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**The internal and external political challenges
and prospects for FYROM: The political repercussions
after the Ohrid Framework Agreement and regional questions**

More than decade after the independence the FYROM and its political system are still only in a transition phase. The democratization of FYROM is taking too long compared with the democratization and transition of the countries of former socialistic block. Ten years of ethnic conflicts in the Balkans have left the region far behind Central and Eastern Europe in the transitional phase to democratization. Crime and corruption in the last decade have fuelled further nationalistic violence in these South East European countries. The same phenomenon still threatens the societies of the region, while the area intends to be integrated with other part of the Europe.

The problem in FYROM and in most other countries of the South East Europe is not non-organized crime, but non-organized political system. Such circumstances have not allowed being introduced total rule of law in this country. At the same time, the horizontal functioning of the state institutions has failed to be accomplished properly¹. New democracies in the region like FYROM are more dependent on international institutions, rather than dependent on own state institutions and their citizens whom do they represents. Therefore, one task with a priority for FYROM and its system should be not only the renovation of the recently aggravated interethnic relations, but as well as the restoration of the legitimacy of the state as a mediator.

Since the proclamation of FYROM's independence in 1991, and its recognition by the international organizations, the political elites have behaved as if everything is proceeding in the correct direction within the state. However, all that appears to have been only a self-deception or false assessment, for the country was established then, but not build up in the interim period².

1. It is of primary objective for FYROM to try to restore a normative structure of the state and with that to restore the rule of law.

2. Veton, Latifi, *'Macedonian Unfinished Crisis: Challenges in the Process of Democratization and Stabilization'*, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Skopje, 2003, p. 21.

Internal challenges for the FYROM political system and democracy

Among the reforms foreseen within the Ohrid Agreement stopped the armed conflict of 2001 in FYROM is the establishment of a framework for securing the future of FYROM's democracy, and the sanctioning of the development of closer and more integrated relations between FYROM and the Euro-Atlantic structures.

But, there still remains several challenges in the process of political and democratic reforms, stability and regional cooperation, that stand on FYROM's way towards democratization.

One of crucial structural-historical deficits of FYROM is the weakness of the state, despite its strong pretences to sovereignty and ethnic statehood. The lack of an efficient civil service, independent judiciary, accountability security and police forces and other modern state institutions predates the communist period. The process of modernization of the state structures is a considerably more demanding endeavor than the transition process in East Central Europe³. A related structural deficit concerns the weakness of civil society that also predates the communist period and is related to the consolidation of a nation state without a corresponding economic middle class and the excessive intertwining of economic and political power.

FYROM is not 'just another transition country'⁴ but a state with external and internal challenges to its very existence. This means that corruption inflicts special damage and that, in effect, FYROM can have either great corruption or stability but not both.

The 2003 and 2004 report on the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) for South East Europe recognizes some important progress made over the 2001: progress in restoring stability in the region, improved security situation, democratically-elected Governments in place throughout the region, massive reconstruction across the region, progress made in assisting return of refugees and displaced persons, sustained growth, inflation under control, increasing trade, enhanced regional co-operation.

3. 'EU and Balkans: From Stabilization to Southeastern Enlargement', Alexandras Yannis (ELIAMEP), Wim van Meurs (CAP), 2002, pp. 13-14.

4. 'How Corruption Drags the Country Down', ICG, Skopje/Brussels, August 2002, p. 2.

But, SAP report also identifies some main challenges facing FYROM and other Western Balkans countries:

- Weaknesses in the functioning of democratic institutions and institutional capacity building,
- Rule of law and full respect of human and minorities rights,
- The fight against organized crime and corruption,
- Reform of the judiciary,
- Continuing sustainable return of refugees and displaced persons, inequality in income distribution,
- Widespread poverty and high unemployment,
- Structural reforms towards fully functioning market economics, and
- Heavy dependence on foreign financing⁵».

Since the 2003's and 2004's SAP reports on FYROM the situation has not been improved so much. There are still series of the challenges for FYROM that apart that present serious threats for its future perspective and stability, they also present significant barriers for the normal development of the media professionalism and functioning of the democratic model media-politics. The challenges that FYROM system faces date many years back regardless which government left or right one has been in power. These challenges are undermining FYROM's stability and hanging on its future. They are still present or eventually reduced from time to time. But, there are not positive indications that these challenges are going to be surpassed in short-term or mid-term period.

There are series of the challenges for FYROM that apart that present serious threats for its future perspective and stability, they also present significant barriers for the dynamics of the process of the EU integration. They will delay the road ahead of FYROM into the European family of nations and the process of the democratization.

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5. “FYROM, Stabilization and Association Process for South East Europe- 2002 report-”, EC, Brussels, 2003, p.2.

