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## **ZOON POLITIKON IN THE AGE OF EXTREMISM: ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE SOCIO-POLITICAL HABITUS**

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### **Abstract**

The fact of the modern world is that the standard has risen, the rich have become richer, but the poor have achieved even greater achievement, as poverty has decreased more in the last fifty years than in five hundred years, so we are witnessing a huge decline in social inequality like never before. Information and communication technology led to a globalization development trend, where one can truly have a sense of superiority. This, of course, is only an external reflection that is the easiest to analyze, but on the other hand, humanity has stagnated on a personal level. This is beautifully reflected in today's external events, where all the principles of ethics and morality, which Aristotle spoke of in ancient Greece, have been forgotten. The question of the process of human degeneration and the very connection with the position on socio-political habitus, we found out that our greatest enemy within ourselves is ignorance. When the main elite in the society are no longer people who create something, but only people who say something and appeal to emotions, then society no longer has anyone to follow and where all classes can see that it is possible to succeed fairly by working hard and by following your ideals.

**Keywords:** ethics, morals, elites, extremism

### **INTRODUCTION**

The construction of western civilization creates a lot of progress and thus often loses desire and meaning for life and existence itself. An indicator of human degeneration is when a person understands freedom exclusively and only as the satisfaction of desires. Such a person is incapable and unwilling to have true freedom which supports creativity. Where his identification with results lacks it is

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difficult for him to build a healthy self-image. Such a degenerate man is not tempted or capable to build something new. Namely, he does not see himself as a part of society and civilization. He also has a very low level of consciousness.

In fact, many people today are unhappy despite the fact that in the developed world we have never been more materially rich. Never before have such a large proportion of people been completely fed or even overfed. Never before have had such large proportion of people had all their basic needs satisfied. At the same time, a man has never had so many opportunities for self-employment.

The concept of finding the causes of material poverty is therefore a serious mistake. We are in a period of spiritual and intellectual poverty. The problem of today's spiritual poverty lies in the ideology that feeds the negative emotions and encourages criticism by passing the blame on to others. The construction of the materially rich man is so dazzling that he seeks all the causes of social problems only in materialism. That is why he is no longer capable of anything other than demanding more in relation to others.

The foundation of any society is when citizens believe and at the same time respect their elites. The essence of elites is that they should be something that people aspire to or want to become. This creates a problem, namely, when people who should be an example to others with their achievements and personality, actually cultivate violence and anger. Today, state institutions, media and pop industry have been selling exclusively unrealistic violent content for decades. So the young generations are born in a world where they rarely see life that it is about goodness, contribution work, firmness, learning, listening, obedience and perception of achievement.

In this paper therefore, we are focused in functional and dysfunctional interactions with different actors and especially in the connection between politics and the people (politics is supposed to be a reflection of the people). The selected variables and the research questions are:

- trust in authority
- private entrepreneurship
- government responsibility
- trust in people

- honesty of people
- politicians for personal gain

Research question 1: Is there a connection that people, with more trust in government believe that private entrepreneurship is the right thing to pursue?

H1: The more people trust the government, the more they believe that private entrepreneurship is a guarantee for solving Slovenia's economic problems.

Research question 2: Is there a connection that people, with more confidence in power, at the same time believe that the government is responsible for reducing income disparities between classes?

H2: The more people trust the government, the more they feel that the government has a responsibility to reduce the income gap between high- and low-income people.

Research question 3: Is there an impact between the general distrust of fellow human beings and politicians as those who engage in politics for personal gain?

H3: The more people think that one has to be very careful with people; the more they think that most politicians are in politics for personal gain.

Research question 4: Is there an influence of general suspicion of fellow human beings and politicians as those engaged in politics for personal gain?

H4: The more people are suspicious of others and think that others are trying to take advantage of them - the more they think that most politicians are in politics for personal gain.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In the title of this paper the first part refers to political animals, the term of which has been exempt since ancient times. The second part of the title deals with the illumination of the extremist paradigm and its reflection on socio-political habitus.

Heidegger (1949, 13) interprets the term *zoon politikon* as a reference to the animal existence of man as follows: given with

special distinction. In principle, we must always think of homo animalis ... this positioning is a kind of metaphysics". The Greeks did not consider themselves anything more than the world, animals, nature, because the only difference between man and animal is that man, as Aristotle says, is a zoon politician or political animal. Unlike today, where man considers himself superior, who has the right to appropriate and change anything and at any time.

