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**INTER AND INTRA ETHNICAL CONFLICTS AS FACTOR FOR
REDUCING OF DEMOCRATIC AND DEVELOPMENT CAPACITIES
OF REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

Abstract

One of the paradoxes of the contemporary Macedonian society at the beginning of twenty-first century can be seen on the fact that in the same period when Republic of Macedonia become independent and sovereign state, the Macedonian society more and more intensively is disintegrating, or it is continuously reducing its social cohesion. Certainly, there are many reasons for this among which most dominant are the inter-and intra-ethnic conflicts which have extremely negative effects as to the global social processes, but also to the individual existence of the citizens. Namely, today in Republic of Macedonia dominates ethnic, religious, political, social, cultural and axiological separation that blocks the rational approach in the processes of organizing and management of the social life in all of its spheres: politics, economy culture, education etc. At the same time it leads to reducing of the democratic and development capacities of the country that has highly negative consequences concerning the dynamics towards access of Republic of Macedonia in European Union.

According to the previous statements in this paper we will try to analyse the inter and intra ethnic conflicts in terms of its genesis, causes, actors, consequences, and possible alternative sincreating assumptions for their gradually overcoming. This approach, at the same time, implies to defying of new priorities and contents concerning all round activities of the ethnic groups and political parties as well as the citizens in the Macedonian society that will be in function of relaxing inter and intra ethnic relations. The establishing of these priorities should result with incensement of the social cohesion that in the same time is the basic assumption to speed up the integration of Republic of Macedonia in the European Union.

Keywords: inter-ethnic conflicts, intra-ethnic conflicts, social cohesion, democratic development

Instead of introduction: the citizen in the closed circuit of the conflicting Macedonian social reality

Nowadays we face an extremely complex social reality with emphasized political ambient, thickly interwoven net of ambivalent social relations and imperceptible

individual and collective interactions based on continuous conflicts. A fundamental representation of this inference is the state of the Macedonian social reality, in which foundation there are evident antagonistic processes. Namely, the Republic of Macedonia, in the last twenty-five years undertakes efforts to establish itself internally, as well as on the international political scene as independent, sovereign, legal and social state, in which the rights and freedom of its citizens are guaranteed. On the other hand, the divisive ethnical, religious, social and political grounds; the crises, armed conflicts and moral erosion; the lack of trust in the institutions and individuals that are managing them, represent the darker side of the Macedonian transitional story. At the same time, the lack of legal ruling is resulting in absence of the legal state, which is directly correlated to the disintegrated system of social functions and norms, while the members of the society are left on their own with devastated lives and generally disappointed of the effects of changes.

The system of values is completely distorted, with domination of fake values, negative selection and authoritarian political leaders. At the same time, one part of the citizens – epigones of political parties do not bother in choose means to get closer to their political leaders in order to earn their affection and to show their loyalty. It becomes norm that this way of living its own life is marked with clientelism and apologetic approach, which threatens individual virtues such as: dignity and self-respect and rendering them easier to be lost. This creates ideal preconditions for manipulations and intrigues to be perceived and glorified as ‘great visions’ and closes the vicious circle – the greater servility and idea-obedience pave the way for even greater glorification of false values and false visions for better life.

The social cohesion of the Macedonian society has been undermined to a significant extent by the glorification of the own ethnos and own political party which creates circumstances for inception of antagonisms that undermine the future of the state. Namely, in Macedonia, a great number of citizens still live in their ethnical and political party ghettos. The belonging to an ethnic group or political party are the basic trademark – a password that provides certain protection in the life. This situation is, at first place, a result of the way politics is enforced, which is a direct reflection of the moral dignity of our politicians. Their congenital need to continuously manipulate the feelings of the helpless citizens complemented with lack of knowledge and vision as well as with absence of sense for dialogue makes them inferior in relation to the assignments they pretend to fulfill. They compensate this with their arrogance, double morality, disrespect to the other’s argumentation and false self-satisfaction of the ‘achieved’ results in their work. The price paid by the citizens for such behavior is too high. In this context, we pose the question: until when will they be able to pay that price?!

