe	83,453	26	Russe	161,453
		57,509			159,578	27		149,642
	Rijeka	49,806		Rijeka	98,759	28	Rijeka	144,043
		68,780			165,904	32		128,624
	Osijek	31,388		Osijek	84,652	29	Osijek	114,616
		49,810			123,944	38		108,048
	Patras	37,728		Patras	96,100	25	Patras	171,616
		61,278			161,782	18		214,580
	Pirey	251,659		Pirey	186,088	23	Pirey	181,933
		205,404			196,389	25		163,688
	Kostanca	27,201		Kostanca	150,276	12	Kostanca	310,471
		78,586			350,581	14		283,872
	Timișoara	72,555		Timișoara	269,353	13	Timișoara	317,660
		111,987			334,115	12		319,279
	Ploiești	56,460		Ploiești	146,922	16	Ploiești	232,527
		95,632			252,715	19		209,945

1901 - 1950			1951 - 2000			2001 - 2013			
Rank	Name of city/year	Population	Rank	Name of city/year	Population	Rank	Name of city/year	Population	
	Craiova	1912 1948	191 192	Craiova	148,711 303,959	15 17	Craiova	2002 2011	302,601 269,506
	Burgas	1910 1946	1956 1975	Burgas	72,526 144,755	22 20	Burgas	2001 2011	192,390 200,271
	St. Zagora	1910 1946	1956 1975	St. Zagora	55,094 122,454	29 31	St. Zagora	2001 2011	143,420 138,272
	Pleven	1910 1946	1956 1975	Pleven	57,555 107,883	32 39	Pleven	2001 2011	121,880 106,954
	Silven	1910 1946	1956 1975	Silven	46,175 90,316	33 42	Silven	2001 2011	100,366 91,620
	Zenica	1910 1948	1961 1991	Zenica	32,476 96,238	35 37	Zenica	2001 2013	100,000 115,134
	Touzla	1910 1948	1971 1991	Touzla	53,926 83,770	30	Touzla	2011	140,000
	Elbasan	1910		Elbasan		33	Elbasan	2011	128,232
	Shkodër	1938		Shkodër		41	Shkodër	2011	95,907
	Valona			Valona		34	Valona		124,000
	Korcha			Korcha		40	Korcha		105,000
	Mostar	1910 1948	1961 1991	Mostar	35,284 75,865	36	Mostar	2011	111,364

allowed it to become the capital of the Rumelia *Eyalet* and achieve strong population and economic growth, making it the third most significant city in the Balkans, just after Istanbul and Thessaloniki.

Historical events in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (the Ilinden uprising in 1903, the Young Turk Revolution, the Balkan wars, WW1, WW2, the post-war period and the period of an independent Republic of Macedonia) resulted in major changes in the geostrategic, administrative and political, as well as the economic position of Bitola. A particular impact is caused by the setting of the country boundaries after the partition of Macedonia in 1913, which made Bitola a peripheral city. Still, it suffered its biggest decline in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when its population dropped from about 60,000 to about 20,000. Afterwards, Bitola experienced a second growth in population and spatial and administrative influence in the region and today is a modern city with all the functions organised in the country. However, the question of whether Bitola would have advanced in its development had it not been for the events mentioned above, remains constantly open. And that especially if we consider that many Balkan cities were far less developed and significant at a given moment in the past (for example, Sofia, Belgrade, Zagreb, Skopje etc.), and are today population-wise

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and economically more developed than Bitola in multifarious ways. This means that some global geostrategic and political directions of development predetermined a different administrative, political and economic course of development.

The future course of development of Bitola must be seen through the prism of Bitola as a centre of the south-western part of the Republic of Macedonia, a centre for the north-western territories in Greece and certain territories in Albania that border the territories of the Orhid-Prespa region. Development paths based on the concept of the

European Union should enable this and should do it in such a way that open borders and the construction of infrastructure (road, railway etc.) kick-start the further advancement of Bitola. It is irrational and illogical for one of the largest production regions (Pelagonia) to still be without a highway connecting it to the country's capital and centre Skopje, and for it to have a non-functioning railway towards Greece. If that is overcome, then Bitola will once again become a worthy centre of a region which now includes a multitude of cities and settlements: Prilep, Lerin, Resen, Demir-Hisar, Krushevo, Kichevo, Makedonski Brod, Ohrid, Struga, Debar, Pogradec and Korcha - an area of a few thousand km<sup>2</sup> and a population of a few hundred thousand.

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