The challenges that FYROM system faces date many years back regardless which government left or right one has been in power:

Lack of rule of law

FYROM is one of those post- socialist countries that are facing a lack of rule of law in many levels of the functioning of the state institutions. The courts and police don't perform all the time and everywhere their tasks. There are still happening soiled business deals and security problems where remain unpunished high government officials and ruling parties officials. There is *tie facto* lack of rule of law in several zones of Western and Northern FYROM.

The police can't enter all the time several villages of the former conflict zones. The FYROM police don't control its entire territory 4 years after the end of the armed conflict⁶.

Security instability

Despite significant improvement of the security situation in FYROM 4 years after the end of the armed conflict, nevertheless there are still insecurities in former crisis zones. Often happens the armed groups to operate in rural zones and FYROM often face security crisis like Kondovo crises for example.

Furthermore, the local mafia networks create many problems and they are linked to the regional mafia networks and often happen to blackmail and kidnapping the successful businessmen who are rich asking for moneys.

Non- functionality of the public administration

The public administration in FYROM is not functioning completely in many instances. Particularly that is a case with the public administration sector in the central level. It is still unable to meet even the basic criteria required with the EU standards.

The reforms in the public administration have not started yet and there is neither vision nor strategy how to reform the public administration sector.

The public administration is characterized with the following: overloaded number of the employed (to big number), corrupted, old average age of the employed people, not satisfied level of the education of the employed people, incompatible with the western modern administrations, etc.

6. Kondovo till recently was one of such cases where the police was not able to enter the village for more than one years, despite the fact this village is in the suburb of the capital.

Reforms of the judiciary system

The judiciary system is not independent, but rather it is merged toward other two systems: executive and legislative. One of the most serious obstacles to state institutions and democratic governance is the corrupt, inefficient and dependent justice system. The judiciary system has failed in two aspects: 1) It has failed to be independent, and 2) It has failed to fulfill its constitutional mission and legal obligations.

The failure in the reformation of the judiciary can be attributed to both the executive and the judiciary itself. The executive has obstructed the creation of an independent judiciary in order to use it for political ends. The judiciary on the other hand has not been reformed due to its high levels of corruption, a level of corruption that has been sustained through the political immunity the executive has vested it with⁷.

The weaknesses of judicial system seriously besets the functioning of the judicial system and of law enforcement, remain with a years.

The Ohrid Framework Agreement

Most of the laws of the Ohrid Framework Agreement are adopted in the Parliament. But that still is only the legislative agenda of Ohrid⁸. There remains series of the challenges of its implementation in the practice. It is going and will go further very slow in the practice. That may discourage the ethnic Albanian population who already seem not to be quite happy with the so far dynamics of the legislative agenda.

The process of the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement has been delayed many times-what imposes the need for close monitoring and further involvement of the internationals, in the process of implementation of the reforms foreseen with the agreement.

The full implementation of Ohrid Agreement still should remain as was few years back one of the preconditions for the EU membership.

There are two issues from Ohrid that are quite sensitive and still have not start work. There still is not defined well nor adopted the law on the use of the languages of ethnic communities. Although the number of the Albanians is the public administration is increased for few percents still that are far away from the real one that is foreseen with the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

7. For this reason seems the government failures in fighting corruption and illegal trafficking have been blamed onto the judiciary.

8. Statement of EU High Common Security and Foreign Policy Representative Javier Solana quoted by several media outlets following the adoption of the law packages on the use of the national symbols from the Ohrid Framework Agreement by the Macedonia Parliament on late July 2005.

Abuse of human rights

The abuse of the human rights by the FYROM police hasn't stopped following the end of the armed conflict 2001. It is reduced only⁹.

The Government's human rights record in FYROM remained poor; although there are some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. There have been reported numerous instances of torture and beatings of detainees by police in the last few months.

In most human rights abuse cases, the police, or the Government takes insufficient steps to investigate and discipline responsible policemen. The judiciary did not effectively investigate or prosecute state agents for alleged human rights abuses. Arbitrary arrest and detention continued to be a problem.

Polarization of the society along ethnic lines

Apart that is politically polarized; even worse FYROM is polarized along ethnic lines. That trend is not stopping at all. On the contrary it is growing up.

Several reports of the international organizations on the field of the interethnic relations in the last period has again proved that there is an evidence of a process of partition of the country among the ordinary citizens and not any integration on ethnic bases, apart the attempts of the authorities to present FYROM as a successful model of multiethnic state.

In many dwellings that are ethnically mixed like is capital Skopje, there has not stopped never in the last years a trend of moving of the ethnic FYROM population from those town districts that are dominated by ethnic Albanians and vice versa. In both sides there still is going on the buying property in ethnically homogenous districts.

