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Towards a multipolar and diverse world?

"Triumphant historical unidirectionality is not only simplistic, it may also be extremely dangerous." Rein Müllerson critiques both classical Marxism and free-market capitalism, with their faith in ineluctable progress, at the same time asking how far universal claims for social justice are reconcilable with the multipolar global system.

The turn of the twenty-first century seems also to be a turning point in the history of humankind. Among economic, political and other tangible factors bearing witness to this is the increasing number of books that take a long historical view on contemporary events, developments and perspectives. Ian Morris's *Why the West Rules – For Now* (going back about 14,000 years), Francis Fukuyama's *The Origins of Political Order from Prehuman Times to the French Revolution* (with more or less the same time-span), Steven Pinker's *The Better Angels of Our Nature: The Decline of Violence in History and its Causes* (10,000 years of history of violence) and other similar works witness this tendency. Why do these and many other authors feel the need to take such a long run up? The most plausible answer seems to be that, when history is radically changing its cause, today's – and even more tomorrow's – problems and questions can be approached only by taking a wider historical perspective. As the Russian poet Sergei Yessenin wrote: "When face to face / We cannot see the face. We should step back / For better observation."



Herbert James Draper, "The Gates of Dawn" 1900. Source: Wikimedia

The process of globalization, especially as it manifests itself though increasing assimilation (homogenization) at the global level and dissimilation (heterogenization) within individual societies (including the increase of those whose choice of lifestyles differ from "traditional" ones) as well as purposeful promotion of western-style liberal democracy and market economy, raises the question not only of the universality (unidirectionality) of humankind's history, but also of the universality of values.

The dominant trend in western social and political philosophy, from Immanuel Kant to John Rawls and many others between and after, has been what one may call abstract philosophizing or theorizing, in other words to proceed from some very general intuitive premises towards more concrete policy recommendations. Notwithstanding the great insights of many original thinkers, what such an approach lacks are historical and comparative analyses. One may be tempted to agree with Raymond Geuss when he writes that "political philosophy must be realist. That means, roughly speaking, that it must start from and be concerned in the first instance not how people ought to ideally (or ought 'rationally') to act, what they ought to desire, or value, the kind of people they ought to be, etc., but, rather, with the way social, economic, political, etc., institutions actually

operate in some society at some given time, and what really moves human beings to act in given circumstances."^[1] Or, as Francis Fukuyama writes: "Putting the theory after the history constitutes what I regard as the correct approach to analysis: theories ought to be inferred from facts, and not the other way around. Of course, there is no such thing as pure confrontation with facts, devoid of prior theoretical constructs. Those who think they are empirical in that fashion are deluding themselves. But all too often social science begins with an elegant theory and then searches for facts that will confirm it."^[2] As most of these theories have been elaborate by western thinkers, it is not at all surprising that practically all of them support, or used to support, some version of political arrangements based on western liberal democratic values.^[3] In order to avoid such theorizing without studies of concrete societies, in order to ask why some of them were slave-owning societies while others were not, why in some places an Idi Amin, a Saddam Hussein or some other strongman rules while in others democratically elected liberals fail to find solutions to today's challenges, it is necessary to a step back for better observation.

Dissimilation and assimilation in the history of humankind

We, *Homo Sapiens*, originate from an African village. Tens of thousands of years of conquering planet Earth was paralleled by a process of dissimilation, in which we as individuals as well as human societies gradually became increasingly different from each other. We were not born different, we became different. Today, now that the world has virtually become a global village, a slow and painful process of assimilation has set in.

The homogenization of the world is not something completely new. Empires, both ancient and modern, contributed to this process. However, with the end of the bi-polar international system, the collapse of the USSR as a counterbalance to western economic and political systems, and the opening up of China to the world, the homogenization of the world has accelerated. In many ways it is a spontaneous process. Interacting and interpenetrating societies borrow from each other what they believe works best; the flow of goods, ideas and practices across state boundaries make societies in important respects – as well as not so important respects – increasingly similar.