Rancière (2005, 37) says that the brilliant derivation of the properties of the aims of a political animal from the properties of a logical animal thus obscures the division. Between the useful and the just is the immeasurability of injustice, which alone establishes the political community as the antagonism of parts of the community that are not actual parts of the social body. But the seeming continuity between the useful and the fair in retrospect reveals the seeming obviousness of a clearly drawn opposition that separates people endowed with the logos from animals that are limited to the mere use of the voice tool (phone). The voice, says Aristotle, is a tool that can be used to show feelings of pain or pleasure.

From this position in fact there is no moment, no period in European history that does not produce any kind of extreme. From invention of monotheisms and polytheisms, Judaism and Christianity, and through Rome and its decline to this day extremes were built without great discontinuity. Understanding extremism means thinking about your own civilization. Which means your own constitution, your own education and yourself (which is the hardest) as an integral part of this extremist (Kuzmanić 2015).

When the course of civilization turns unexpectedly, when instead of the constant progress we expected, we find ourselves threatened, we naturally blame everyone but ourselves. We are prepared to accept almost any explanation of the current crisis of our civilization, except one that is based on our own responsibility. The current civilisation may be pursuing some of our most cherished ideals has obviously yielded results quite different from what we expected (Hayek 1944, 78).

The concept of man as a free and independent individual was deeply imprinted in the European culture. On the other hand the institution of private property was introduced in the full, legal sense only by capitalism. In pre-capitalist periods, private property existed de facto,

not de jure, that is, by custom and inclination, not by right or by law. The “practical” justification of capitalism is not in the collectivist claim that “the best allocation is national resources”. Man is not a “national resource” and neither is his mind — and without the creative power of human intelligence, raw materials are still only useless raw materials (Rand 1966, 132).

Among all the political, economic, and social controversies of our time, some basic patterns emerge. On the one hand, those who see the problems of the world are essentially subjective - for example, lack of "compassion" or "commitment", while those on the other, see reality as a severe constraint, and disregard for that reality as exacerbating many problems (Sowell 1993, 23).

The moral justification of capitalism is not in the altruistic claim that the best way to achieve "common good" but that the it is consistent with man's rational nature is that it protects man's survival and that his ruling principle is: justice. The tribal notion of the “common good” has served as the moral justification for most social systems in the history. The degree of enslavement or freedom of society corresponded to the degree to which the tribal slogan was invoked or ignored. The “common good” (or “public interest”) is an undefined and vague concept: there is no such entity as “tribe” or “public”; a tribe (or society) is only a few individual subjects. Nothing can be good for a tribe as such; "good" and "value" refer only to a living organism to an individual living organism - not to an evicted set of relationships (Rand 1966, 147).

Poverty used to mean hunger and insufficient clothing, as well as long hours of hard work. Today, however most people living below the official poverty line have enough food and they are on average more often overweight than others. Most of today's poor in a developed world have colour TVs and microwaves. Poverty in the old physical sense is nowhere as widespread today as it once was (Sowell 2011, 154).

Politics is certainly one of the fundamental areas that define human life. Wherever we are dealing with a particular form of human community, there is a need to regulate common affairs, which presupposes the adoption and implementation of decisions that are binding on all members of the community; this leads to a greater or lesser institutionalization of activities that serve these purposes.

These are certain functions relevant to the whole community, performed by all political systems, regardless of the degree of their complexity (Tomšič 2008, 33).

There is no more enduring and influential religion in the world today than a belief in government spending. Everywhere, government spending is presented as a solution to economic problems. All that is needed is for the government to spend more when private consumption is lacking to remedy the “deficiency” (Hazlitt 1988, 23). Government investment is thus a form of socialism. Only confusion of thought or intentional duality would deny this. For socialism, as any dictionary would tell the Keynesians, means the ownership and control of the means of production by the government (Hazlitt 1959, 388).