With Ohrid Framework Agreement only, is impossible to be pretended do solve the problem of the polarization as its aim and its mission wasn't to stop separation of the citizens in the normal life but to keep on the existence of the state, improve the status of the ethnic Albanians, stop hostilities between armed groups and stop the further bloodshed through constitutional changes and not to integrate via the agreement the polarized society. The prospectus of the polarization doesn't depend so much on Ohrid Agreement outcomes.

9. That is proved as well as by the early October 2005 published reports in several dailies in Skopje of some Skopje based NGOs on human rights and by the FYROM Ombudsman claims.

Collapsed economy

The FYROM economy since long time ago is in comma. That is still a case. The number of the unemployed people is growing up each month and is one of the highest in Europe. Around 390.000 unemployed people in 2.1 million populations speak enough about the level of the collapsed economy in FYROM.

Not only political and security tensions endanger the stability and future of FYROM, the weak economy has an effect too. The stability is closely connected to the economic prosperity. The economic and social progress of FYROM is a necessary condition and guarantee for the stability. This stability would undergo only when the institutions are stable and securing economic growth and development.

The factory production in FYROM is the story from the history or in some cases is insignificant. There are neither foreign investments nor strategy for attracting them. The trade benefits are the only main sources of incomes for the FYROM economy. But, even the trade relations are not high and they are based mainly on the export with Kosovo and Serbia and Bulgaria. These export markets are one of rear incomes for the FYROM economy that keep on it to don't collapse completely.

Unemployment, low salaries, problems with health insurance and corruption as basic elements which caused economic instability in FYROM in the last decade, seems to continue being as equally concerning trends in the coming 5-6 year period, too.

The endemic corruption

For many years back it is an endemic problem for the FYROM political, economic and juridical system. It is reduced in the last 2-3 years under international pressure, but still that is not enough and FYROM continues to be mired in corruption.

Corruption allows quite often happening suspicious business deals during the foreign economic investments with an involvement of the officials close to the ruling political parties. After such scandals next foreign investors hesitate a lot and they should hesitate further. Under worsen economic problems; corruption is a serious threat to the stability of this country, like others in the Balkans. A lot of investigative reports point out this phenomenon.

The representatives of the parties have blamed the officials of their counterparts for involvement in corruption, and vice versa. In the meantime, the unstable economic and political situation will not draw the foreign economic investments that could well be one element of the solution.

Organized crime

FYROM territory remains to be a transit zone for the smuggling of cigarettes, drugs and weapons. The local organized crimes networks as well as are in the regional mafia and organized crime schemes and they offer a significant support and are parts of the regional chain.

Organized crime is increasingly challenging FYROM many years back and putting at risk both the stability and the development of society in the country. The Government has announced efforts for crackdown on corruption, drugs, trafficking and particularly weapons smuggling, but these have remained only ideas without major positive outcomes, which impose the question; how to carry them out, when almost everyone is implicated, particularly high leadership staff members of the government parties, regardless which government this one or previous one?!

The fight against organized crime to a large extent depends on institutional and legal reforms. There as well as has to be coordinated activity against organized crime both at a regional and international level, because organized crime has global networks and global impact.

These above shortly elaborated ten points are the systematic challenges that FYROM faces and is going to face at least in mid-term period. They present a problem and to some extent threaten as well to the stability and security of FYROM if the process of the reformation will not be speeded up by the authorities in Skopje.

In order to promote democratization and hence stability in FYROM there should be implemented some urgent steps Stability vs. Democracy.

It is important to realize that the handicaps of the FYROM democracy cannot be dealt with only through top-down approaches. An important challenge FYROM democracy faces is to stimulate grass root participation and organization. This would be an effective way to bridge the gap between the people and the political elite. This function has not been performed by the so-called civil society that has been quite often identified with NGOs.

The external- political challenges

Lack of legitimacy

The Ohrid Framework Agreement may address and solve the basic democratic defects of the FYROM society and provide reforms for the political system. But, it can't address the issue of the legitimacy, which is an issue of concern for FYROM. Although that some of the internal aspects which compose the lack of legitimacy like lack of internal cohesion and a weak state issue may be fixed partly, with the Ohrid Framework Agreement are not expected to be surpassed the very important external challenges of the lack of the legitimacy for FYROM: identity crisis and issue of the flag and contested constitutional name of FYROM which nowadays remained on the stage of the historical quarrels with some of the neighboring countries.

Through the process of stabilization it is a turn of FYROM to show that is not a country of permanent conflicts which are on the verge of transforming into war, but, on the contrary, it is a country where it is possible to achieve political consensus, mutual political will, and respecting and upgrading everything done in that direction by the institutions of the government from the previous period, regardless of what political entities comprised it. That will significantly facilitate the process of the solving the identity crisis and of the lack of legitimacy.

Any perceived threat to the territorial integrity of the FYROM thus constitutes a threat to the legitimacy, and possibly even mere existence, of a FYROM nation¹⁰. As several of its neighbors contest the authenticity of the FYROM nation, the identity of both the Macedonian nation and state becomes highly problematic.

