

REVOLUTIONS

GLOBAL TRENDS & REGIONAL ISSUES

the PRECARIAT

Between revolution,
temporary protest
or a message
for change

Conceptualizing precarity in
light of the Occupy
and Indignados movements



Underexplored dimensions of BEIJING'S FOREIGN POLICY at the time of leadership change



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BEIJING'S
Foreign policy at the time
of leadership change

artworks &
PHOTOS

by
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Szymon Paż



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foreword

R/EVOLUTIONS

GLOBAL TRENDS AND REGIONAL ISSUES

THIS IS IT – THE FIRST ONLINE INCARNATION OF R/EVOLUTIONS. WHAT STARTED OFF AS A MERE CONCEPT A YEAR AND A HALF AGO, HAS FINALLY TAKEN THE SHAPE OF AN EXPERIMENTAL INTERDISCIPLINARY ENGLISH JOURNAL. OUR FIRST EDITION WITH OVER FIFTEEN AUTHORS AND EXPERTS, TOGETHER PROVIDING A WHOLE FAN OF SCIENTIFIC ARTICLES, ESSAYS AND INTERVIEWS CONCENTRATED ON TWO TOPICS. OUR CHOICE TO LIMIT THE RANGE OF TOPICS TO TWO DISTINCT OBJECTS OF ANALYSIS HAS PAID OFF. THIS EDITION OFFERS TWO DOSSIERS, NOT COMPLETE, BUT NEVERTHELESS SUBSTANTIVE IN SCOPE.

The first trend topic “*Precariat - Between revolution, temporary protest and a message for change – Conceptualizing precarity in light of the Occupy and Indignados movements*” offers a wide range of texts, covering three continents, and aims to make a contribution to the growing scholarly interest on the precarization of work and its social consequences. The second topic “*Underexplored dimensions of Beijing’s foreign policy at the time of leadership change*” holds its magnifying glass over the People’s Republic of China, focusing on some of its foreign policy dimension that are often overlooked or ignored.

When we conceptualized the journal, we declared to build it on three foundations: open access, international cooperation, and future-oriented analysis. Despite some difficulties along the way, as an editorial team, we can humbly state these declarations have not been in vain. Firstly, the site (r-evolutions.amu.edu.pl) is online and linked with social media; the journal is uploaded – as a whole and every text separately. We will continue our effort to make our texts as widely available as possible. And we invite you all to pass on the link of our website and promote the journal.

Secondly, the journal’s international dimension: as we are based in Poznań, Poland, we wanted to offer Polish scholars another platform to publish their texts together with scholars and experts from other countries. On the other hand, this international dimension was essential, as in our conviction it would enable the journal to surpass a Western-centric outlook better, merge various perspectives and provoke discussion. We realize that the number of Polish authors is dominant in this edition, but since many of them have lived, studied, worked outside Poland, a Polish-centric view, which is also valuable in its own right, cannot clearly be discerned in this edition. At this point already we would especially like to thank our authors, who participated in this experiment. As this is the first edition and we did not possess anything to show for in the beginning, we are very grateful to them for lending us their blind trust when agreeing to write a text, adhering to the concept of R/evolutions and for their effort of writing and confiding their permission to publish their work.

Our third pillar, providing future-orientated texts and forecasts has been a learning curve. As an editorial team, we soon realized it is not always possible for authors to write about how a phenomenon might evolve in the next 5-7 years, especially when it is developing under our noses. This has most clearly been the case with our global trend. Our regional issue on the other hand, because of the choice of the topic, has allowed

authors to indentify key variables and to extrapolate trends. Interesting is that every author prefers his own form of scenario-building or forecasting and methodology, which is something we warmly support.

In our first evaluation of this project, we rather stand by the principles of our founding conceptions, although we welcome all forms of feedback to improve and develop them over time. Our contact e-mail is rev@amu.edu.pl, but those who want, can leave messages on our site and Facebook too.

Finally we would like to thank our program board and especially Professor Anna Wolff-Powęska for her support at the journal's stage of inception. We would also like to thank the other board members Prof. Dorota Piontek, Przemysław Osiewicz (PhD), Beata Pająk-Patkowska (PhD) and Remigiusz Rosicki (PhD) for their advice, organizational input and guidance. We are likewise indebted to Prof. Tadeusz Wallas and Dr Tomasz Brańka (PhD), our Dean and Vice-Dean at the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism (AMU) for their confidence in the project, advice and even financial input at a time of dire need.

Moreover, we would like to thank the members of our first two R/evolutions Round Table panels, which served to present the project to a wider audience and highlight the value of scientific forecasting. We thank the participants of the first panel: "Europe as an actor in a multipolar world" at the 13th European Political Conference "EUROPE of the XXI CENTURY" in Słubice, Poland on February 7th 2013 for their support, conceptual advice and their efforts to promote our project. And we are of course also grateful to those who participated in the very successful second Round Table Panel: „In the shadow of the Great Game – Internal dynamics of Central Asia” at the ‘7th International Conference: Asia in the XXI Century: Challenges, Dilemmas, Perspectives’ in Toruń, Poland on May 16-17 2013.

Once more we would like to show our gratitude to all the authors who made this first edition possible, even to those we lend us our trust, but were not able to write a text due to other obligations, and also to those numerous reviewers, who will remain anonymous, but know who they are. Finally our thanks goes out to our partner "Foundation for Languages and Colutures – Sfera" for the exchange of know-how and their aid in finding volunteers to lighten the workload, and of course the volunteers themselves, our translators, and friends who agreed to help out with the corrections.

As readers will notice at first glance, is that we pay special attention to the lay-out of R/evolutions and aimed to find our own style. We thank *Typeface NV* for their advice and inspiration in developing the style and cover and also those artists and photographers who have sent us their work. As a result we decided to provide the peer-reviewed articles, essays and interviews all with a different lay-out. Regarding the use of English, we tried to adapt every article to the British or American-English according to the choice of the author. This explains the differences among texts, but each text on its own should be coherent to the style of the author. When it comes to our choice for bibliography, we adapted the system of in-text short referencing to footnotes, for easier reading, while allowing authors the possibility to elaborate on details at the bottom of the page.

The R/evolutions editorial team:

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global
TRENDS

the
PRECARIAT

Between revolution,
temporary protest
or a message
for change

Conceptualizing precarity
in light of the Occupy
and Indignados movements

texts

Bauman
Butler
Standing
Sowa
Miller
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Raunig
Desperak
Obinger
Jasiewicz
Müller
Bocheńska

artworks& photos

Lazar
Floranes



photo by T. Lazar

Protesters in Guy Fawkes masks, Zuccotti Park, New York

United States of **DEBT**

photoreport by
TOMASZ LAZAR

IT ALL BEGAN WITH THE HAPPENING WHICH TOOK PLACE ON THE 17TH OF SEPTEMBER NEAR WALL STREET. ITS AIM WAS TO PROTEST AGAINST THE SILENT DEAL BETWEEN THE FINANCIAL WORLD OF WALL STREET AND POLITICIANS, WHICH LEAD TO A SITUATION IN WHICH DURING THE CRISIS THE RICH WERE STILL MAKING MONEY WHILE THE POOR WERE SINKING EVER DEEPER IN DEBT. FROM THAT TIME ONWARDS THE PROTESTERS MOVED TO THE ZUCCOTI PARK. MORE THAN 800 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN ARRESTED BUT THE PROTEST CONTINUED SPREADING TO OTHER US CITIES. IT HAS ALSO GAINED INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION. THE POLICE REMOVED PROTESTERS FROM THE ZUCCOTI PARK ON NOVEMBER 15TH.

global TRENDS

ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIALS FOR "GLOBAL TRENDS" ARE DISPLAYED BETWEEN THE TEXTS. THIS IS PURELY FOR AESTHETIC MOTIVATIONS AND DOES NOT PROMOTE ANY IDEOLOGY OR VISION OF THE JOURNAL ITSELF. THE PICTURES AIM TO PROVIDE INSIGHT INTO THE REALITY OF THE PROTESTERS OF THE OCCUPY AND INDIGNADOS MOVEMENTS AND ARE SELECTED FROM THE WORK OF THOMAS LAZAR, RICARDO FLORANES, AMIRA BOCHEŃSKA.