While in most cases government eligibility programs work according to plan, the welfare state occasionally breaks down and the poor become rebellious, threatening the stability of the political system. In these circumstances, Piven and Cloward argue that government officials will try to redeem themselves from the poor by temporarily expanding the scope of the welfare state. But these efforts to appease them are merely temporary mitigation measures aimed at undermining the need for more important and lasting reforms. As soon as the riots die, the government reveals its true intentions and begins to break up the welfare state (Kelso 1994, 145). The welfare state is not really about the welfare of the masses. At best, what the government bureaucracy could provide some resources to help in times of need (Hellin 2011, 126). Thomas Sowell, an American economist, political commentator, and author, stated that the question today is the same as throughout history, whether man will be allowed to rule himself or be ruled by elites (Edwards 2011, 45).

To maintain freedom, a certain amount of government power and coercion is required. The government must have the power to prevent those who would deny others the right to peaceful, voluntary exchange, whether foreign or domestic perpetrators. Thus, one of the legitimate functions of the federal government is to provide national defence; state and local authorities should provide police protection. The government must also be competent to decide on disputes between citizens and to enforce the constitutional order. Much of what federal, state, and local governments are doing today goes far beyond constitutional authority and a reasonable definition of moral

government. As Friedrich Hayek pointed out, it is important that all coercive government action must be unequivocally defined by a permanent legal framework that allows the individual to plan with a degree of confidence and that minimizes human insecurity and especially economic uncertainty (Williams 1995, 39).

With the increased scope of government functions, the power of government agencies increases. It is clear that delegated legislation, which promotes mergers rather than separation of powers, poses a serious threat to the traditional norms of constitutional rule (Siedentop 2003, 166). The founders of Western democracy ensured a functional and territorial separation of powers in order to protect the people from abuses of government and to effectively limit government action. For them, this was a precaution against tyranny in a government with an unjustified concentration of power (Mises 1994, 73).

Logic is an essential component of the process of transforming vision into theory, just as empirical evidence is essential to determining the validity of a theory. But the initial vision is crucial to our view of the way the world works. To understand the role of visions, William Godwin's inquiry into political justice (1793) can tell us more than Marx's capital. In fact, we can understand more of Marx's Capital after seeing how similar premises were formed in William Godwin's less complex model. Similarly, the vision of social causality on which the theories of physiocrats are based was essentially very similar to a vision crafted in the more complex and sophisticated way of Adam Smith and even later (and even more so) Milton Friedman (Sowel, 2007, 123).

It is obvious that economic freedom in and of itself constitutes a very important part of general freedom. Viewed from the position of a means of contributing to political freedom, economic regulation is important because of its implications for concentration and power distribution. An economy based on direct economic freedoms, that is, competitive capitalism, also supports political freedom. This separates economic power from political power, allowing them to control each other (Friedman 2011, 9).

Issues such as free markets versus redistributive economics, education reform, immigration, and global warming are becoming battlefields where correctness and real truth clash, but with most of

the moral leverage seemingly on the side of correctness that has power in shame and stigmatization to all who oppose it. Righteousness is a power in itself, a power large enough to prevail over actual truth most of the time. However, regimes of correctness always stifle the human imagination and lead to cultural stagnation because they are inherently repressive. They impose empty and often tyrannical compliance on society (Steele 2015, 26).

A well-intentioned, albeit misguided, “war on poverty” actually promotes poverty. The “war on drugs” is causing casualties to innocent citizens, making them increasingly vulnerable to gang and drug-related violence. “Competition stories” fill our newspapers. (Racial profiling “Cultural bias” in standardized testing, Elder 200, 7).

Sennholz (1993, 114) mentions the philosopher of 19th century evolution, Herbert Spencer, and the limitation of state power remained one of Spencer’s dominant interests until the end of his life. After a few previous discussions, Spencer comes to what he calls the “formula of justice, where each man is free to do what he wants, provided he does not violate the equal freedom of another. Haralambos and Holborn (1999, 525) cite Pareto, who says that elite theory differs from both pluralism and functionalism in its belief that a small minority has a monopoly over power in society. As the basis of the elite, Pareto especially emphasized psychological characteristics.

Like freedom and justice, equality is a process characteristic of a limited vision and a result characteristic of an unhindered vision. True egalitarians are not people who want to redistribute wealth to the poor, but those who want to extend to the poor the ability to create their own wealth, to rise, instead of trying to destroy others. Earning respect, including self-esteem, is better than being a parasite (Kalahar 2014, 54). In addition, we must not forget that the media of mass confusion have a special influence in our popular culture. According to De Beauvoir (2014,197), human desire is the most affected today, especially through various advertisements and propaganda. When a person wastes his "individual capital", he becomes part of an unrecognizable mass, to which various corporations and other institutions of greed also dictate their own desires, which in fact are not desires at all, but certain desires.