The current migration wave, an aspect and a result of the globalization process, contributes to the assimilation of the world and at the same time to dissimilation of individual societies. Until recently most migration waves have had either economic causes (through push and pull factors) or have been the result of armed conflicts. However, already we see that environmental factors are starting to play a role in that respect too. Ian Morris warns that "Global warming threatens to make even the most lurid fears of anti-immigrant activists come true by the 2020s. Tens of millions of the world's hungriest, angriest, and most desperate people may be fleeing the Muslim world for Europe, and Latin America for the United States. The population movements could dwarf anything in history, reviving the kind of problems that the steppe highway [on which the hordes of the Huns, Chengiz Han, and others moved either to the West or to the East] used to present."^[4]

Globalization, and migration as one of its manifestations, also leads to the heterogenization of individual societies. In most societies the world over there are more and more material factors, ideas, practices and people of foreign origin. Some big cities, especially in the West, are microcosms of the world as a whole. If foreign material goods are, as a rule, accepted benevolently (though even here there are exceptions), foreign ideas, practices and especially carriers of those ideas and practices tend to produce resistance on the part of indigenous populations.

These controversial parallel processes of homogenization and heterogenization have already created serious problems. The world has become interconnected but also unmanageable. Everything is related to everything else and, more often than not, deliberate and planned actions have unforeseen and unintended consequences. Negative events in one part of the world have an immediate impact in other parts. Economic and financial crises, terrorist attacks, environmental pollution and uncontrollable immigration

waves are major negative consequences of globalization.

Universal history and historical determinism

Besides the spontaneous homogenization of the world there have also been conscious attempts to make it thus. Monotheistic religions such as Christianity and Islam have both tried to make the world the same in terms of faith, either through conquest or missionary activities. The ideas of the Enlightenment, based on the belief in the universality of reason and its eventual triumph over emotions, spontaneity and irrationality, have been a powerful source of attempts to remake the world in accordance with elaborate blueprints. Marxism was the most prominent emanation of the Enlightenment, an ideology that planned to redesign the world according to societal laws "scientifically discovered" by Karl Marx and the Marxists. Here, historical determinism and voluntarism joined forces. Having discovered iron laws that would inevitably lead all societies towards the full emancipation of humankind, the Marxists saw their task as being to facilitate the birth pangs of the new world – to play the role of its midwife. Erik Olin Wright is right claiming that "Marx proposed a highly deterministic theory of the demise of capitalism."^[5] However, as he adds, Marx also offered "a relatively voluntaristic theory of the construction of [capitalism's] alternative."^[6] It is important to note that it is not only Marxism that is guilty of a confusion of phenomena that, at first glance, seem to offer irreconcilable explanations of social processes. Both these "irreconcilable reconcilables" have their roots in the Judeo-Christian worldview, and especially the legacy of the Enlightenment.

The dominant liberal democratic vision of the world is methodologically close to Marxist "scientific" revelations, though they point in different directions. That shouldn't be surprising, since both are heirs to the Enlightenment and both have linear visions of historical evolution of human societies. Like Marxism, the liberal democratic mental picture of world's evolution is also a combination of deterministic and voluntaristic elements. Many liberal democrats, certain that all societies will eventually evolve towards free market liberal democracy, also believe that it is their duty to help those societies that are not yet liberal democracies achieve their destiny faster. This belief has been especially strong in Anglo-Saxon societies. Walter Russell Mead speaks of it as "the 'whig' narrative – a theory of history that sees the slow and gradual march of progress in a free society as the dominant force not only in Anglo-American history but in the wider world as well."^[7] Having established the liberal maritime international order, Great Britain and later the United States use "the strategic flexibility of an offshore power, protected to some degree from the rivalries and hostilities of land powers surrounded by powerful neighbours, to build power strategies that other countries cannot counter. It means using command of the seas to plant colonies whose wealth and success reinforce the mother country. It involves developing a global system that is relatively easy to establish and which, once developed, proves extremely difficult to dislodge."^[8] The gist of such a view is that it is almost inevitable that world not only is dominated by the Anglo-Saxon countries, but also that other societies using the Marxist lexicon, are thrown into the dustbin of history, *volens nolens* becoming more and more like Anglo-Saxon societies.