Notwithstanding, we are facing a time in which the questions for our future and economic development become questions for our survival or questions of the logical absurd that is happening here and now around us.

Evidently, in such circumstances, the Macedonian citizen does not possess ability to create his life in accordance with his needs and potentials. In the same time, to a great extent, he remains imprisoned to the impaired way of living. Torn between the desired and the real, faced with numerous existential and essential challenges, left over the cruel reality, but also to the recklessness of the politicians, he awakes continuously in the nightmare how to survive, how to find a suitable employment, how to provide existence to his/her children, how to heat the home, and in the first place, how to keep his/her dignity?!

Having in mind the above arguments, the blade of this paper is directed towards

criticizing all the processes and actors that take away the citizen's right to live the life according to his own principles based on one's authentic needs. In this context, it is essential to escape the unbearable easiness of self-deception that problems are going to be resolved and situation improved on its own. Our goal is to point out that living in permanently conflicting situation is not determined by the destiny, but it is a reflection of the powerlessness of the Macedonian citizens to oppose the 'political elites' who think that can impose a way of life only because they are powerful, greedy, self-centered and inconsiderate. We would like to anticipate the assumption that things can go in another direction too. Namely, the citizen has full right to give resistance in the name of his own life philosophy; to offer own alternative for existence; to oppose the utilitarian logic of the small and little bigger dictators and their instrumental mind; that he does not comply with when living in their paranoid world being a person with less and less own spiritual habitat, while being more and more role-player in a function of maintaining alienated model of existence, designed to satisfy only their ambitions.

Theoretical and methodological guidelines: the science as criticism of the current societal reality

The general characteristics of the problems faced in our society clearly demonstrate the complex and contradictory character of the processes that currently occur in the area of the social, political, economic, collective and individual life of the Macedonian citizens. Taking into account the necessity to perceive the intrinsic essence of these processes, it is indispensable to observe them in the framework of integrated interdisciplinary methodological approach. This will allow us to analyze certain segments of the problems including the problems as a whole, at different cognitive levels, through the prisms of separate scientific disciplines, having in mind their immanent interconnectedness in one epistemological unity. In this context, our intention is to perceive the Macedonian society in its totality through dialectical weld of general and specific approach, as well as through the numerous fragmented contradictions. In this way, the focus of analysis leads directly to the realization of the relationship between reasons and consequences of the existing conflicting states with an aim to uncover their common denominators, *i.e.* to detect the fundamental reasons that charge the disintegrative processes and make the existing social ambient anarchical and anemic.

Taking into consideration the complexity of the task, one gets the impression that it cannot be realized only with flawless scientific analysis based on the rigorous and accurately constructed scientific apparatus. This generally accepted positivistic approach produces objective truth according to the rules of the formally-logical thought and it is characterized with values neutrality, meaning that it is carried out independently from the value judgments of the scientist. Alternatively, the problem might be observed in the context of existential human needs by attempting to uncover the truth of what is happening around us. Exploring the societal states and changes while starting only from those segments of the society that are fitting for quantitative analysis in their empirical evidence is often compared to the work of Sisyphus who was condemned to ceaselessly roll a rock to the top of a mountain. Hence, it is a challenging task to start competing with the generally accepted mechanisms and instruments of the formally-logical positivistic notions, rules and principles, in the contemporary scientific research. This should be done by offering alternative methodological approaches that even at the expense of lower scientific

rigor, enable perception of certain intrinsic contradictions of the complex events in one multi-layered cognitive level.

In accordance with the above arguments, our methodological approach in this paper will have as an initial standpoint the basic epistemological notions of the critical theory of the Frankfurter school. The following cognitive principles are in place:

- The rational theoretical cognition must be, at the same time, a critique for its object of cognition, which means anticipation of the optimal possibilities for its change;
- In order to stay in accordance with its object, the thought must follow the changes in the otherwise contradictory societal content;
- Unity with respect to theory and practice – intrinsic connectedness of the theory and the method;
- The cognition for the laws of movements in the society are not presented exclusively in hypothetical form ‘if - then’ nor in categorical form ‘because of - hence it must be’ but in existential form ‘it doesnot have to be - people can alter the societal being’.