Weak state institutions

One may ask; why are there so many basic defects in FYROM's society, and in some other regional countries, and why the search for the solution to be found is going so slowly¹¹? And the answer, very simply, can be found in the

10. George W. White, in his *'Nationalism and Territory: Constructing Group Identity in South-eastern Europe'* (Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield, 2000, p. 5.), maintains that territory, contains the 'cultural landscapes of group identity' and therefore 'the expression of territoriality is... the expression of a group's need to protect its language, its religion, its essential identity.'

11. "Veton, Latifi, *'Macedonian Unfinished Crisis: Challenges in the Process of Democratization and Stabilization'*, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Skopje, 2003, p. 42.

basic knowledge of the democracy theory. Democracy came as a gift to the FYROM citizens. They didn't 'fight' at all for it nor made any particular effort to win it.

The democracy in this country appeared as a result of the former Yugoslavia's disintegration, particularly since the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. FYROM didn't break completely with the old system inherited from the communist period. The institutions and system mainly remained the same, but *with* different names. However, in practice it continued to function similarly.

The problems of the society have been already identified, but it is still an open question that will be the carriers of the changes. People of this country are used to the past 'belonging' to someone and it is difficult for them to have groups of individuals working unified, a different situation from that they are used to.

That is not a case only with FYROM. This theory should be applied for the defects of other countries of Balkans. Indeed the more we are different in the Balkans, the more we are similar, in facing the same challenges.

There will need to be a time established when the first productive generations of the 'free individuals' say stop to the 'subject' mentality. Therefore, for the start of this process, the carriers of the reforms will be people from abroad. If international involvement is estimated to be one of short-term solutions, then the education of the population would be a long-term settlement, which would greatly help in overcoming the gaps of FYROM democracy.

In fact, the monopoly, which has been evident so often in all of these last ten years of democracy, can be surpassed only with concurrence and the latter would be achieved with deregulation. But, firstly at all FYROM should make a reforms within its weak state institutions which are reflected with a weak FYROM democracy and therefore with a weak state.

The state is young and fragile, and in the ten years of its existence, which have been years of slow and painful transition, has been in the midst of an unceasing regional turmoil that affected both its security, 'as with the Kosovo conflict, and its economy, which suffered indirectly from the embargoes on Yugoslavia and directly from the trade embargo imposed by Greece in the early 1990'¹². An instable state will be more vulnerable to challenges from within, while trying to retain its necessary internal unity.

12. "Veton, Latifi, *Macedonian Unfinished Crisis: Challenges in the Process of Democratization and Stabilization*', Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Skopje, 2003, p. 42.

Weak state institutions are one of the causes for the growth of organized crime. States in the Balkans, such as FYROM, are strong in terms of expenditure, they run complex centralized systems, maintain controls over borders and assume many functions which should not be in state hands. ‘All that activity takes place in a heavily bureaucratized environment. This state of affairs gives state officials’ power which in its turn more often than not breeds corruption and fosters close links between crime and the state’¹³. To break down this nexus the answer may be found perhaps in the question ‘what can the state do less’¹⁴. In other words the controlling role of the state should be diminished and the state should derive its power from enforcing the law.

One of the most significant traits of the FYROM democracy is the identification of state institutions with the political party that in turn is identified with the government, which in the democratic process is replaced periodically by the political parties through the electoral system. There is a very fine distinction between government and state in the first place since the former has the authority to act on behalf of the latter.

While in other states in the region with weak institutions, the state institutions represent only a part of the society, the state institutions in FYROM represent only a part of the community—the ethnic Macedonians. In other countries in the region like Albania, the state institutions represent only a part of the community, but not on an ethnic base but on a party base.

Institutional building remains a daunting task for FYROM both at present and for the future. There are a variety of factors that beset the democratic institutional building in FYROM. One of the major problems throughout the transition period has been the politicization of the state administration. Every political party once in power has begun a purge of the state administration, replacing previous employees with its loyal supporters, a practice which has strongly undermined the capacity and efficacy of the state administration and institutions.

Institutions have become hostage to the political changes in the country. These tendencies and practices have weakened state institutions. If the remaking of the government has been accompanied by the weakening of the state, the reasons should be sought at the way of building institutions.

13. ‘*Shared interests and values between SEE and the Transatlantic Community*’, ELIAMEP, Athens, 2003, p. 2.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Capacity-building for functional states and political entities at all levels needs to strengthen the effectiveness and legitimacy of state institutions and develops creative approaches to the unresolved status issues without sliding back to zero-sum conflicts and destabilizing unilateral demands for territorial revisionism¹⁵.