According to John Gray, the former British Prime Minister Tony Blair possessed a simplistic, unilinear vision of the world and "never doubted that globalization was creating a worldwide market economy that must eventually be complemented by global democracy".^[9] Blair also believed in the power of force to ensure the triumph of good.^[10] Gray is right when he warns against the dangers of utopian visionaries who have acquired political power. The Bush-Blair axis did indeed lead to disasters, among which the 2003 Iraq invasion should stand up as a warning for future generations. However, like his predecessor Karl Popper, who introduced the concept of "piecemeal engineering" into the philosophy of politics, Gray himself is absolutist when denying any positive role for social utopias and visionary politicians. He is also too harsh towards the Enlightenment's legacy, seeing it as a monolithic whole. The so-called "war on terror" is not so much a war of reason against religious violence as a war of a faith against another faith. It is the faith in the supremacy of western values, including the free market, globalization and democracy, against the faith in Islam's ability to bring justice and wellbeing to mankind. It is not by chance that Tony

Blair was one of the most, if not *the* most, religious British Prime Minister for many years and that George W. Bush was not only a born again Christian but also very close to American religious conservatives, many of whom take a literal interpretation of the Bible.

Many of those who have promoted liberal democracy or do so today also believe that all societies move in the same direction and that it is only due to unreasonable and selfish leaders who prevent their peoples reaching the Promised Land that liberal democracy does not exist worldwide. A century ago, American Baptists, desirous to civilize Russia before the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, believed that "for Russia, sooner or later, there will be Runnymede and a Magna Charta, if not a Bunker Hill and Yorktown".^[11] They foresaw for Russia, if not the American way of development, then at least the British one. Things haven't changed much since. Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* may be read today as a caricature of liberal democratic visions of the future, but more moderate and therefore less prominent versions of the same vision are as influential as ever. In their otherwise very interesting, balanced and forward-looking article, Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry observe that "just as the Nazis envisioned a 'new order' for Europe and the Soviet Union designed an interstate economic and political order, so, too, did the liberal West." Nevertheless, they come to an optimistic conclusion that "the foreign policy of the liberal states should continue to be based on the broad assumption that there is ultimately one path to modernity – and that it is essentially liberal in character" and that "liberal states should not assume that history has ended, but they can still be certain that it is on their side".^[12] This is only a slightly modified and moderate version of a deterministic explanation of history.

Here, once again, voluntarism, feeding on its opposite – determinism – steps in. These are the human agents who are on the "right side of history"; who realize humankind's destiny. Political regimes and economic systems that are on the "wrong side of history" have to go, and sooner rather than later. Slavoj Žižek is right when he observes that "it is easy to make fun of Fukuyama's notion of the 'End of History', but most people today are Fukuyamean, accepting liberal-democratic capitalism as the finally found formula of the best possible society, such that all one can do is to try to make it more just, more tolerant, and so on."^[13] Such triumphant historical unidirectionality is not only simplistic and wrong; it may also be extremely dangerous. The whole history of humankind testifies that there is no final form of social, political or economic arrangement and that no domination is eternal. "We should thus ruthlessly abandon the prejudice that the linear time of evolution is 'on our side', that History is 'working for us'," writes Žižek.^[14] Only *ex post facto* and usually long after the fact do we learn where history is leading us. We contemporaries can only make more or less educated guesses.

If there are liberal democrats who consider that the best way to promote liberal democracy is assisting those societies which have chosen to follow their example, there are also liberal interventionists who believe in the necessity of actively enlarging the circle of liberal democracies. In the United States, liberals like Samantha Power and Anne-Marie Slaughter have joined forces with neo-conservatives like Paul Wolfowitz, Robert Kagan and Randy Scheunemann, though the reasons for their reaching similar policy conclusions are quite different. If the interventionism of neo-conservatives is primarily dictated by pragmatic interests (oil, gas, strategic benefits), liberal interventionists sincerely believe in their mission to make the world a better place.

It is obvious that history is not an impersonal *perpetuum mobile*. Using Marx's words, "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past".^[15] Ian Morris, having studied social development over the last 14,000 years, concludes: "Social development is not a gift or curse laid on humanity [...]; it is something we make ourselves, just not in ways of our own choosing."^[16] Studies taking the longer historical perspective show that it is necessary to plan for the future and that past and present trends are of some assistance in this endeavour. However, our plans will never be realized as we intended and we therefore have to be ready to constantly correct them. Most importantly, history does not move to any specific end but is a combination of three categories of factors:

deterministic (not everything is possible and some things really are impossible, at least for the time being); voluntaristic (quite a few things do depend on our choices and efforts); and chance (many things depend neither on our rational nor irrational choices, nor are they predetermined by any discoverable pre-existing factors).