Inter-ethnic conflicts in the Republic of Macedonia: genesis and current condition

The historical context of the Macedonian state existence undoubtedly and clearly determines the philosophy of its political and cultural self-sustainability. Macedonia, similarly as the whole Balkans throughout the centuries represents vividly persistent amalgam of interactions among numerous ethnicities. In the same time, it is a place of contradicting interests on religious and ethnic grounds, but also a place of cohabitation of different ethnic communities. Having in mind this analogy, nowadays Macedonia represents a multi-cultural community where citizens’ existence is different according to their ethnical and confessional background, culture, tradition, language and, at the same time, the approach to and view of life. Evidently, this kind of differentiated configuration results with broad spectrum of interactions that can easily become a factor of instability. We have in mind processes in which foundation lies the glorification of the own cultural identity of the ethnical communities, most frequently for the benefit of previously well thought-of political manipulation of their political leaders. In this context, the belonging to an ethnical entity becomes a trademark for own identification. The basic existential human needs get to identify with the political requirements of the ethnical group one belongs to. The personal opinions recede before the generally accepted ethno-political doctrines of the existing ethnic group. The fear and lack of trust are further even more intensified in the mutual communication or non-communication. All of this contributes to the creation of negative feelings towards the representatives of the other ethnical groups. In this way, the already existing negative ethnical stereotypes get enhanced, which poses on its own a basic precondition for confrontation and conflicts.

Undoubtedly, the Macedonian societal ambient in the last twenty-five years is characterized by these circumstances. They have been actualized especially during the military conflict between the Albanians and the Macedonians in 2001. This conflict has surfaced all previously suppressed dividing, antagonisms, frustrations, un-satisfactions and, last but not least, the different visions for the future of the Republic of Macedonia. Even though the conflict had limited, to certain extent controlled military enactment by the in-

ternational factor, and lasted short time, still it has emitted very clear political and military message that the Republic of Macedonia is far from being oasis of peace, with domination of relaxed inter-ethnic relations – which has been the claim of the actual political leadership in that period. Formulating the above more explicitly, this event pointed out a very important fact that Macedonia has been, and still is a place of unsafe living, restlessness and uncertain future.

At the same time, despite that the Framework agreement that followed briefly afterwards, has allowed to relativize the consequences of the armed ethnic conflict, and has created legal framework for cohabitation of Macedonians and Albanians, it is still evident that the Macedonian society is still very sensitive in relation to this problem. This means that in order to surpass it, there is a need for long-term, well thought strategy, and its permanent realization, in all spheres of the social life. The ultimate effect should lead to complete integration and realization of all citizens in a common state where they will feel as their own.

Intra-ethnic conflicts in the Republic of Macedonia: current conditions

The previous thoughts enhance the intensity, or in other words, increase the sense of concern, having in mind the fact that the Macedonian society is being divided on all basis on intra-ethnic level such as: political, social and in terms of values. Namely, today in the Republic of Macedonia, the authoritarian type of political culture in the organization and the functioning of the greater part of the political parties (especially the ones in power), as well as in the maintenance of the entire political life, whose basic mark is ultimate division to the extent of antagonism. Today, in the Macedonian society, the interests of the own party and the own interests in the name of the party are placed before the interests of the citizens and those of the entire country. Conflicts, inter-party argues, tragic-comical monologues, insults... The partitioning of the state, the partitioning of the society, the partitioning of the human souls... this is the essence of the Macedonian political and social context. In this context, in the Macedonian society there are citizens of first and second order: those who are with the government and those who want to change that government. The first ones are in situation to use certain political, social and economic advantages depending on the position they occupy in the party pyramid.

In any case, the process of division in the sphere of social living is evident and it is manifested through the creation of small 'elite' of rich and powerful citizens. They have brought to poverty the majority of the people, which leads to reductions of the middle class as a main engine of the societal processes in the previous system. The polarization of Macedonian society furthermore creates preconditions for continuous conflicts in all areas and institutions of the social life. In analogy to this, we witness many changes in the society such as: losing basic functions of the marriage and family, malfunctioning of education, permanently eroding social capital and expansion of the societal pathology.