Most of us will agree that our beliefs influence our behaviour. This does not mean that our beliefs are completely consistent or that all of our behaviour stems from our beliefs. Much of what we do may be

the exact opposite of what we think we should do, or it simply has nothing to do with any of our beliefs. The nature of belief may be too vague or unattainable to serve as a starting point, but it must be recognized as the basis that may be the ultimate goal of our excavations. Beliefs are clearly different from ideas. The belief seems to be embedded in a personality or character. It informs its identity in the literal sense, giving it shape. This may be a Western cultural phenomenon and not generally human (Patterson 2011, 1).

Aristotle thus understood ethics as a field of political science, that is, as a subcategory of politics. Statesmen strive to make people better through the constitution and laws, but in doing so they must adhere to ethical criteria, as only in this way can they create a good state. The essence of ethics is to define and enforce the highest good - happiness - to which both the individual and society as a whole must strive. Happiness is achieved through virtue, which is the golden mean between two extremes. Aristotle was convinced that the golden mean can be found by any "smart man" - this is a very relative criterion, but that is why Aristotle's ethics is the first autonomous ethics in the history of philosophy, as ethical behaviour depends on man himself and not some higher, divine substances outside the human personality, which is characteristic of heteronomous ethics (Pajntar 2005, 13).

Therefore, virtue depends on us, and so does evil. If it is up to us to do something, then it is also up to us not to do it; and if the "no" depends on us, the "yes" is also in our power. It follows from this: if an activity as something beautiful is in our power, then in our power there is also a corresponding inactivity as something bad. And vice versa: if some inactivity depends on us as something beautiful, then the corresponding activity as something bad also depends on us. But if it is in our power to do good or evil deeds, then it is also in our power not to do these deeds; and since it depends on these actions whether we are good or bad, we can say that it is up to us whether we are virtuous or unworthy (Aristotle 2002, 106).

Being moderate in your actions - in the right amount, at the right time, in relation to the right subject, and in the right way - is therefore not as easy as it sounds. Not everyone is able to reach the golden mean, it can only be achieved by a smart man who is able to separate the good from the bad, who knows how to find the golden mean, which is also true in the case of politics. Aristotle believes that this requires a

lot of practice, when we have consciously conquered a virtue, we can only internalize it and thus become part of us, our character - then we are good, then we act ethically of ourselves. Ethical action is the "child of habit". The very word ethics comes from the word ethos, which means "the discerning spirit of character." Moral virtues are not innate to us, it is not just about what someone does and what they don't, but above all about what someone likes to do and what they don't. But no one is a born ethical person - it is necessary to learn, to get used to it. We must act consciously and decisively. (Pajntar 2005, 27).

## **METHODOLOGY**

We decided to use of data from an international database, which was also used in other major studies. We therefore selected secondary data obtained from the Slovenian Public Opinion Survey (SJM), the Centre for Public Opinion Research and Mass Communications, which was conducted in 2011.

Slovenian Public Opinion 2011/1 is a set of surveys and is the first of two surveys conducted in 2011. The questionnaire includes 4 content sets covering various national and international surveys: ISSP 2010 Environment, ISSP 2011 Health and Healthcare, Employment Relationship Survey, Family and Psychological violence in the workplace. The survey was conducted on a representative sample (N = 1800, realized sample: N = 1082) of the adult population of the Republic of Slovenia. It took place between March and June 2011, with 52 interviewers collecting data in 150 selected local environments in Slovenia (ADP 2016).

Contrary to the majority belief that data should be collected independently for analysis, the use of data already collected has at least two important advantages that improve quality in terms of (Lamut and Macur 2012, 126):

- The measurement scales used and the diction of the questions, as these are often standardized questions and answers.
- A sample that is generally representative of the selected population.

## **EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS**

The statistical methods used:

- correlation analysis, where we tested how strongly the two statistical variables are related (coordinated) or correlated,
- regression

### A) Correlation

We tested whether the following substantive hypotheses are true:

H1: People's trust in government and private entrepreneurship as a solution to economic problems are linked.