Problems of liberal democracy and democratic capitalism.

The most important shortcoming of proactive promotion of liberal democracy in the world stems from the simplistic belief in linear, unidirectional evolution. Although it is true that the more globalized the world becomes, the more homogeneous it becomes, this process is very slow and moves in fits and starts. Yesterday's and even today's tendencies may not be indications of tomorrow's directions. Moreover, globalization has dangers as well as limits. It may well be that, at least in certain areas, societies will find it necessary to curb certain aspects and effects of globalization. Although the West has been the engine of globalization as well as its main beneficiary, it will not stay like that forever. In human history there has never been any political or economic system, empire or great power whose dominance has not come to an end, whose ways of doing things have not become outdated. Given that globalization has accelerated changes and developments in many parts of the world, the rise and fall of great powers will also happen faster than ever before in human history.^[17] Even if it weren't for the current financial and economic crisis in the West, there is no doubt that Asia and above all China, combining western scientific and social achievements with their own traditions and inventions, will change the balance of power in the world. Trying to impose, even for benign ends, one's own model on other societies will put an end to social development, since humankind has evolved not only through borrowing from others but also through social experimentation and competition.^[18] Charles Kupchan writes that the

"crisis of governability within the western world comes at a particularly inopportune moment. The international system is in the midst of tectonic change due to the diffusion of wealth and power to new quarters. Globalization was supposed to have played to the advantage of liberal societies, which were presumably best suited to capitalize on the fast and fluid nature of the global marketplace. But instead, mass publics in the advanced democracies of North America, Europe, and East Asia have been particularly hard hit – precisely because their countries' economies are both mature and open to the world."^[19]

Moreover, it is not at all certain that social arrangements that currently dominate are well suited to facing new and unforeseen challenges.

Francis Fukuyama writes that "liberal democracy is the default ideology around much of the world today in part because it responds to and is facilitated by certain socioeconomic structures. Changes in those structures may have ideological consequences, just as ideological consequences may have socioeconomic consequences."^[20] Globalization and the development of technology have eroded the relative strength of the middle class – the main pillar of liberal democracy – in the western world. Societies are becoming more and more unequal and polarised. In Fukuyama's view, such a tendency undermines the structure on which liberal democratic ideology and practices are based. It is difficult to disagree. If, say, Great Britain continues losing its industrial base, which in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries enabled its dominant position in the world, and carries on relying on the financial services of the City as a source of its revenue, it may indeed guarantee a GDP growth for some time, but society will become ever more unequal and the middle class smaller and weaker.

It would be imprudent to remain content with Churchill's words, which for too many have become a mantra, that "democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time" (Winston Churchill is reported of having also said that "the best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter"). There are several shortcomings of liberal democracy that have become visible as the world becomes more and more globalized. First, modern democracy emerged in parallel with, evolved within, and was dependent on so-called nation-

states. Historically, there was a positive correlation between democracy and nationalism. Today, however, most societies have become multicultural, are increasingly multiethnic and multireligious. Nationalism has ceased to play any positive emancipatory role; its impact is increasingly becoming negative.

Equally damaging is the positive correlation, especially in the United States, between money and democracy. If, in some so-called developing countries or emerging market economies, one has to enjoy political power in order to become a billionaire, in the citadel of liberal democracy one needs, in order to be elected to a high political post, if not to be a billionaire, then at least to be supported by them. As Jeffrey Sachs writes, "corporate wealth translates into political power through campaign financing, corporate lobbying, and the revolving door of jobs between government and industry";^[21] America, he claims, is becoming a "corporatocracy, a political system in which powerful corporate interest groups dominate the policy agenda".^[22] Another shortcoming of liberal democracy is an institution at the very core of democracy – periodic elections. They are causing short-termism in policy-making of practically all Western liberal democracies. "All these problems of short-termism are compounded by an anti-planning mentality,"^[23] observes Jeffrey Sachs. The inability to take necessary measures in the face of current financial and economic crises is only one of the signs of democratic short-termism. As Fukuyama observes, "many people currently admire the Chinese system not just for its economic record but also because it can make large, complex decisions quickly, compared with the agonizing policy paralysis that has struck both the United States and Europe in the past few years."^[24]

