

MONEY MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND, BUT OVERTURNED MACEDONIA

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The New Year usually symbolizes a fresh new start. Unfortunately, in Macedonian political life, the New 2013 came together with a heavy burden from the previous year, not leaving a lot of space for optimism in the country. The recent developments regarding the budget adoption in the Macedonian Parliament left deep scars on Macedonian democracy. Whoever started first, all parties contributed to the whole situation and no one's responsibility should be erased. More precisely, the 24th of December was a day when the Parliament turned from a home of democracy and place for competing ideas into a battle arena in which

"homo homini lupus est". The annual procedure for adoption of the budget was disturbed with the submission of multiple amendments and violated from the moment when the President of the Parliament decided to submit the draft-budget to the Government although the Committees' sessions were not closed and minutes not signed (opposite to Article 79 from the Rules and Procedures of the Parliament). It was a positive sign that the opposition woke up and understood that its role is to be a corrective mechanism offering its own solutions, but unfortunately strayed to the other extreme – being uncooperative and disorderly in the sessions submitting numerous amendments and setting ultimatum

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"our budget or no budget". Both sides quarreled like children for a toy without giving up from their first conception which shows how immature our political elites are. The turmoil reached its peak with the violence in the plenary hall – deviant behavior with breaking equipment and attacking the physical integrity of the President of the Parliament. In the moment when the public was convinced that it could not be worse, somebody decided to show "who pulls all the strings". Although the security officers made sure to throw out the journalists so they could stay "blind" for the following occurrences, from some self-made videos the whole public became witness of the brutal ejection of the opposition and the journalists from the plenary hall. And then - adoption of the budget behind closed doors on a plenary session that should have never been held under such circumstances. The battle of the budget was not taking place only in the Parliament – it spilled over in the streets. The Government had already ignited the atmosphere with organizing "counter-protests" (protesting against the protest of the opposition) on the streets supporting the adoption of the budget, forgetting that it has the legitimacy from the majority and the power on its side. In this way, the whole meaning of the protest as a democratic tool for those who feel deprived from their rights to make their voice be heard was destroyed,

devaluing further usage of the right to protest. What happened on 24th of December is dangerous precedent that may establish a practice for any future government to enforce its plan without considering what kind of tools is using, as long it has the majority in the Parliament.

Another symptomatic issue is that the Ombudsperson, the one that should represent embodiment of democracy, human rights and highest authority, was re-elected at the same session without the opposition. Besides, the Law on private security which encouraged fierce debate at the committee meetings and was expected to provoke even stronger debate at the plenary was also adopted at the same session. This did not break the legal norm, but it breached the moral and democratic values.

Meanwhile, the whole nation became hostage of the egoistic interests of both parties. The Government arrogantly convinced in its untouchable power and the opposition provoking acts where it comes out as victim of the “non-democratic regime” are leading the country to vicious circle on which future no one could bet. Luckily, the majority of the citizens did not allow to be instrumentalized in the name of the fight between “the good and the evil” staying home instead of going in front of the Parliament and throwing food and stones to their friends, neighbors, relatives and other citizens. Another plus is the police that performed its duty professional-

ly and avoided bigger incidents to happen among both groups.

Tremendous political will is needed for the problem to be resolved. At first, both sides should consider that dialog is the crucial tool for anything to be achieved. Without it, we will annul all positive progress reports from the European Commission. The ruling party should be the one to initiate the political dialog aiming to resolve the political crises, even if it means accepting some of the demands of the opposition. The ignorant and disparaging attitude that they have towards opposition is destroying the democratic spirit of the society. Instead of competing with ideas and projects thus increasing their level and setting better solutions, the ruling party became too comfortable in its position and does not want to hear anything from the other side. On the other hand, the opposition should leave the streets and use the institutional way to get its voice heard. It could get the citizens on its side only with a promising program and honest commitment to realize it. In order to be taken seriously, they should firstly have a consensus within the party regarding what they want to achieve and not going in public with contradictory statements. The opposition cannot set ultimatums that the Government should fulfill all the time just to keep them to play their role in the politics.

The crises got so deep that

is very likely that outside assistance will be needed. However, interference of international factor will bring more harm than benefit. The country should show that is capable to face the challenges by itself with its own mechanisms. Early parliamentary elections will not be the solution. The citizens got tired from having elections almost every year. It is also unreasonable spending money and there is a discontinuity in the functioning of the institutions. There are also several remaining questions - What if the same coalition wins the elections again? - Will the opposition accept such situation or will it accuse of falsification of the results leading the country in yet another crisis? Besides, the local elections are already an indicator for the mood of the voters towards the options presented. Another threat is the possible blockade of the local elections which could bring damage to the whole image of the country. In time when Macedonia is waiting for the spring report from the European Commission, such developments could take us far away from the accession talks and put new benchmarks for us to fulfill if we want to stand shoulder to shoulder with the other countries from the big European family.

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