United States of Debt
photoreport by **Tomasz Lazar**



Spanish dream
photoreport by **Amira Bocheńska**

artworks by
Richardo Floranes



photo by T. Lazar

Arrests during
the protests,
Harlem,
New York

TOMASZ LAZAR IS A FREELANCE PHOTOGRAPHER, MEMBER OF ZPAF, GRADUATE OF COMPUTER SCIENCE AT THE WEST POMERANIAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY. HE PARTICIPATED IN WORKSHOPS CONDUCTED BY TOMASZ TOMASZEWSKI AND EDDIE ADAMS WORKSHOP IN THE USA. HE WON MANY PHOTO CONTESTS IN POLAND AND ABROAD (INCLUDING THE SONY WORLD PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS, INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY AWARD, BZ WBK PRESS PHOTO, THE GRAND PRESS PHOTO) : WINNER OF THE GRAND PRIX AT THE INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL IN LODZ; RECENTLY NOMINATED IN THE CATEGORY "DEEPER PERSPECTIVE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR" IN THE INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY AWARD; WINNER OF THE SECOND PLACE AT WORLD PRESS PHOTO 2012 IN THE CATEGORY "PEOPLE IN THE NEWS."

THE PRECARIAT

BETWEEN REVOLUTION, TEMPORARY PROTEST OR A MESSAGE FOR **CHANGE**

CONCEPTUALIZING PRECARIETY
IN LIGHT OF THE OCCUPY AND
INDIGNADOS MOVEMENTS

THE WORLD'S SOCIAL LANDSCAPE IS CHANGING, ESPECIALLY IN TIMES OF ECONOMIC CRISIS. THIS IS NOT ONLY HAPPENING RIGHT NOW, BUT WILL ALSO AFFECT THE FUTURE QUALITY OF CIVIL SOCIETIES. THEREFORE WE DECIDED TO DEDICATE THE FIRST GLOBAL TREND OF R/EVOLUTIONS TO THE TOPIC OF PRECARIETY AND THE OCCUPY AND INDIGNADOS MOVEMENTS. THIS ISSUE PROVIDES A BROAD OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENT CONDITION OF OUR SOCIETIES AND THIS NEW PHENOMENON. IT WILL OFFER FOOD FOR THOUGHT TO CREATE FORECASTS, WHICH IS A CONCEPTUAL PILLAR OF R/EVOLUTIONS.

In this part of our journal we want to analyze the changes in the social, political and economic spheres in the modern world. We aim to take a closer look at events that take place here and now, changing all the time, while its future remains unknown. We decided to choose such a challenging perspective because the issue is gaining importance every day. This collection of articles, essays and interviews does not contain clear forecasts as such, but by analyzing the topic from different perspective R/evolutions aims to contribute to this growing research field. The main reason for this is that the analyzed trend is still largely unexplored. To get a better understanding of this research field we decided to use not only scientific articles but also such forms of expression like essays and interviews by people from within the protest movements. However, the lack of temporal distance to the presented events can make our project hard to objectify. At this point we would like to emphasize that the journal does not adhere to any forms of ideology. Our aim is not to promote any of the ideological options presented in this issue. Quite the contrary: we want offer the reader a collection of testimonies, theories, opinions and scientific concepts, so they can make up their own mind.

Precariat as a concept is very hard to define. On the one hand it is called the new social class "*in statu nascendi*"¹ on the other hand the "unclass."² At the same time it is considered to be "the atomization of Precariat, its descendant and negation."³ Precariat is not only the definition of a new social category or group, but rather an attempt to capture the contemporary human condition in terms of modern capitalism. That what unites precarians is a feeling of alienation, relative deprivation, cognitive dissonance and low level of confidence in the capitals of decision-making. We can also point out the pervasive feeling of uncertainty. Quoting Zygmunt Bauman: precarians „boil down to *existential uncertainty*: that awesome blend of ignorance and impotence, and inexhaustible source of humiliation."⁴

Precariat and precarity were primly defined in the concepts of Pierre Bourdieu and popularized mainly by Guy Standing, Judith Butler and Zygmunt Bauman. But are we then able to find the common denominator for all precarians? With the help of our readers we are going to find out. Thus we would like to start the discussion on social riots, mutiny against capitalism and "street performance" by the children of the "debt culture." Our aim is to analyze the origins and character of protests which engulfed large part of the Europe and USA. We seek to explore the ideas that were born in the

1 Standing 2011.

2 Bauman 2011.

3 Bauman 2011.

4 Bauman 2001.

minds of many European and American citizens. The final aim of this issue is an attempt to contribute to answering the questions about these social resistance movements' true political impact. What is more we can only notice and explore a small part of the precariat, the tip of the precarious iceberg: the activists who decided to publicly express their outrage. And – based on precariat and precarity theories – this issue of R/evolutions wants to focus on and explore the occupiers and the Indignados movements.

The Occupy Movement, regarded by some observers as a mass expression of precarian expectations, can be considered a variant of Alter-Globalization movement and as a possible follow-up of new social movements. In this context it is important to mention the main points of criticism of the Occupy Movement: the use of information not always confirmed by statistical data or attested only in a one-dimensional analysis, lack of clear objective, conflicting views of different protesters, and the lack of efficiency. There were also more specific forms of criticism, such as negative comments against the activists of the Indignados Movement⁵ expressed by Spanish Catholic Church or Mike Brownfield's (The Heritage Foundation) statement that the rejection of the current economic and political systems would not yield results as an improvement of life conditions for unemployed citizens of USA.

This issue will raise questions such as:

- Can the precariat actually become a “dangerous class?”⁶
- Are these outraged protesters vulnerable to the voices of extremists and populists?
- Can the precariat become a real political force? What changes in the socio-economical system can their actions generate?
- Is there a gender dimension missing in precariat theory?

In the first issue of R /evolutions we managed to gather the pioneers of precariat and precarity concepts. Among others we have interviews with: **Zygmunt Bauman** (Professor of Sociology), **Judith Butler** (Professor of Philosophy) and **Guy Standing** (Professor of Development Studies). Moreover this issue offers scientific articles by authors such as **Iza Desperak** (Institute of Sociology, Lodz University, Poland), **Toby Miller** (British-Australian-US interdisciplinary social scientist), **Julia Obinger** (Japanese studies), **Gerald Raunig** (Professor, philosopher and art theorist), **Jan Sowa** (sociologist), and

⁵ Spanish 15-M Movement also known as Indignados Movement is considered a part of an international Occupy Movement, sometimes is described as an inspiration for the rest of massive protests organized under the auspices of Occupy Movement declarations.