Even more serious are external problems of democracy. Institutions of modern democracy, having emerged and adapted for the frame of the nation-state, are unsuitable for international relations and don't work well when the previously clear divisions between external and domestic affairs become blurred. Would democracy in external relations mean "one state, one vote"? In that case, Nauru and China would carry the same weight, which seems not only unfair but absurd. Would it mean that democratic states should have a stronger voice than non-democratic states? In that case, who would allocate such votes? Ideas of so-called cosmopolitan democracy^[25] are able to address at best some of the concerns of the democracy deficit in the globalizing world. Most populations of the EU member-states constantly complain about the alienation of the EU institutions from the European peoples and about the democracy deficit within the Union. And this is within a group of states whose histories, traditions and levels of development are relatively close. There is even a positive (or negative, depending on how one looks at the problem) correlation between the power and the effectiveness of international bodies, on the one hand, and their "democratic" credentials, on the other. The more "democratic" an international body is, the less power or authority it enjoys. Within the UN, it is its Security Council, and especially its five permanent members, that is the most powerful and effective organ. Various other informal groupings, such as the G7, G8, G20 or G2, are no more "democratic". Rather, one might conclude that the concept has very little room in the field of international relations.

Besides the crisis of liberal democracy, there is also a crisis of capitalism. It seems that the free market and liberal democracy, phenomena that have premised each other, are at the same time also in constant rivalry. The freer the market, the greater the economic inequality; the greater the inequality, the less democracy and *vice versa*. Strong democracy attained by curbing inequality inevitably bridles market freedoms. Economic inequality also increases political inequality, while political equality puts brakes on widening economic inequality. Democracy tries to make society more equal, while an unbridled market increases inequality. The result of this constant balancing act is that, in western European liberal democracies (social democracies), these two spheres – political and economic – constantly soften each other's negative impacts. In this respect, the US differs considerably from Europe. John Dunn writes that "America today remains a society uncomfortable with every surviving vestige of explicit privilege, but remarkably blithe in face of the most vertiginous of economic gulfs, and comprehensively reconciled to the most obtrusive privileges of wealth as such. Behind this outcome lies the continuing vitality of its economy, the real source of the victory of the partisans of 'distinction, or the English school of

economists'."^[26] In the US, the market has prevailed over democracy while in Sweden, say, which for a long time had a social democrat government, there has been less room, as Dunn puts it, for "distinctions and opulence".^[27] In other words, democracy has exercised greater constraints on the market. Today, when there are serious doubts about "the continuing vitality" of the American economy, one may question whether equality of opportunity is not too narrow a concept.

Dunn also observes that within the liberal democratic movement, "the partisans of the order of egoism", in other words capitalists, have defeated "the partisans of equality",^[28] in other words democrats. One of the important causes of equality's defeat in the hands of economic egoism has been that, in the long run, the uncompromising instruments for attempting to realize equality and the rigidities inherent in its pursuit have blunted equality's appeal as a goal.^[29] The French and Russian revolutions, where, contrary to the American revolution, the aim was not so much, as Hannah Arendt put it, "freedom from oppression" as "freedom from want", and where one of the main requirements was therefore *égalité* (equality), have contributed to the existing balance (or imbalance) within today's understanding of democracy and liberty. Arendt wrote that "the inescapable fact was that liberation from tyranny spelled freedom only for the few and was hardly felt by the many who remained loaded down by their misery. These had to be liberated once more, and compared to this liberation from the yoke of necessity, the original liberation from tyranny must have looked like child's play."^[30]