Building functioning states is a *conditio sine qua non* both for stability and for the prospect of EU integration. Regardless of final status arrangements, the progress of state and political entities will be conditional to its performance in capacity-building and reforms of state institutions such as the public administration, the financial regulatory framework, the judiciary and the police. The establishment of functioning state institutions is, perhaps, the single most important strategic objective for FYROM. Thus, the functionality of state and entities has to take precedence over questions of sovereignty.

A step by-step peaceful and democratic process of negotiating political status issues can only strengthen the legitimacy and thereby the effectiveness of state institutions¹⁶. FYROM should not allow being occurred other conflicts within its territory: the lessons have been learned that only with a political negotiation and by the effectiveness of state institutions the problems can be solved. Sustaining the balancing act between building functional state and preparing final political arrangements is perhaps one of most demanding challenge of the current time.

The starting point for creative politics in FYROM regarding unresolved status problems, particularly regarding the local leadership, is the need to respect completely the international obligations namely the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

The state has to address the demands/anxieties of its people, if it wants to remain legitimate in their eyes, and if it does not want to be challenged. There was widespread dissatisfaction in the ethnic Albanian community with the state institutions and their failure to obtain reforms that would meet Albanian demands before the conflict in 2001.

FYROM needs to improve the fairness of the state and assist the economy to function more efficiently. These changes can be expected to increase both stability and general prosperity in the country, making it more attractive to foreign investment. These are all central goals of the international community. Foreign investors see instability as what holds them back from putting resources into FYROM. More effective and responsive governance will enhance stability and so attract investment.

15. 'EU and Balkans: From Stabilization to Southeastern Enlargement', Alexandras Yannis (ELIAMEP), Wim van Meurs (CAP), 2002, p 21.

16. Ibid.

Lack of internal cohesion

One of the main theoretical, political, practical and historical problems in the multiethnic countries and countries with an identity crisis is the reach of the internal cohesion. That is a case with FYROM. On time of communism such kind of cohesion was achieved through the ideological repression or through other forms. With the emergence of the democracy and pluralism in the historical scene, objectively the issue of internal cohesion went to be discussed again.

The pluralism emerged in the region as an ethnic pluralism, with the nationalistic, chauvinistic attributes. Of course, upon these nationalistic principles was not possible to be built the new internal cohesion in the multiethnic societies. Therefore with the rejection of the liberal democratic principles in the new democracies in the units of the former Yugoslavia started again to be applied the repression. This new kind intolerant repression was legitimated with the arguments of the partial national, religious and other interests, rather than with neutral ideological arguments¹⁷.

The change of the communistic and monist doctrines with the democratic and pluralistic concepts was not accompanied with a change of the mentality and systems of values. It is typical characteristic for this mentality *exclusivism* and intolerance toward each other. On the time of communism were excluded and marginalized the ideological concurrent and when the communistic doctrine was replaced with the nationalistic doctrine started the process of elimination and marginalization of the ethnic concurrent, which resulted with the ethnic cleanings.

During this phase of transformation of the FYROM societies as well as others in the region, one crucial question is raised- code of identification- code upon which should be built the new internal cohesion. The new internal cohesion can't be built up based on the principles of despotic repression, nor based on the principles of partial proveniences, ideological nationalistic or technocratic principles. The system of values of each European civilization contains the cosmopolitism, tolerance as dominant characteristics, and vice versa. Therefore in Europe there are not allowed to be built up the projects for creating the internal cohesion based on the repression.

17. This form of repression in former Yugoslavia was aiming to eliminate the ethnical rivals. For this reason after the break of Yugoslavia seems that happened ethnic cleanings and anxious tragedies.

With the dissolution of Socialistic Yugoslavia the new states and multiethnic societies like FYROM started to become ethnocentric imposing the national codes as new start-points of the internal cohesion. Such a practice started to face a continuing resistance from the side of ethnic Albanians, particularly in 1980s and early 1990s when the new independent state emerged and with the new amendments of the former Yugoslav Constitution of 1974 the political status of ethnic Albanians started to be marginalized and were abrogated a list of the rights of the Albanians which they enjoyed till that period with the Constitution of 1974¹⁸.

Nowadays, the relicts of this period and mentality are evident in many segments of the political-society life in FYROM, starting from the anthem of the country to the official names of the schools, streets, buildings, etc (which don't include at all any element of the Albanian cultural or historical heritage, but only the glorification of the history of ethnic Macedonians). The eventual continuation of this trend may fuel further the problem of the internal cohesion of FYROM.

At the end of April 2003, FYROM press has republished the outcome of one local survey done on the anonymous basis in Skopje. The citizens were asked through the phone to answer the question whether is possible a common life among ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians after the armed conflict of 2001?! Only 52% of the citizens have claimed that is a possible still a common living of two communities. In specific columns there were the results within communities: 60% of interviewed Macedonians and 39% of Albanians have claimed that is impossible the common life between Albanians and Macedonians after the conflict of 2001¹⁹. Only 22% of ethnic Macedonians and 34% of ethnic Albanians think that there is possible a calm cohabitation between two communities.