⁶ Standing 2011.

Anna Visvizi (economic and political analyst). We also gathered interviews and voices of experts, witnesses and activists Like **Amira Bocheńska** (artist and reporter), **Ewa Jasiewicz** (journalist and social rights activist) and **Stefanie Müller** (economist, expert on communication and journalist).

We want our journal to speak not only by words but also by images. Thus you can enjoy photo reports and graphics prepared by well known and rewarded artists like **Tomasz Lazar** (photographer, winner of the international “World Press Photo” award), **Amira Bocheńska** and **Ricardo Floranes** (graphic, mural artist) delivered from the heart of the events. All these publications are aimed to start a discussion on the future development of this trend. We would like you to take a part in this discussion. We are waiting for your feedback, to successfully develop this trends section or R/evolutions and new ones to come in the future.

‘Global Trends’ Editors:
Agnieszka Filipiak
Eliza Kania

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photo by T. Lazar

A man hiding from heavy rain in a phone booth, Zuccotti Park, New York

FAR AWAY FROM "SOLID MODERNITY"

“

THE DISCOVERY OF THE PRECARIOUS POSITION OF THE MAJORITY OF MIDDLE CLASSES (...) AND INDEED THE INCREASING POPULARITY OF THE NOTION OF PRECARIAT WERE THE CONSEQUENCES OF SOBERING-UP, DASHING OF HOPES," CLAIMS PROF. ZYGMUNT BAUMAN. HE EXPLAINS AND DESCRIBES THE PROCESS AND THE ROAD WE TRAVELLED FROM AN INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY TO THE POINT WHERE WE FIND OURSELVES NOW, IN THE STATE OF "LIQUID MODERNITY." THIS CONVERSATION TRIES TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS WHETHER WE HAVE LOST THE SENSE OF SOCIAL SECURITY AND WHY WE HAVE STOPPED CARING ABOUT THE WELL-BEING OF THE HUMAN COMMUNITY. AND FINALLY, ARE WE – AS A SOCIETY – REALLY "MOVING TOWARDS THE APOCALYPSE?"

INTERVIEW WITH **ZYGMUNT BAUMAN**

BY ELIZA KANIA

TRANSLATED BY PATRYCJA CICHONÁ

The notion of precariat seems quite general and vague to many people. Who are therefore the precarians?

The "general" and "vague" character of the notion of precariat bothers people accustomed to the division of society into "classes" and, in particular, to the phenomenon of "proletariat" or its idea, which the concept of "precariat" should, in my conviction (but not only mine), replace in the analysis of social divisions. In comparison to its successor, proletariat appears indeed almost as an emblem of the "specific" and "concrete"... How easy it was, when compared to precariat, to determine its content and limits... But the fluidity of composition is one of the features defining the phenomenon of precarity; one cannot get rid of that fluidity without making the notion of "precariat" analytically useless.

Are there any criteria making it possible to define this group in a clear way?

The semantic field of the notion of "precariat" embraces people affected by insecurity or fragility of their social position and beset with the fear of losing it (loss of job and/or possessions, bankruptcy, social demotion and rejection); such a definition applies to a fast-growing section of the so-called "middle-classes." What such a variegated assembly of individuals have in common, is the inadequacy of resources that would be necessary were they to cope unassisted with the individually striking and suffered misfortune: a task assigned to them in the same process of liquid-modern individualisation together with the counterfactual attribution of a capacity to fulfil it. The point is, however, that in precariat, as opposed to the proletariat as recorded in public memory, everybody suffers in solitude... The sufferings of "individuals by virtue of a decree" do not beget a vision of community of interests. Using the old vocabulary deriving from Hegel and adopted by Marx, one could say that precariat has meagre chances of passing from a modality of "class in itself" to that of a "class for itself" - that is, a tightly-knit political force. The mutual relations between precarians - regardless of whether they earn their living in an office a company, self-employment or in a factory - are governed by the principle of competition rather than solidarity.

Is the emergence of precariat linked to the economic crisis of 2008 or is it a much longer process? What is its origin?

Its history is much longer... The crash of the credit economy only revealed the reality concealed by the illusion of security, created by easily accessible credits, making possible a live on credit, which neoliberal ideology and practice promised to make everlasting. All of a sudden, it revealed how fragile were the foundations supporting, as assumed, the year-after-year rising prosperity over the thirty-year long consumerist orgy, justifying the trust that it will last forever. The “discovery” of the precarious position of the majority of “middle classes” and of the “proletariat” in the process of “embourgeoisement,” and indeed the increasing popularity of the notion of “precariat” were the consequences of sobering-up, dashing of hopes. It is tempting to say: a hangover following an unexpected end to an orgy...

Who can be considered the pioneer of deliberations on precarity?

It is, of course, Guy Standing (*The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*)¹ – although I personally think that the subtitle he or his publishers gave to this study was doubly misleading (no “class” and no “dangerous”). The understanding of the notion of precariat has also been widely extended in the works of Prof. Claus Offe.

What issues do, in your opinion, differentiate precariat most distinctly from proletariat? To what extent can one connect the two notions? And finally: is precariat a social class?

Well, I have serious doubts about that. I would prefer to call precariat a *social category*. The mere similarity of situation is not enough to transform an aggregate of individuals bearing similar characteristics into a “class” – that is, into an integrated group willing to pursue common interests as well as proceeding to integrate and coordinate actions stemming from that will. If workplaces of the times of “solid modernity” were, irrespective of the kind of products manufactured, also the factories of social solidarity, liquid-modern workplaces are, irrespective of their business objectives, the producers of mutual suspicion and competitiveness.

¹ Standing 2011.

You said in one of the interviews² that there are some processes which we perceive as decrees of fate while in truth they are the outcome of someone’s actions. What processes determine to the greatest extent the situation of precarians?

As it should have appeared from the prior reflections, the category of “precariat” emerged chiefly due to the deregulation of functions previously codified and administered or supervised by state bodies; in particular, by the deregulation of labour markets resulting in rendering the plight of employees dependent on the abilities and resources at the disposal of an individual, and, thus, stripping the closing of ranks and undertaking of collective actions of its pragmatic utility and appeal (having first deprived it of instrumental rationality). Deregulation and individualization divide and pulverize, instead of uniting and integrating. This last effect has been aided and abetted by a unilateral breaking by the employers of the previously reciprocal dependence of capital and labour. The newly acquired (won or imposed politically and supported technically) freedom to move capital results in the “secession of elites” who no longer depend on locally hired labour – and hence makes the extant tools of employee self-defence, such as uniting in trade unions, demanding collective bargaining agreements or resorting to strike, ineffective or downright suicidal.

The mass demonstrations of the Outraged or the Occupy Wall Street movement can be considered an act of courage and open protest. At the same time, one can assume, however, that there are issues which terrify both the protesters and those people who despite their outrage remain at home. What do representatives of this group fear most?

Such movements as the “Outraged” or “Occupy Wall Street” were an expression of a fervent search for new ways of gaining political influence on the state of affairs in the face of the abandonment or bankruptcy of those existing so far and the atrophy of hope for help, or at least some intention on the part of the existing community institutions to listen to the demands of the disabled groups. They expressed a deepening crisis of trust not in this or that political party, but in the totality of the political system inherited from our ancestors. I do not know who you mean by “people who despite their outrage remain at home,” but I do not know either what the cause which made the outraged take

² Żakowski 2005.