The more people trust the government, the more they believe that private entrepreneurship is a guarantee for solving Slovenia's economic problems.

The statement is statistically significant, but the correlation is weak.

The direction of the linear correlation is positive, as the Pearson correlation coefficient = 0.13

$r = 0.13$  POSITIVE CONNECTION, A WEAK

sig. (2-tailed)% = 0.00 <0.05 (statistically significant because the risk is lower than <0.05)

N = 989 (989 respondents were taken into account in the calculation)

The more they are trusted by the authorities, the more they believe that private entrepreneurship is the right thing to do.

H2: People's trust in government and the government's responsibility to reduce income disparities are linked.

The more people trust the government, the more they feel that the government has a responsibility to reduce the income gap between high- and low-income people.

The statement is statistically significant but has a negative correlation. The direction of the linear correlation is negative, as the Pearson correlation coefficient is = -0.13

$r = -0.13$  NEGATIVE CONNECTION

sig. (2-tailed)% = 0.00 <0.05 (statistically significant because the risk is lower than <0.05)

N = 1051 (1051 respondents were taken into account in the calculation)

The greater the trust of the authorities, the less they agree that the government is responsible for reducing the income gap.

We were able to prove that there is a correlation between the two variables, a positive weak correlation that is statistically significant. Despite the weak correlation, we need to know that in social science data (when it comes to attitudes / opinions / desires), the exception is difficult to find a correlation where the correlation would be medium or even above 0.6, so we cannot be so sharp at the scale. Therefore, we can accept the first Hypothesis 1, that the more people trust the government, the more they believe that private entrepreneurship is a guarantee for the solution of Slovenia's economic problems.

**B) Multiple regression analysis**

Now that we have proven that the association exists (E5a-E2a), we can move on to regression analysis, as the correlation proved to be statistically significant. In regression analysis, we can look at the influence of one variable (in this case we are talking about simple linear regression) or ten on one variable (multiple linear regression). In our case, we have the influence of two variables on one.

Our theoretical model:



The substantive hypothesis is the one that arises from the research question. Zero and alternative, however, belong to an individual statistical test. Therefore, in our case, when we look at the regression, the null hypothesis is  $H_0: \beta_1 = 0$  which means that there is no influence or that one, e.g. the first independent variable has no statistically significant effect on the explanation of the dependent. Then we say that it is positive, negative, or different from zero,  $H_1: \beta_2 \neq 0$  which means that the influence exists.

H3: The more people think that one has to be very careful with people, the more they think that most politicians are in politics for personal gain.

H4: The more people are suspicious of others and think that others are trying to take advantage of them - the more they think that most politicians are in politics for personal gain.

In our case, the variable E5B depends, and the independent E4a and E4b. We were interested in how much variance of the dependent variable is explained by all included independent variables (share of explained variance).

R is valid only when we have a simple regression analysis (i.e. 1 on 1). Since we have several independents in our case, this no longer represents the Pearson correlation coefficient, as it represents a more complex coefficient.

The R square is a determination coefficient that we also interpret when we have a simple regression analysis. Therefore, we are interested in the corrected coefficient of variance or the adjusted R square (corrected for the number of independent variables) of 6%, which means that we explained only 6% of the variation of the dependent variable with two independent variables. The standard error is 0.87, i.e. the calculated differences between the actual value and the estimated value (i.e. the one on the regression line).

- In the ANOVA table (analysis of variance), which tells us whether the regression model as a whole is statistically significant (whether the theoretical model fits the data well)? The model otherwise fits the data well, which we see from the statistically significant F. We found that the model is reliable, which means that the analysis makes sense. After all, if the risk was higher than 5%, it would mean that the model does not fit the data. Thus, the regression value is greater than the unexplained value (residuals), so the F statistic is quite high and is therefore statistically significant.

- In the Coefficient Correlations table, we can examine the impact of each individual independent variable. Here we see that the variable E4b, which is  $<0.05$  and has a positive effect, which means that the coefficient has a statistically significant effect on the explanation of the dependent variable, and it therefore makes sense to remain in the model. Otherwise, it is excluded from the model. Therefore, in our case, we would exclude E4a, since sig. is 0.282, with E4b the risk is less than 5%.