In all the former conflict zones of former Yugoslavia including FYROM have been occurred difficulties in the creation of the new cohesion. The tendencies for creating ethnic states were more powerful than those for building multiethnic states.

18. Like Bosniaks in Bosnia who were not accepting a decade ago to be identified with the Croats nor the Serbs, ethnic Albanians in FYROM were rejecting to be identified with the Macedonians in the previous 10 years of the FYROM multiparty system. The Albanians were all the time looking for the building of one society which would legalize diversities and would allow their free development insisting that the identification code of the new state to be the diversity and not the unification based on the symbols of one nation only.

19. The results of this survey are contained within the published article 'Can we live together anymore', Weekly magazine Klan, <http://www.rcvistaklan.com>, Tirana, May 09, 2003.

The contemporary western states can function in normal way if they provide three basic elements:

- internal cohesion;
- the welfare of its citizens and their loyalty toward a system; and
- the liberal democracy.

FYROM-before and after the Ohrid Agreement- don't fulfill the first element as a very important condition for each multiethnic confliction state. There is no vision and readiness in FYROM to be achieved the interethnic reconciliation and with that to be surpassed the generator which fuel the interethnic antagonisms and therefore the lack of the internal cohesion.

FYROM is not exclusive case in the region. Such difficulties for providing the internal cohesion in the society are usually evident in other heterogenic and confliction societies.

Despite the enormous international investments in Bosnia the internal cohesion there is still not provided, but it is kept with a force through the engagement of the internal factor. In Kosovo, the ethnic Serbs are not coming back after the conflict of 1999 and their common life the Albanians there seems unhopeful and all that is leading toward enclavization of Kosovo. In FYROM, more and more the society is becoming polarized through ethnic lines.

Multiethnic states, which emerged from the conflicts, will function as such only if they will arrive to redefine realistically the contract of their cohabitation. If they will not take this step, then there may be activated the historical Balkanic tendencies for creating the ethnic states. The complete implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement is the only way for FYROM for achieving the internal cohesion. Therefore, FYROM authorities should foster inter-ethnic relationships and generate crosscutting ties between political leaders from different ethnic groups at the local level in FYROM. This is important to do in anticipation of the immanent devolution of power from the central government in Skopje to the local level that was mandated by the Ohrid Framework, Agreement that brought to an end the fighting between ethnic Albanian rebels and the FYROM Government forces in 2001.

As FYROM and other countries of the Western Balkan gradually move from 'stabilization and reconstruction to association and sustainable development, policies pursuing economic and social cohesion at both national and

regional levels become increasingly relevant²⁰, in particular having in mind the very high level of unemployment in most of them, as well as the social and regional dimension of ethnic problems.

It is of vital importance to every stable society that there is a consensus of the greatest part of its citizens concerning the important attributes of the community. If no such thing exists or if the relevant social structures act indolently towards these issues without paying them the attention they deserve, sooner or later the difference in viewpoints, judgments, desires and strivings of the citizens will lead to certain minor or greater conflicts. It is worth noting that so far there has not been a consensus of the greatest part of the population about the most important attributes of the contents and the institutions of the system.

The regional questions

In the Balkans when there is no external hindrances it is difficult to provoke instability within the countries. Certainly two cases present in our time are excluded: inequality and discrimination based on ethnicity and intolerance toward political rivals- the negation of real pluralism and the rule of law.

Further improvements in regional cooperation, not only in the fields of politics, but other fields as well, will facilitate, obviously, the passing of the historical contests. Firstly, it will enlarge the regional cooperation in general terms. And finally it will give an impulse to the EU integration of the complete region. Having in mind the common problems to be passed by the countries of the region, and their links and backgrounds despite all contests, it will be difficult for the regional countries alone to have success in the process of integration.

The regional common challenges of any of the countries will condition the prosperity of others in the region.

The impact of ongoing Kosovo status talks on the political stability and security situation in FYROM

The security and political stability in FYROM is not affected at this phase from the ongoing talks for Kosovo final status. For the moment Kosovo is not exporting insecurity in FYROM and the insecurity may get only of internal dimension within Kosovo itself eventually.

20. EU Presidency priorities for Balkans region, January, 2003, Brussels, p. 7.

The ongoing talks are not changing something significantly in the regional policy of ethnic Albanians. Later after the final status to be announced/reached it may have some implications for FYROM in raising the debates about the new higher status of ethnic Albanians in FYROM similar to the Serbs could get in Kosovo.

Or, in case Kosovo to be divided around Mitrovica, then FYROM may have trouble to meet the eventual fueled Albanian radical elements in FYROM with asking for joining a part of Western FYROM to Kosovo.