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SOCIETY WHICH IS MOVING RELENTLESSLY
TOWARDS THE APOCALYPSE, DOES NOT CARE
(DOES NOT WANT TO CARE OR IS NOT ABLE
TO) ABOUT THE SECURITY AND WELL-BEING OF
HUMAN COMMUNITY

to the streets could gain if those people did not stay at home. So far, the only place where the occupation of Wall Street went unnoticed was Wall Street itself... We may applaud “the acts of courage and open protest” of the demonstrators looking for new, more effective means of winning political influence, but we have to admit that such methods have not been found yet and the search is still far from being finished. We should also note, however, that all public demonstrations of “the movement of the outraged” drew to public squares people pulled by extremely diverse claims and grievances; that diversity was not abolished, but only suspended for the time needed to implement one demand on which all demonstrators agreed. Once this demand was reached, stark conflicts of interest, preferences or hierarchies of values, which have been concealed so far or not articulated or noticed enough, would surface, as it was in the case of Polish “Solidarity.”

What is, in your opinion, the future of precariat? Does it stand a chance to change our attitude towards work, the individual and what we consider society?

I can see a different possibility in the case of precariat: of cultivating social impotence when it comes to overcoming social ailments. I can think of a close connection between the emergence and growth in number and significance of the “precarious condition” and the transition from “gardeners’ utopia” to “hunters’ utopia”. The first type of utopia, guiding human intentions and actions, was the vision of “good society,” which similarly to the vision of an ideal garden, prompting the gardeners to work on bringing the imperfect reality of their cultivated plots closer to their vision of a perfect harmony as well as to accept responsibility for the success of the undertaking (“without us, chaos and decay”), directed attention towards the shape of society: both the contemporary shape, a faulty one - and the one just being designed, cleared of faults. The hunters’ utopia does not care about the welfare of prospective game on the hunting grounds; if a hunter, guided by the vision of his hunting bag filled to the brim, is free from concerns about its disastrous consequences (decimating the potential objects of future hunters’ hunting), likewise the “hunters’ utopia” does not care about the welfare of the whole of society and

its hospitality to human habitation - focusing instead attention on finding a relatively safe and comfortable, or at least tolerable, nice for oneself that would enable one to survive amidst a world irreparably condemned to stay inhospitable, if not downright hostile to human habitation. Something resembling the rush to buy family nuclear shelters in the not-so-distant times of panic caused by the apparently imminent outbreak of a nuclear war... Or hopes for personal survival being nowadays pinned on purchasing private insurance policies in a society which, moving relentlessly towards the apocalypse, does not care (does not want to care or is not able to) about the security and well-being of human community.

Prof. **Zygmunt Bauman** is a Polish sociologist, who has been living and working in Great Britain since 1971. He is a Professor of sociology at the University of Leeds (and since 1990 emeritus professor). Prof. Bauman is best known for his analyses of the links between modernity, postmodern societies and consumerism. He was awarded the “European Amalfi Prize” for Sociology and Social Sciences in 1992, the “Theodor W. Adorno Award” of the city of Frankfurt in 1998 and in 2010 jointly with Alain Touraine, the ‘Príncipe de Asturias Prize’ for Communication and the Humanities. The University of Leeds launched the Bauman Institute within its School of Sociology and Social Policy in Bauman’s honour in September 2010. Zygmunt Bauman is the author of over 60 books, including: *Socialism: The Active Utopia*, *Freedom*, *Postmodernity and its discontents* and *Liquid modernity*.

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photo by T. Lazar

A woman arrested during demonstration against police violence, *Harlem, New York*

EXERCISING FREEDOM

CAN WE EXERCISE FREEDOM LIKE WE EXERCISE OUR BODIES? DO PROTESTERS HAVE TO USE THEIR BODIES TO OCCUPY THE PUBLIC SPACE TO MAKE THEIR DEMANDS ENTER THE POLITICAL SPHERE? SHOULD WE SPEED UP REACHING RADICAL DEMOCRACY, AND SLOW DOWN WITH GENERALIZATIONS? - PROF. JUDITH BUTLER EXPLAINS HOW PRECARIETY AFFECTS PEOPLE'S LIVES, WHAT THE MEANING OF OCCUPY MOVEMENT IS, AND WHY IT „ENCOURAGED THE PUBLIC TO THINK SYSTEMATICALLY ABOUT THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM.“ OF COURSE, ALWAYS REMEMBERING THAT „GENDER REMAINS SURELY WITH US.“

INTERVIEW WITH **JUDITH BUTLER**
BY ELIZA KANIA

Precarization, precarity and precariousness – you use these terms in your publications. Can you highlight the main differences between them?

I am not sure that they are absolutely distinct. But it seems to me that precariousness is a general feature of embodied life, a dimension of our corporeality and sociality. And precarity is a way that precariousness is amplified or made more acute under certain social policies. So precarity is induced. And precaritization helps us think about the processes through which precarity is induced – those can be police actions, economic policies, governmental policies, or forms of state racism and militarization.

In your own words, people's lives are nowadays *dispensable* and *substitutable*. What are the causes of this situation?

It is probably important to rephrase this formulation, since what I think is true is that an increasing number of people „have become“ more dispensable and more substitutable, and this is what we mean when we say that precarity is become an ever greater reality in the lives of the vast majority of people. I think that we can certainly say that „neo-liberalism“ is responsible for this increasing precaritization of the population, but so, too, are security regimes, and new forms of state racism.

Is it the result of the changes that have occurred in recent years or is it a much longer process?

On the one hand, we have to ask how the development of capitalism has changed, what new features it now has, but also to ask how the operations of capitalism persist, especially the profit motive and class structure. One way that capitalism has changed is that labor is not merely commodified, but it is understood as dispensable. Once there are ways of making profit without labor, labor loses its value, which means that people lose their work. We used to think that labor was necessary to turn a profit, but now there are ways of gaming the market without regard for labor. We have seen the loss of worker's rights, so that the very basis of unions, of social democracy, and democratic socialism has been undermined.

It is also necessary to track how forms of state racism intersect with new forms of capitalism, and how both of these intersect with new security regimes.

Formulating an unambiguous definition of the precariat seems a challenging task. How would you define this group/class/category?

Perhaps this social phenomenon is just now coming into being; a group of people who are not only exploited workers, but those whose labor is now regarded as dispensable. It is one thing to demand a decent wage and good work conditions, and it is quite another to see that there is no job security, and that temporary forms of labor are becoming the norm. So it is that shift in labor conditions that demands that we begin to think the precariat apart from the proletariat. In my view, the precariat are not only those whose labor is considered dispensable, but also those who are targeted by war or who are living in regions that have been decimated by development.

So can we assume that the occupiers are precarians?

No, I think we have to attend to the different forms of public demonstration, since “Occupy” is one form, but it is not the norm. And though the precariat has become an important term in Spain and parts of Europe, I am not sure it translates, for instance, into what is happening in Turkey at this moment. So perhaps we should slow down a bit before we come up with those generalizations.

How would you describe the impact of neoliberal policies on people’s lives?