## **FINDINGS**

With the first hypothesis, we assumed that the more people trust the government, the more they believe that private entrepreneurship is a guarantee for solving Slovenia's economic problems. To confirm or reject the hypothesis, we decided to check with correlation analysis, where we were able to prove that with less than 5% risk between the variables E5a and E2a there is a correlation that is statistically significant, although weak. Since these are data from the SJM (i.e. social science data) - it is extremely difficult to find a correlation where there would be a medium-strong connection or even a strong one, so we cannot be so sharp in our scale. Therefore, we accept the first hypothesis.

With the second hypothesis, we assumed that the more people trust the government, the more they feel that the government is responsible for reducing the income gap between high and low-income people. To confirm or reject the hypothesis, we decided to also check with correlation analysis. We found that the claim is statistically significant but has a negative correlation, as the Pearson coefficient is -0.13, so we rejected the hypothesis. From the above, we conclude that the greater the trust in the government, the less they agree that the government is responsible for reducing the income gap. Therefore, the second hypothesis can be rejected.

With the third hypothesis, we assumed that the more people think that one should be very careful with people, the more they think that most politicians are in politics for personal gain. To confirm or reject this hypothesis, we decided to check with multiple regression analysis (together with Hypothesis 4, i.e. the influence of two independent variables). We found that in the Coefficient Correlations table, the influence of the variable E4b is  $<0.05$  and has a positive effect, which means that the coefficient has a statistically significant effect on the explanation of the dependent variable, and therefore it makes sense to remain in the model. Therefore, the third hypothesis can be accepted as there is a certain impact.

With the fourth hypothesis, we assumed that the more people are suspicious of others and think that others are trying to take advantage of them - the more they think that most politicians are in politics for personal gain. To confirm or reject this hypothesis, we decided to check with multiple regression analysis (together with Hypothesis 3, i.e. the influence of two independent variables). We

found that for the Coefficient Correlations table, the variable E4a sig. 0.282 - so the risk is more than 5%, so it can be excluded from the model. Therefore, we reject the fourth hypothesis.

## **CONCLUSION**

Of the four hypotheses posed, two had to be discarded. One of these is the second hypothesis, that the greater the trust in government, the less they agree that government is responsible for reducing income disparities. It is known from the literature and also in general knowledge that those who most believe and trust in the power of government expect the government to minimize income disparities and create the greatest possible equality in society. It is also somewhat surprising now that the first hypothesis was accepted since it is based on a similar logic as Hypothesis 2. In the first hypothesis, we therefore confirmed that the more people trust the government, the more they believe that private enterprise is a guarantee for solving economic problems. Slovenia. Where according to the literature and the common knowledge, we could say that in fact the more people believe and trust the government, the more they are against private entrepreneurship, as they believe in state-owned companies and "joint ownership".

Nevertheless, on the other hand, it can also be true (as our hypothesis was confirmed), because if people have more confidence in the government, they will much prefer to take the entrepreneurial path, in the case of the perceptive image, that the government does not interfere in the economy. On the other hand, the aforementioned surprise at the rejection of Hypothesis 2 (the reverse direction of correlation) is actually not that unusual. Considering the slightly special context of Slovenia as a post-communist society, it is paradoxical that those who view power negatively often do not advocate a minimalist but a maximalist state. Therefore, they think about it just the opposite of neoliberal thinkers. Their assessment of power can be negative precisely because they expect (too) much from power. Therefore, they understand that power, and not people with their own work and abilities, provides prosperity and because the government does not provide this, they trust it less.

We were also somewhat surprised by the third hypothesis, as we hypothesized that both the third and fourth hypotheses had a similar effect on variable E5b. The obtained results or findings came

somewhat inconsistent with certain assumptions from the literature, although the questions asked can also be viewed from another angle, so the results are understandable. The question of the respondents' perception of the meaning of the terminologies of government responsibility, private entrepreneurship, trust and honesty arises. The issue of ignorance or contradictory understanding of survey questions is one of the possible errors in the research itself and key findings and interpretations of the final results, which must also be taken into account, especially in sensitive topics.

When people who have succeeded in a fair way are lost, remain only those who care about quick earnings or quick satisfaction of their needs. Therefore, the younger generations are born into a world where they never see or realize that every human being can have his own contribution to the good functioning of society. Only then can we witness changes in the political system.

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