The fact that radical attempts of liberation from "the yoke of necessity" and creation of more equal societies have sometimes led to tyranny should in no way compromise the values of equality and freedom from want in the eyes of thoughtful individuals. It is possible to abuse all values and norms, but this does not mean that we should reject them. What is needed is a critical mind able to distinguish between a value and its abuse. Today, advanced liberal democracies have, in principle, got rid of the "yoke of tyranny" and have alleviated the "yoke of necessity" for most of their people, though one cannot be complacent, since not only are there too many poor people in rich European societies but the "war on terror" has attempted to bring back the "yoke of tyranny". For many other societies, both tasks still constitute formidable challenges, and even mature democracies have to constantly find new balances between freedom and equality. Wolfgang Streeck, writing of "the crises of democratic capitalism", whose heyday, in his opinion, was between the end of WWII and the end of the 1960s, observes that "more than ever, economic power seems today to have become political power, while citizens appear to be almost entirely stripped of their democratic defences and their capacity to impress upon the political economy interests and demands that are incommensurable with those of capital owners."^[31] After the collapse of communism, the conflictual aspect of the correlation "capitalism-democracy" is becoming more and more visible. One may therefore be justified in asking whether the "sell-by date" of at least some western style political and economic institutions has not already passed.

Limits of social-democratic choice in the globalized world

After WWII, many western European states found a remedy against the excesses of capitalism in social-democratic policies and the so-called welfare state, which seemed to strike a satisfactory balance between *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité*. Today, however, the nation-state and national market economy – those cradles of human rights and democracy – are undergoing radical change. The world market is no longer the sum-total of national markets; it is becoming more and more a real common market. The state has lost its ability not only to control financial flows, but also to protect its own population from the negative effects of fluctuations in world markets, especially financial markets. The unfettered global market tends to drag down the protection of economic and social rights to the level of the lowest common denominator (cheap labour and longer working hours in many Asian societies are certainly affecting employment and social protection in all OECD countries). Jack Donnelly writes: "The globalization of production is weakening state-centric schemes for implementing economic, social and cultural rights, most dramatically in the wealthier countries of the Northern Hemisphere. It does not, however, seem to be creating viable alternative mechanisms."^[32] Donnelly correctly emphasizes that

economic growth resulting from globalization and the new division of labour should not be confused with the growth of economic and social rights, since "human rights are about assuring minimum distributions of goods, services and opportunities to all, something that is by no means assured by economic growth."^[33]

Civil and especially political rights are also negatively affected by the process of globalization. The inability of democratically elected governments to protect their constituencies from negative global effects (e.g. from the crash of financial markets or from the effect of cheap child labour in some Asian countries) means that democracy has become less effective and political rights less important. The dilemma that globalization has caused for social democrats has been well summarized by Dominique Strauss-Kahn, a former minister in the Mitterrand and Jospin governments and the former chief of the IMF: "The success of post-war democracy rests on the equilibrium between production and redistribution, regulated by the state. With globalization, this equilibrium is broken. Capital has become mobile: production has moved beyond national borders, and thus outside the remit of state redistribution [...]. Growth would oppose redistribution; the virtuous circle would become the vicious circle."^[34]

In the aftermath of WWI, the creation of the International Labour Organization (ILO) was the western world's (then the only world that mattered) response to two problems: the workers movements, in which many saw "the spectre of communism", and the need to level the playing field for competing national capitals. The only specialized agency of the UN created before WWII, the mandate of the ILO has been the promotion of social and economic rights, which are considered "second generation rights" (if at all) *vis-à-vis* first generation (civil and political) rights. The fact that the ILO was founded before human rights became an international issue is significant. International concern for workers' rights was not so much motivated by unease about the welfare of the workers, though they naturally benefited from it. Rather, the ILO was established for the sake of the survival of capitalism: it was intended to mitigate rivalry between employers in different western countries by equalizing labour costs and conditions. Such an arrangement was possible between a limited number of countries at approximately the same level of economic and social development. Can this experience be repeated today worldwide? While the ILO is an organization with universal membership, it is no secret that working conditions, workers' pay and other labour factors differ hugely between countries and regions. Today, it is not only European societies or societies of European extraction that are competing with each other, as was the case after WWI. Given the very different levels of economic, social and political development that exist throughout the contemporary world, it would be impossible to demand that labour costs and conditions are even approximately the same. In a global world, capital benefits from a "race to the bottom", moving to places labour costs are lower, thereby dragging down social safety nets in richer countries too. Increasing migration from the poorer regions to the richer ones has the same effect. When social democratic or even socialist parties come to power in European countries, they are unable to continue traditional welfare state policies. The right and right-of-centre policies that until recently were trumpeted as the panacea for all socioeconomic ills (no more bust and boom, only boom) may have bankrupted the western world, but the left and left-of-centre parties have been unable to offer any plausible answers to today's challenges.