I very much appreciate how Lauren Berlant has described the lived experience of those living in precarity as a kind of “slow death.” It is not the same as being killed or destroyed by military means, but still the very possibility of subsistence is increasingly called into question. Other values have supervened, like efficiency and rationality, which means that the very rights and powers associated with living as a body, in need of shelter, food, and work, have been increasingly undermined. It is difficult, if not impossible, to live without a sense of future, not knowing where work is coming from, whether it will come at all. It is difficult, if not impossible, to feel that one’s labor is

without value, that it can be used and discarded at will.

At the same time that there is hopelessness, though, there is also rage, and this can be translated into political language and action, and we have seen that in some impressive ways as the precariat has gathered in Spain, in Greece, and in the mobilizations against the G-8.

So, what is the solution? Is it deliberative democracy or would you rather point out another idea?

Certainly, some dimensions of deliberative democracy are important, but I continue to think that “radical democracy” is a goal. It is not only important that people speak to one another and have ways of achieving consensus, but also that they are free to assemble, and that they find ways of actually living with one another, valuing interdependency and equality. I am not sure “deliberative” democracy can help us with these latter goals.

The display of popular and democratic will – that’s how you called the gatherings of protesters during your speech at NYC’s Washington Sq. Park. Are occupiers recapturing solidarity and political ethics or rather creating new political values and demands?

It all depends on the context. For instance, as I write these words, protestors are being dispersed by gas and police force in Taksim Square in Istanbul. Some of the protestors who arrived there are nationalists, and some of them are struggling to defend democracy, which includes the very rights of public assembly they are exercising. Some of them oppose the government’s alliance with efforts to privatize public space, including Taksim, which for many represents the democratic potential of the nation. So some are trying to save the nation, but others oppose both nationalism and neo-liberal forms of privatization. Those alliances can be quite complicated, and my sense is that they probably won’t last. Although police power does have a way of helping people to resist, despite their quite fundamental differences of political opinion.

A few words about the skeptics: some criticize the representatives of the occupy movement for excessive idealism and lack of clearly defined demands. Do the occupiers who are contesting „the system” have to have detailed list of demands, or is it rather a matter of a symbolic act of protest?

I am not sure that I accept the distinction between having demands and performing a symbolic act. Let us think for a moment about the “standing man” in Istanbul as well as the nightly crowds who stand motionless on public space. Motionless, and so non-violent, but also motionless, and so recalcitrant, even obdurate, producing a barrier against both the machines that would destroy the public space and produce private business. but also, importantly, a barrier against the police, making clear on which side force is being wielded. All this can be done without speech, and yet it makes a certain claim. We could say these are merely “symbolic” or we can say that there is a way that the body makes a demand, that bodies in their collectivity make demands, simply by laying claim to a public space, and refusing it privatization and its police control. I think perhaps we have to reconsider the “symbolic” forms in which political demands. In this instance, the body is the vector for that demand.

It also appears that what scares the adversaries of the occupiers and of precariat theorists most is the word “radical.” Can a shift from the apotheosis of the free market, capital and influence of corporations towards more “social” solutions and open democracy be considered revolutionary.

No doubt the word “radical” signifies very differently, depending on the political context. There is no global consensus on its signification. So let’s start with that. Under conditions in which social welfare and public goods are both being radically undermined by new forms of capitalism and new strategies of privatization, then surely insisting on social values and the public good can be part of a more radical agenda. It is interesting that issues such as these could be regarded rather mainstream (including the basic claims of social democracy), but now are considered radical. So perhaps we have to ask about

“ I AM NOT SURE THAT I ACCEPT THE DISTINCTION
BETWEEN HAVING DEMANDS
AND PERFORMING A SYMBOLIC ACT

those shifts in signification, why and how they matter, and how it might become possible to become part of another shift.

Is the image of protesters in the US mainstream media objective?

As much as the mainstream media discounted the political value of the occupy movement, they also clearly relied on the kinds of analyses that the occupiers offered. That means that the problem of wealth differentials and student debt has become more central to public discourse. Occupy encouraged the public to think systematically about the economic system, and though anti-capitalism will never become that popular in the US, it was made into a public issue, and that is surely something of a breakthrough in this context. What might be most important about the US movement, though, is that its ties to other struggles across the world, since it will be the global alliances that will make the difference.

Relations between the state (mainly police interventions) and occupiers seem to be presented quite equivocally. We can read the reports about brutal police actions, but on the other hand some media present the protesters as violent and destructive. What is the source of violence which increased around the Occupy Movement?

It is important to remember that the Occupy Movement began by calling public attention to increasing differentials of wealth between the rich (a group that only grows smaller and richer) and the poor (a group that only grows larger and poorer). The encampments were part of an effort to reclaim public space, but also to make certain kinds of public claims through exercising the freedom of assembly. Occupation of this kind involved living on the grounds where the right of freedom of assembly is being exercised. And this brought attention to the bodily preconditions of exercising liberal rights such as these. As a result, the groups living in public sometimes included those who were already homeless, exposing what it is to live without shelter, but also living exposed to police forces whose efforts to (a) reclaim public space as a government space and (b) patrol public space in the service of increased privatization.

Although in some few cases some groups allied with occupy were involved in violence against property, that was never, as far as I know, an explicit strategy of occupy itself. The vast majority of violent acts were committed by police acting under state orders and in the service of maintaining a certain relationship between state and market. So though resistance to police violence has become foregrounded (surely in Istanbul, recently, as we have seen), it would be a mistake to think that police violence is the object of contemporary resistance. One has to contextualize police power in relation to what is happening as market values supplant ideas of public good, and as the state seeks to monopolize public space, undermining the very spatial conditions for democracy.

So, what actions of the Occupy Wall Street Movement do you find most important?

What I find most important is the way that space is opened up to the public, which is effectively a way of demanding that such spaces be preserved, of fighting the privatization not only of public space but of public goods. That process of privatization is also what has produced massive inequalities of wealth, but also the situation of unpayable debt. That last is what we might understand as an economic way of killing the future.

While many researchers tend to write about rioted individuals, egos, human beings, suffering itself, etc. you have decided to emphasize corporality, and focus on physicality. What is the meaning of public gatherings of bodies in the case of precarity?

Well, I have always focused on corporeality, even in *Gender Trouble* some 23 years ago, so it is probably no surprise that this dimension of current demonstrations interests me. I think what is most important here is to see how assembled bodies act in tandem with social media and dominant media to produce an “event” that cannot happen without each of these dimensions of action. The condition of precarity induced by neo-liberalism and austerity policies bring into focus the basic needs of the human body for shelter, food, health care, and work, for freedom to move, and freedom of expression, importantly linked with both mobility and speech. So the bodies on the street are

themselves the subject and the aim of politicization, and that does not go away no matter how “virtual” the conflict becomes.

Continuing this topic: can you explain your concept of *politics of public bodies*?

I suppose I am trying to think about what it means that bodies have basic requirements, and that they suffer when those requirements are not met, and that those very bodies, understood as precarious, also act, enter into modes of solidarity, and become a part of a larger resistance struggle. Can we understand what those bodies suffer, actually or potentially, in relation to their assembled action? It seems important to understand the relation between suffering and resistance at the same time that we ask, what difference does it make when bodies act in concert, together. Do they form the kinds of networks of communication and support that they seek to realize in the broader world?

Some of recent polls showed that occupiers have made quite favorable impression on some part of the public. Can they turn this positive reception and voices of support into a real political force? Will the movement continue to resist or it will start to fade and finally disappear? What is your scenario for the occupiers’ future for the next couple of years?