The Kosovo Albanian politicians are interested to show as the constructive as much possible in the regional policy as well before the final status decided. The ethnic Albanian politicians in FYROM, too.

Several elements within the Serbian authorities in Belgrade are trying to use the FYROM ground and shake the stability for obstructing the talks with Pristina via Skopje's role. They are fuelling Skopje's authorities to ask for the demarcation of the borderline between Kosovo and FYROM as soon as possible.

The only issue linked to Kosovo that is affecting the political situation in FYROM is the issue of the demarcation of the border. The FYROM Government and President are asking for that to be solved before the status in each meeting with the internationals and are in permanent link with Belgrade in coordinating their positions.

Such pressing politics of the FYROM authorities may irritate ethnic Albanian population and their political representatives both in Kosovo and especially in FYROM.

The political-economic relations of FYROM with its neighbours

The FYROM economic relations with its neighbors are functioning great, without any particular problem. The FYROM economy incomes mainly are based on the benefits coming from the economic relations with its neighbors. These are the trade relations based mainly on the exports to Kosovo, Serbia and limited Bulgaria.

The export markets of Kosovo and Serbia are one of rear incomes for the FYROM economy that keep on it to don't collapse completely. Under such circumstances, FYROM economy still is living from the trade actually. Additionally here should be mentioned large benefits coming from the Greek investments in the FYROM economy from the previous years.

Ironically, in the political level the relations with its neighbors are dramatic and getting worsened more and more. Still the problems are coming due to the double and traditional equidistance foreign policy of FYROM toward its neighbors from one side and from another side due to the contested legitimacy symbols and Kosovo status talks.

The disputes regarding the contested name with the Greece remains blocked without any positive change. Only that additionally the Greek diplomacy has intensified its diplomatic efforts in the international scene to get the case.

All the efforts of the FYROM policy regarding the external cases actually are wrongly focused on solving the demarcation of the borderline with Kosovo. All the energy it is losing there. FYROM illusionary pretends to appear as a regional factor in the process of the Kosovo talks²¹.

There is an aversion of the government toward Bulgaria still as there is permanent fight of the pro- Serbian and pro- Bulgarian elements within the FYROM politicians and population and in the Government there are present and influential some pro-Serbian elements.

FYROM policy makers and diplomacy in front of the international are campaigning against the Bulgaria for the moment, as it is not allowing some few hundred FYROM minority members in Bulgaria to organize celebrating one ceremony about the historical issue in the Bulgarian territory²².

But, even with Serbia there are serious problems in the last period regarding the autonomy of the FYROM church. The Serbian Government and church are contesting the FYROM church again and there has been reported by the press that they have been paid regularly a fraction of the priest Jovan to campaign in contesting the FYROM church.

Till a month ago there were normal and good relations only with Albania. But, since the April 2006 statement of Besnik Mustafaj, a foreign affairs minister of Albania about the non-stability of the borders in the region following the Kosovo final status, the FYROM diplomacy started with furious attacks over official Tirana.

21. It is asking for solving the open question of the border marking before the status of Kosovo is solved and with that is lobbying indirectly for Belgrade to get some better positions.

22. Skopje is complaining among the EU diplomats against the membership of the Sofia in EU before giving more rights to the FYROM minority in Bulgaria and is trying to make obstructions to Sofia in the way.

FYROM policymakers and diplomacy instead of being focused on the solving the problems with its neighbors in constructive way in the last period is concentrating its energy on going to internationals and whispering and complaining all the time against each of its neighbors in terms of how much they threaten the FYROM sovereignty and identity.

It seems that there is no any good neighbor from FYROM Government side for the moment.

The prospects for the stabilization of the political system

The stabilization of FYROM system will be completed with the full implementation of the Ohrid Agreement through a realization of its three following elementary messages:

- Pacification of the country through three segments - the first is disarmament and reconciliation (amnesty), the second is enabling the existence of multiethnic governments with which the equal opportunity for participation in and building of the future of FYROM will be enabled, and the third is creating possibilities for the institutions of the system to develop their own credibility as capable, competent and politically and ideologically impartial;
- Insisting on the rule of law which needs to be provided through mechanisms for preventing corruption and conflict of interests, and through mechanisms which need to provide, among other things, putting the state institutions in the function of economic development, the rule of law and the process of integration of RM in the EU;
- Building good relations with the neighbors not only because of its own safety, but because it is in the interest of its own economic development, the processes of regional Integration and one of the bases on which the integration of RM in the EU can be achieved.