When it competed with the economically ineffective, politically oppressive and ideologically utopian communist system, the capitalist system turned out to be much more effective, freer and more pragmatic. Yet the triumph of capitalism over a failed experiment shouldn't make us complacent and closed to the search for reforms and even revolutionary alternatives. Jeffrey Sachs writes that, today, "America's weaknesses are warning signs for the rest of the world" and that "the society that led the world in financial liberalization, round-the-clock media saturation, television based election campaigns, is now revealing the downside of a society that has let market institutions run wild over politics and public values".^[35]

Any viable alternatives?

It would be wrong, in my opinion, even to ask where the world is going. To ask such a general question would be to imply that we all are moving in the same direction, that we accept a unidirectional, linear evolution of the world towards some singular end. However the world, though interconnected, is going in different directions, and one should become despondent about that.

Not many would disagree with the statement that "the shift in power and wealth from West to East in the twenty-first century is probably as inevitable as the shift from East to West that happened in the nineteenth century."^[36] The rapid rise of not only China, but also the increasing potential of Brazil, Russia, Turkey, Vietnam and the earlier economic miracles of authoritarian Asian tigers (South Korea, Taiwan) have led some authors to write, often with apprehension, about authoritarian capitalism as one potential model for the future. Israeli strategist Azar Gat, for example, observes that "authoritarian capitalist states, today exemplified by China and Russia, may present a viable alternative path to modernity, which in turn suggests that there is nothing inevitable about liberal democracy's ultimate victory – or future dominance."^[37] Russian analyst Sergei Karaganov, similarly, observes that there is another aspect of the emerging "New Epoch of Confrontation": "the emerging struggle between two models of development – the liberal-democratic capitalism of the traditional West, and the 'authoritarian capitalism' led by the Asian 'tigers' and 'dragons'."^[38] Slavoj Žižek, one of the most eloquent critics of all forms of capitalism, warns that "the virus of this authoritarian capitalism is slowly but surely spreading around the globe".^[39]

For societies like China or even Russia, it may indeed be that some form of authoritarian capitalism will be their model of development. European nations, on the other hand, may continue experimenting with various forms of liberal-democratic market economy. The choice of different models will depend on various factors, among which history, religion, size, geography and demography will be significant. Sometimes, chance may also play a crucial role. However, it is important to note that relatively small Asian authoritarian tigers became gradually less authoritarian and more democratic. And the big ones are not so averse to the pull of democratic ideals either. As Kishore Mahbubani observes, though China remains a "politically closed society", it is "in social and intellectual terms an increasingly open society".^[40] Moreover, China is also experimenting with political reforms, though slowly and cautiously. Azar Gat observes that "institutionally, the regime in China is continuously broadening its base, co-opting the business elites into the party, democratizing the party itself, and experimenting with various forms of popular participation, including village and some town elections, public opinion surveys, and focus group polling—all of which are intended to ensure that the government does not lose the public's pulse."^[41]

This means that China is shedding some of its authoritarian straits while acquiring some democratic ones. This is an important trend from which the West may benefit; but it may also find that many of the policies of a more democratic China will be contrary to what the West would expect. Democracy in China is for the Chinese people. What is important is that this process goes at its own pace, without being hastened from outside. A more democratic China will not necessarily be more amenable to western or American interests (a more democratic China may well be more nationalistic). Equally, Chinese democracy will certainly have "Chinese characteristics".

Turkey's evolution under the government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party may well show the way for other Muslim countries. There, the market economy is pooled with Islam and democracy. This combination may be quite different from western liberal democracies, which Turkey tried to resemble in its ambition to join the European Union. Samuel Huntington insightfully predicted some years ago that, "at some point Turkey could be ready to give up its frustrating and humiliating role as a beggar pleading for membership in the West and to resume its much more impressive and elevated historical role as the principal Islamic interlocutor and antagonist of the West."^[42] It seems that this time has come. Turkey has become not only economically more successful and politically more assertive, but also more authentic. Ted Galen Carpenter writes of Turkey: "Turkish leaders chafe at being expected to

follow Washington's lead on every issue. Deferring to the United States may have made sense in the bipolar strategic environment of the Cold War, when Soviet power and intentions appeared to pose a serious threat to Turkey's security and the United States was the only country that could provide effective protection. But the situation in the twenty-first century is much different. The possible threats are both less serious and more diffuse. Therefore, blindly following Washington's policy lead is not only unnecessary, it could be counterproductive to Turkey's interests."^[43] Of course, it should be welcome when individuals or societies strive to become better and more successful through learning from the experiences of others. However, if, in their strivings, they have to give up their identity, many of them become torn, whether they are individuals or societies.