It is surely up to the Occupy Movement to decide its future, so I myself have nothing to say on this matter. I do think that there are different actions that have called attention to the broader aims of the movement, including the engagement of some occupiers in helping those displaced or rendered homeless by Hurricane Sandy in NYC. I think it is clear that the major point about accelerating differentials in wealth has entered into

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AS LONG AS TRANSGENDER AND QUEER PEOPLE ARE STILL AT RISK ON THE STREET, THEN THOSE EXPOSED TO POLICE VIOLENCE ARE ALSO EXPOSED TO HATE CRIMES – SO GENDER REMAINS SURELY WITH US

public consciousness and even mainstream media, and that many of the huge movements we are seeing right now, including the one in Brazil, are clearly focused on the question of who is getting wealthy at the expense of whom. So as long as that question continues to be posed, and it becomes a rallying point for mobilization, then we can say that Occupy continues to be effective.

What do you mean by *exercising freedom*? Does it mean that we can strengthen and shape our sense of political subjectivity?

When people gather in the street to reclaim the street as public space, they are doing the very thing that they are fighting for. The aim of their politics is enacted at that moment. Similarly, when the undocumented assert rights of citizenship, without having those rights, they are exercising the right – not because they already “have” it, but because they are trying to get it. I understand these kinds of moments as plural performative political action.

Does the precariat have a gender?

As long as literacy and poverty disproportionately affect women, then the precariat will have a gender. As long as transgender and queer people are still at risk on the street, then those exposed to police violence are also exposed to hate crimes – so gender remains surely with us.

Prof. Judith Butler is an American post-structuralist philosopher. Her research fields are feminist philosophy, queer theory, political philosophy, and ethics. She is a Professor in the Rhetoric and Comparative Literature departments at the University of California, Berkeley, and is also the Hannah Arendt Professor of Philosophy at the European Graduate School. Butler is considered one of the most influential political and feminist theorists today. Butler is the author of *Gender Trouble*, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* and many other books and publications. She was awarded the Theodor W. Adorno Award in 2012 for her work on “Political theory, on moral philosophy and gender studies.” She is a member of the advisory board of Jewish Voice for Peace and a supporter of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel.



photo by T. Lazar

Brokers on Wall Street, protected by police in New York

JOIN TOGETHER, DEMAND **CHANGE** AND **RISK**

SCIENTISTS AND STUDENTS, PROFESSIONAL AND MANUAL WORKERS, OCCUPIERS AND THOSE WHO REMAIN AT HOME; PEOPLE WITH STABLE EMPLOYMENT AND THOSE WITHOUT, EVERYONE WHO IS STUDYING OR HAS BEEN CONFRONTED WITH THE CONCEPT OF THE PRECARIAT HAS PROBABLY HEARD ABOUT PROFESSOR GUY STANDING. THE THEORIST WHO LAUNCHED THIS NEW SOCIAL CATEGORY TALKS ABOUT CHANGES THAT HAVE OCCURRED IN THE LABOUR MARKET, ABOUT THE MEANING OF PUBLIC PROTESTS AND THE MAIN CHALLENGES WHICH PRECARIANS WILL HAVE TO FACE. HE ALSO EXPLAINS HIS CONVICTION THAT PRECARIANS ARE ABLE TO BECOME A SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL FORCE IN THE FUTURE. WHEN? "THE SOONER THE BETTER," HE ANSWERS.

INTERVIEW WITH **GUY STANDING**
BY ELIZA KANIA

Your widely discussed book *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*¹ seems to change our thinking about the labour market. But when we talk about this category, at least here in Poland, people very often ask „who exactly are the precarians”? Can we give a precise definition of this group?

The precariat consists of millions of people who are living and working in conditions of insecurity. But the most important defining features are that they lack an occupational identity or narrative to give themselves, and they are what I call “denizens,” not citizens, in that they lack the full range of rights of citizens. A denizen is somebody who may lack civil rights – not being able to use the law to provide himself or herself with protection; social rights – not being able to gain social benefits easily or securely; political rights – not being able to exercise politically or be represented politically; cultural rights – not being able to belong to organisations and institutions that allow the reproduction of one’s own culture; and economic rights – not being able to practise the type of work one is capable of doing and qualified to do.

What are the origins of the concept of precariat?

There are many origins, with the word being used in several countries. But I think the concept has become clearer in the past three years, and it was not defined clearly before that.

Does it mean that precarians are the children of the economic crisis of 2008, or can we look for their origins much earlier?

Certainly, the evolution of the precariat came with globalization and the systematic attempt by governments everywhere to create more flexible labour markets. Flexibility means eroding all the labour-based securities that had been strengthened during the 20th century. Many gave privileges to male workers, and therefore one should not be too wedded to those securities. However, if governments take them away, they leave millions exposed to deeper and deeper insecurity, as I show in the book and in a longer previous book,

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THE ESSENCE OF THE PRECARIAT POLITICALLY
IS REJECTION OF THE OLD POLITICAL AGENDAS
OF LEFT AND RIGHT

¹ Standing 2011.

*Work after Globalization.*² Of course, the crisis of 2008 resulted in the expansion of the precariat everywhere. Unemployment is only the tip of the iceberg. We have seen a huge growth of the number of people with wages or incomes that are painfully inadequate for survival in decency. We have seen homelessness sweeping across Europe and the United States. And, sadly, we will see worse to come.

Do you agree that one of the conclusions that could be drawn from reading your book is that nearly everyone is on the edge of precarity?

I think you are right in thinking that we are reaching a stage where a majority of people feel that they are on the edge of the precariat if they are not already in it. But something is beginning to happen. We are finding our Voice. As more people become aware of being in the precariat, they will search for others and join a movement to demand changes.

But who is mostly affected by the precarization of labour?

In my book, I say that every social group is affected. But clearly young people, many highly qualified, are at the forefront of what is happening. And, of course, women, migrants and ethnic minorities are making up a very large share of the precariat. Now, there are essentially three groups: first, there are those falling out of the old working class – the dispossessed proletariat, if you like. Second, there are the migrants – many Poles are in this position all over Europe. They have to keep their heads down as they seek some income. But many of those are very angry about what is happening and about the lives without roots that they have to endure. And third, there is the educated youth, who experience status frustration, being qualified but without opportunity to develop their capabilities.

What about the role of the modern state? How should governments improve the situation of people affected by the changes in the labor market? Or is it the time to go beyond our current understanding of the social role of the state and look for new solutions.

² Standing 2009.

As I have suggested above, we need to overhaul our social protection system. We must move away from means-testing and behaviour-testing conditionality for entitlement to benefits. We must overcome chronic uncertainty by enabling everybody to have basic security. Only then can the precariat adapt to the labour market flexibility that has been created. Without basic security, it is stupidly unfair to expect people to accept flexible labour relations that necessarily give labour market insecurity. We need a new social bargain. That is why finding a way to build basic income security is the defining challenge of our time.

The mass protests of the Outraged or Occupy Wall Street movement are a manifestation of their rebel and discontent. What are the main fears and demands of the protesters?

The Occupy movement, if that is the way to describe it, and the Indignados movement, and other mass protests since 2011 are very important manifestations. They are the protests of “primitive rebels,” in that those who have taken part know what they are against, but are not sure yet what they are in favour of instead. In the primitive rebel phase of a great transformation, people come to identify themselves as part of a common class. Having a sense of common identity is a crucial first phase of any transformation.