Additional confusion in the increase of the conflict-ability of the Macedonian societal ambient is the condition in the axiological area. After twenty-five years of transition from centrally planned to market economy, the old value benchmarks have not yet been deserted, while the new ones are not fully accepted. According to some empirical research most of the citizens find domination of holistic and traditional values, from the point of view of the social identity of the citizens and from the aspect of the accepted models and content

of social behavior and integration. At this point, the promoted liberal-democratic values, on which projection the existing political and economic system should be constructed, remain to a great extent as abstract and wanted, but not existing.

Notwithstanding, the Macedonian social ambient is on dangerously low level of social integration which leads to anarchy and lawlessness, while stimulating permanent spill over from one crisis modality to another. At the moment, regardless the dominant type of crisis such as: ethnical, political, social, economic or crisis of value systems, they interchangeably complement each other and construct a vicious circle of the Macedonian hopelessness.

Final discourse: the activism as alternative

In the middle of this political, ethnical, social and value system chaos the Macedonian citizen feels more and more that the basic constitutional principles as a foundation of the Macedonian state continuously diminish. These are: sovereignty, independence, civil and democratic orientation that should guarantee the rights, freedom and personal integrity of the citizen and allowing for dignified cohabitation of all its citizens, based on social security and economic welfare. We can notice that nowadays, the principles of sovereignty and independence are only on paper. The legal system protects the representatives of the government who have performed criminal acts while getting ruthlessly rich. The proclaimed democracy is only a mask for criminal, fake pluralism, and recklessness of the political and economic people in power, or a cover that conceals the problems much more than it allows for their resolution.

Left on his/her own, helpless to fight the anomalies and the paradoxes of the system, the citizen leaves the 'prey' to the ones who use intrigue, ruthlessness, manipulation, mediocrity, people with no dignity and honor, people whose trademark is the common party dress, especially the ones on rule. The worst consequence is that the feeling of helplessness results in the need for passivity or being introvert. In the environment of social anomaly the illusion for possible individual survival, grounded in the defensive logic of self-isolation or abstinence from the public life, occurs as the last act of desperation. Withdrawn in their homes, offices, ordinations, working places, in their privacy or intellectual space, accepting the life philosophy of least resistance, we consider ourselves safer and less exposed to danger. It seems as if we donot want or cannot notice that the escape from the society is at the same time escape from ourselves. Paralyzed of fear and uncertainty we keep forgetting that we are that same society, we are forgetting that we have the moral obligation to actively participate in all that is happening around us. We have to declare ourselves, we have to let everyone who wants to shatter our country that we are still here and we are still beings.

In this context, it should be stressed the necessity of a new axiological framework, with a gravitational core founded on the principles of creative living, honesty, rightfulness, freedom of thinking and acting, open-mind for exchanging ideas and tolerance to one another. With respect to this, we need a dialogue that will enable us to become more proximate to each other. This dialogue should create the preconditions for building a world of authentic living in which the freedom of thought and speech would be the fundament for its development. Only in such way the miniscule of our existence can receive some dose of permanence. This is our obligation from the deeds of our ancestors who have set the foundations of our country, but this is our obligation towards the generations

to come. As much as right we come up with a conclusion that the world we live in is in permanent crisis that may culminate with entropic consequences. In relation with this, we cannot change much and we must know that the history is not familiar with good times, but only remembers brave, proud, smart, creative people, ready to sacrifice a lot of their own lives for the wellbeing of the others and the society as a whole.

In sum, the events and eras are not valued according our perception for ourselves, but according to what we leave as heritage for the ones that follow. This creates a responsibility for our generation about the processes that are happening in the time we live in. Moreover, it is an enough reason not to stay mute observer to the processes that happen around us, but to offer our critical view of the social reality as an attempt to exchange opinions that should create the foundations for more human and more authentic existence.

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