It is necessary for FYROM in the short-term and mid-term period to overcome situations, occurrences and factors, which, unless resolved, can incur negative influence on the process of accelerated integration of FYROM in the EU. Namely, in this context, there should be mentioned the need for resolving and working on the improvement or elimination of the following²³:

23. 'National Forum for Accelerated Integration into the EU', published by International Center for Preventive Activities Conflict Resolutions & Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Skopje 2003, pp. 35-36

- Passivity of the legislative authority and domination of the executive authorities, i.e. the party leaderships with respect to the former;
- Ethnically-based parties - as a result of the process of replacing the one party system, i.e. instead of a multi-party system, there appeared an ethnic-party system.
- Tendencies of not interfering in the internal affairs of other ethnicities, which as a process starts in politics and continues to grow roots in the society and, then, has a reverse influence from society to politics;
- Appearance of elements of *oligarchization* in the political and economic life;
- Number and diversity of the media, but questionable general quality and social responsibility and role of the same;
- Creating conditions for educating citizens in the spirit of European values -human rights, rule of law, etc.

Strategic debates about the future of FYROM

The biggest temptation to the unitary state - conflict of 2001 is maybe politically and legally resolved, but in essence it is not. Amount of skepticism is still in place between ordinary people not completely convinced about final intentions of the “other side”. The FYROM shall be, in fact, unified in diversity when ethnic Macedonians will accept genuine power sharing with ethnic Albanians, and the latter will pay tribute to the common symbols of the state as the former does.

Depend on the regional developments in the coming period there might happen fundamental new interpretation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement in order to compose a bi-national state as a replacement to authentic multiculturalism. The challenges are certainly ahead- the formidable one is decentralization package where both ethnic leaderships need to balance power and principles subtly.

Demographic tendencies and unforced internal migrations of the people are well known for decades. Without prior political deliberations, they can very easily strengthen the fears of local minorities that new municipal boundaries will emerge as ethnic frontiers. With other words - to keep FYROM technically within internationally recognized borders as unitary state *de jure*, but internally to be fragmented along ethnic lines, *de facto*. In this view sustainable

ethnic Albanian solution could be proposed to be ethno-federalism, despite the ethnic Macedonian insisted solution of unitary state more inclusive and more accountable.

Strategic debates in the RM are not over. Viability of the state will depend solely upon autonomous capacity and vision of its intellectual and political elites. To keep the country from being memorized only as a footnote in the future history books it is their responsibility to streamline nation's creativity, identify and apply developmental concept and provide of FYROM's place in Euro-Atlantic integrations²⁴.

The main and most immediate challenge that FYROM citizens confront today, if they want to give long-term peace a chance, is building trust. The armed conflict deepened the fears and the divisions. And the Framework Agreement, paradoxically, has created new fears and new divisions. The climate in Skopje is sometimes somber, subdued at best. The ordinary Albanian fear or expect that the Macedonians would play all sorts of tricks to delay the implementation of, if not to nullify altogether, the Ohrid peace agreement. The ordinary FYROM's typical comment is that it is not rights that the Albanians really want, but territory instead²⁵.

The Framework Agreement went a considerable distance in meeting old grievances of the ethnic Albanians. It is now the responsibility of the political establishment to move forward, first of all by implementing the decisions taken in Ohrid. It is up to the international community to help the transition by stating very clearly what would not be regarded as acceptable under any circumstances, namely territorial partition and not granting the Albanians the rights that were promised in Ohrid²⁶.

Despite all the horrible moments of 2001 conflict, on which both the FYROM and Albanian populations should be lectured, FYROM has remained a divided country through ethnic lines. The '*ethnicization*'²⁷ of the country has continued to be worked on.

24. Pendarovski, Stevo, The Republic of Macedonia - Last Chance for Internal Legitimacy, Paper for the Balkan Commission, Skopje, August 2004, p.25.

25. '*Crisis in Macedonia*', Ethno-barometer, Rome, 2002, p. 73.

26. Ibid.

27. *Ethnicization* refers to the process by which a country becomes ever more politically, socially and economically based on the ethnic criteria.

Parallel with that, the 'partition' of FYROM society has proceeded, not only in the ethnic terms, but also in context of the political parties' power- in all political processes-regardless of which community that party belongs to. The political parties are still more powerful and with a more decisive role to play than the state institutions, even more powerful than the government itself. FYROM society functions on the principles of 'partisanship'. There is still no alteration in the functioning of FYROM democratic manner with regard to decision making process: the political parties in power make the first, original decisions about all issues, the government's participation comes second.

Although there is evident an establishment of cooperation among the political representatives of the FYROM and Albanian Communities, that is not strong enough yet to be considered as a long-term alliance. Their disputes sometimes have been conceded only with international mediation. Lacking real trust among the ethnic Macedonians and Albanians, the inter-ethnic relations, similar to the peace, seem to still be fragile. This mistrust might be aggravated again very easily²⁸ in the upcoming period following the often-reported incidents and the fragile peace and especially in case the implementation of Ohrid Agreement would be delayed.

28. Veton, Latifi, *'Macedonian Unfinished Crisis: Challenges in the Process of Democratization and Stabilization'*, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Skopje, 2003, p. 30.