Precarians have their own concerns, but on the other hand, are they somehow dangerous?

To be dangerous is to be a threat to the established order. The essence of the precariat politically is rejection of the old political agendas of left and right. This is why social democrats are losing everywhere, and why neo-liberals are detested by the educated in the precariat. They are seeking a new progressive politics. Now we see only silly populism. But as I argue in my new book, that will give way to a new progressive politics.

Can you point out the most important values, or changes in thinking about the economy or the social sector caused by the emergence of the precariat?

At present, the precariat is almost at war with itself. That will not last for long. However, part of it is reacting to the insecurities and inequalities by listening to crazy voices of populists, who are tending

to be neo-fascist, in that they want a strong state against groups who are really the most vulnerable victims of globalisation and the austerity era, namely migrants, the Roma, ethnic minorities, the disabled and so on. However, the young educated who are finding themselves in the precariat are not attracted to that populism. They tend to reject old-style politics and the agendas of social democracy and christian democracy. They are not anti-political. But they want a new progressive politics, one that reduces the emphasis on competitiveness, economic growth in which the production of arms is treated as equal to the production of food and healthcare, and in which inequalities are treated as inevitable. We must find a progressive agenda, around what I call in the book “a politics of paradise’. We must not be afraid of being mildly utopian at this stage of the Global Transformation.

What, in your opinion, is the source of precariat’s potential strength?

The strength of the precariat will come from its weakness, its vulnerability. The precariat has been reduced to being “supplicants,” begging for pity. People do not take that state for very long. The anger and the energy are growing.

Referring to your words: are precarians more the subjects of liberation or the victims of the system?

The precariat is being treated as passive objects to be pitied or punished for failure. But actually we are not victims. The sense of agency, the sense of wanting a better and different type of life, these sentiments are growing. Every new class brings with it a sense of potential transformation. The precariat wants to work and wants to develop capabilities in a really ecological way. That is why I give so much emphasis to the need to reconceptualise what we mean by work.

Some criticize the precariat theory claiming that it is a somewhat elitist concept; that it concerns the people who are struggling with a sense of relative deprivation, but generally come from the “richest” parts of the world - such as Western Europe or the United States and they are part of the middle class. How would you refer to such comments?

The growth of the precariat is a global phenomenon. Anybody calling it elitist is really being elitist himself or herself. It must be

understood as a category wanted by multinational capitalism. It wants millions of people habituated to a life of unstable labour. I have just come back from India, where the precariat is also growing and is already vast in the cities across that vast country. Probably the biggest group of precarians is in China, as I describe in the book.

Should precarians first crystallize their demands to be able to cause any change in the socio-economic system which affects their position?

I am not sure I understand this question. I think the first demands should be for a radical transformation of our social protection systems, so that governments redistribute income by providing everybody with a basic income as a right. This is affordable, and would revive economic growth in an ecologically sustainable way, since it would promote and reward work that reproduces our local communities, our families and local production of basic goods and services.

Nevertheless, can we identify a part of the world which is particularly affected by the precarization of labour especially or is it an entirely global phenomenon?

It is global.

Can we consider precariat in class terms?

I think it is essential to describe the precariat in class terms. That is the only way by which we will become united enough to pose a threat to the neo-liberal state. The precariat has nothing to lose except its insecurity!

How do you relate to the protests that took place in Spain, the United States or Greece. Can we assume that they have similar roots?

The precariat is an evolving class, in that it includes millions who are insecure in their labour and living and who have no occupational identity. Above all, they are supplicants – reduced to being essentially beggars, in that they do not have secure rights. The state can take away rights with impunity. We all feel the erosion taking place, and it is taking place in the context of an increasingly

class-based market-driven system. The plutocracy and the elite are gaining more and more, while wages and benefits are being cut for the precariat and the under-class below it. So, yes, the protests that have been building since 2011 do have similar roots, the deep roots of insecurity, begging and loss of hope.

You support the idea of the Universal Basic Income. Some economists say that it is – simply - economically irrational. Is it possible to put this idea into practice, or is it a utopia?

It is not only possible to implement a universal, unconditional basic income. It is essential to do so, if we want to escape from the awful prospect of having millions more join an increasingly insecure precariat. We have implemented a basic income in rural areas in a part of India, and in a conference in Delhi last week we showed how it could replace expensive subsidies that go mainly to the Salariat and the Indian plutocracy. Where we have implemented it, the basic income has transformed the lives of Indian villagers. If it can be operationalised in India, of course it could be operationalised in every part of Europe. There is a Basic Income Initiative at the EU level, in which everybody is being encouraged to sign a petition. If we obtain one million signatures by January 2014, the EU must introduce pilots and research projects on basic income. Please sign that petition!

Some researchers compare the scale of potential changes caused by Implementation of the UBI to the abolition of slavery or the introduction of the universal right-to-vote. Do you think that if we decided to implement the idea of Universal Basic Income changes would be so far-reaching?

I believe the potential for change is real. However, we have to present it as a reform that is about reversing the trends of the past quarter of a century – away from means-testing, away from coercive workfare, away from punishing the unemployed, the disabled, the migrants and the minorities. We have to present a face of re-civilizing a society that has lost its moral bearings, lost its anchor of social solidarity. A basic income is not a panacea; it is part of a new progressive vision.

How do the mainstream media and authorities refer to the public protests

of precarians?

The media are gradually waking up to the precariat. The fact that they are beginning to understand it and use the word is indicative of a change.

Will precarians become a viable political force in the future?

Yes... and the sooner the better.

What is your recipe to improve the situation of precarians in the future?

We must remember that social progress only comes when enough people join together to demand change, and risk making a nuisance to those who resist.

Prof. Guy Standing is Professor of Development Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, co-founder of the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) and author of several books, including *Work After Globalization: Building Occupational Citizenship* (2009) and *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (2011). He is a famous advocate of the unconditional basic income and deliberative democracy. From 1975 to 2006 he worked at the International Labour Organization as a researcher on insecurity and flexibility of Labour. He is known for having created the Decent Work Index. Standing's best-known book, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* launched a global discussion on this subject.