Why can the world not consist of a social-democratic Europe, a libertarian-capitalist America, and a state-capitalist China and even Russia? A serious problem with such a scenario is that all these forms have already revealed their deficiencies and limits. Authoritarian capitalism may indeed be more efficient in responding to new challenges, but its main problem is that every authoritarianism limits human freedom, and the latter is not only an important value in itself but also a vehicle of development.^[44] Moreover, as we have seen, successful authoritarianisms tend, in their evolution, to become more liberal and democratic, which of course is a welcome trend. Charles Kupchan predicts that "it is more likely that emerging powers will follow their own unique paths to modernity as they rise, ensuring that the next world will not just be multipolar, but also politically diverse", and that therefore "the emerging world is poised to consist of a multiplicity of different kinds of regimes; considerable political diversity, not political homogeneity among western lines, lies ahead."^[45]

Today we see at least three competing and struggling forms of capitalism: the liberal-democratic capitalism of Anglo-Saxon type, the social-democratic capitalism of Scandinavian countries, Germany and some other western European countries, and the state capitalism exemplified first of all by China and Russia. The most plausible and positive tendency could be a kind of peaceful competition, in the course of which all models are ready to take from each other what works best. One thing is certain: the West does not have, and should not pretend to have, the monopoly of truth. It may well be that, while the East gradually becomes more democratic and liberal (not becoming a western style liberal democracy), the West, in order to regain some governance lost to market forces, has to increase the role of the state both domestically and internationally. Sergei Karaganov may well be right that "the existing model of western capitalism based on a society of almost universal affluence and advanced democracy cannot withstand new competition. Not only will the authoritarian regimes have to drift towards greater democracy in the medium term. Western democracies, too, will have to drift towards more authoritarianism. This will be a retreat, a post-modern theory of convergence."^[46] There seems to be some truth in such a statement. However, if the eastern drift towards greater liberty and democracy is well within the overall long-term tendency of evolution of humankind, a widespread and sustainable drift towards more authoritarianism goes against the general long-term transformations that have taken place in the world. Therefore, "more authoritarianism" may not reflect accurately what the West needs in order to compete with the rising East. Instead of glorifying rampant individualism à la Ayn Rand, it should aim for more collectivism, rights balanced with responsibilities and greater role of the state, not so much as the re-distributor of wealth but as protector of people from the negative effect of markets. Above all, however, the West must accept the truth that that there is no single socioeconomic and political arrangement suitable for all.

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^[2] F. Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order*, 24.

^[3] For critique of ahistorical political theorizing see, e.g. Raymond Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics*, Princeton University Press, 2008; *Political Philosophy versus History: Contextualism and Real Politics in the Contemporary Political Thought* (eds. J. Floyd, M. Stears), Cambridge University Press, 2011.

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- [5] E. O. Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, Verso, 2010, 98.
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- [15] K. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Arc Manor, 2008, 15.
- [16] I. Morris, 194.
- [17] Although Niall Ferguson's warning that "imperial demise" is not necessarily a centuries long process and can take place rather abruptly, may be overstated (N. Ferguson, "Complexity and Collapse. Empires on the Edge of Chaos", *Foreign Affairs*, 2010, March-April, 2010), there is no doubt that the acceleration of social changes that is a result of and a part of globalization means that changes in the balance of power in the world also happen more quickly than centuries ago.
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- [21] J. Sachs, *The Price of Civilization. Economics and Ethics after the Fall*, The Bodley Head, 2011, 116.
- [22] Ibid. 106.
- [23] Ibid. 242.
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- [30] H. Arendt, *On Revolution*, Penguin Books, 1965, 74.
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