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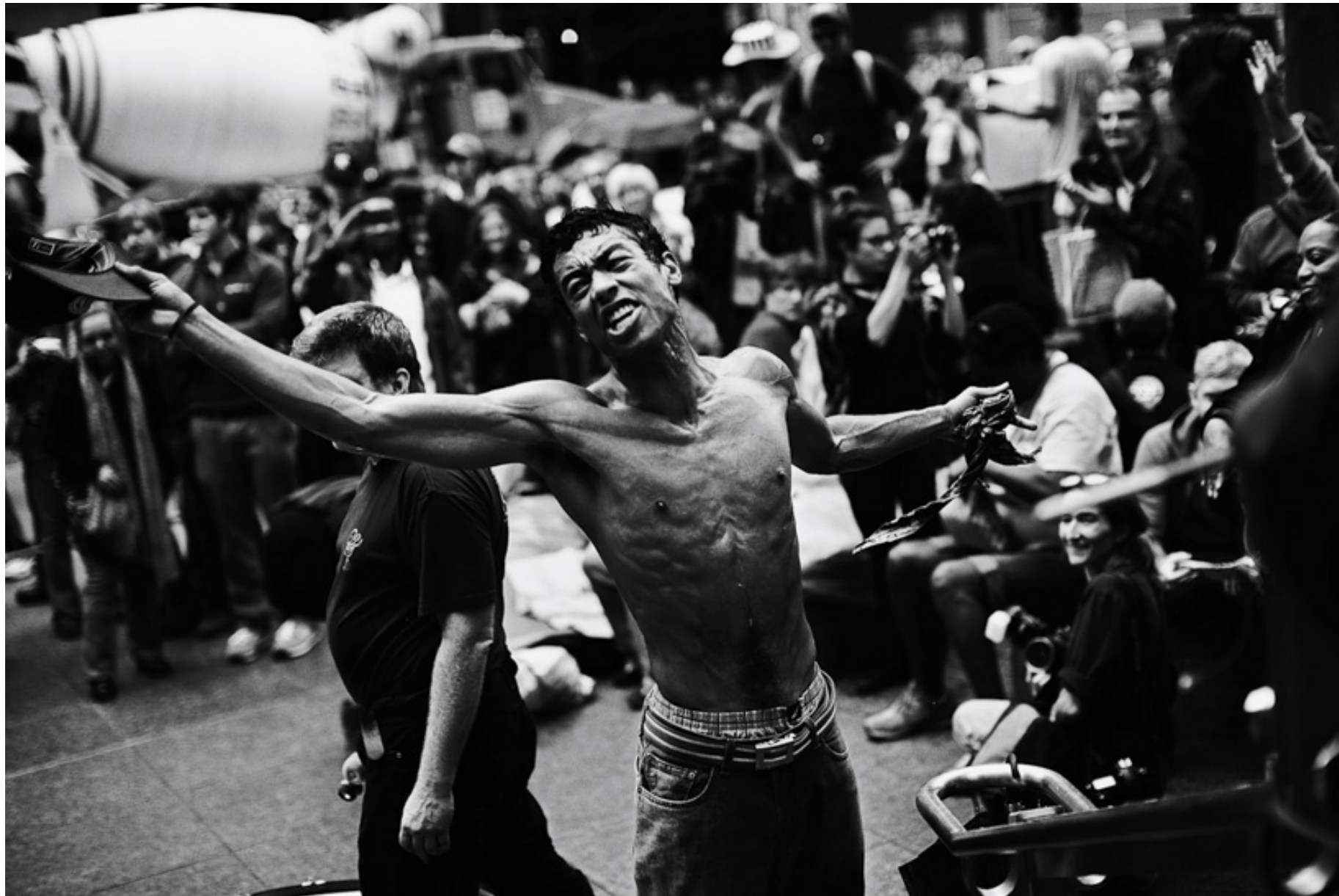


photo by T. Lazar

Man dancing in ecstasy, Zuccotti Park, New York

MULTITUDE

AS A SUBJECT OF DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTIONS SEVERAL CONCLUSIONS FROM THE PSYCHOANALYSIS OF A **COLLECTIVE VOICE**

JAN SOWA

TRANSLATED BY JOACHIM DYMITRI NAWROT

article abstract

THIS TEXT IS AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF MULTITUDE IN THE BACKGROUND OF THE POLITICAL EVENTS THAT HAVE STARTED IN 2011. IT ENCOMPASSES THE RIOTS, PROTESTS AND UPRISING IN THE MAGHREB, THE MIDDLE EAST, EUROPE (MADRID), AND THE UNITED STATES (OCCUPY WALL STREET MOVEMENT). THESE DEVELOPMENTS CHALLENGE THE ACCURACY OF THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PROCESS. IT ANALYZES THE GROUND FOR THESE PROTESTS WHICH BOIL DOWN TO ONE REQUEST: MORE DEMOCRACY.

keywords

ARAB SPRING, DEMOCRACY,
INDIGNADOS, MULTITUDE,
OCCUPY WALL STREET,
PSYCHOANALYSIS

I would like to devote this work to the political events of 2011. More specifically, to devote it to the unrests, protests and uprisings in the Maghreb in the Middle East, Madrid in Europe, and the USA (the Occupy Wall Street movement). Those events cast shadows over the accuracy of liberal concepts of democratisation processes. There are a number of problems needing to be outlined. First and foremost, those mass movements, unprecedented in their reach since 1968, make more or less the same postulates in Egypt, Libya, Syria, Spain, the United Kingdom and the USA; they all boil down to one demand: more democracy. Everyone, who – just like Francis Fukuyama or Fareed Zakaria – still thinks that the theory of modernisation is not yet dead and buried, should really take a closer look at this significant coincidence.

We do not have to do with a transfer or an imitation on the peripheries of something happening in the centre. When citizens of dictatorships struggle for a greater autonomy and emancipation and lesser plutocracy and corruption, citizens of democratic countries - or even citizens of the USA that considers itself an ideal democracy - demand the same. Furthermore, the Protest Movements turn against both the Right (as it is the case in the United Kingdom), the Left (in Spain), and Centre (in the USA). It is, vicariously, an argument in support of the claim that the traditional divisions tend to be vanishing in the contemporary, political reality (or, to put it more aptly, in the post-political reality). Despite what can be heard in the mainstream of dominant liberal discourse, it is not the societies of the centre that inspired the transformations on the peripheries, but its the exact opposite: it is the Tahrir Square in Cairo that can be considered as a synecdoche of the “history’s awakening” - a term used by Alain Badiou to describe the events happening in 2011.¹ Protesters from the Occupy Movement of Plaza del Sol in Madrid, or Liberty Plaza in New York, used to remark frequently of an inspiration, that they considered protest in Egypt and Tunisia to be. For them, these became a source of hope and faith in that a fundamental change of political reality is indeed possible. This situation is a symptom of deep and thorough transformation of global, socio-political dynamics, upon which I shall elaborate further in the conclusion of this work.

Political events of the past year provide very valuable material for an anthropological analysis of democracy. We, however, need to avoid an individualistic perspective that suggests seeking psychological, cultural or ethical characteristic of democratic citizenship. I do not, therefore, plan to consider traits of a “man of democracy” as such, I shall rather concentrate

¹ Badiou 2011.

on the people - males and females alike - who constitute the democracy. The change from singular to plural denotes a deep alteration of both the theoretical and political point of view. Instead of an individualistic-liberal perspective, which has no ability to transcend the perspective of cultural identity, it introduces a collective and communist point of view. I am fully aware of that the notion of “communism” does not carry positive connotations, this being the case in particular when discussing democracy. Let me thus add promptly: I use this term as defined by Hardt and Negri, who refer to “the common” as the essence of communism: “what is common, is for communism what private is for capitalism, and what state-owned is for socialism.”² Just in order to capture what is common, we need to step outside the individualistic perspective. The question about what is common, cannot be correctly posed by a male or a female of democracy, but by both males and females alike, or by the multitude.

Regrettably, multitude as such constitutes a problem. In his book “A Grammar of the Multitude,” Paolo Virno claims the theoretical poverty, which is encompassed by the notion of “multitude” is a direct result of his own failure in the challenge against another notion around which, over the course of years, has become surrounded by a gigantic, political discourse - the figure of “the people.” As a direct result of that failure the contemporary political philosophy turned towards Hobbes and Locke, rather than Spinoza.³ The task that now stands ahead of us includes transcending the political discourse, related to the notion of the people, therefore with the notion of representative democracy or, to be more precise, the parliamentarism. This is, I believe, the most important and ultimate aim strived for by every male and female demanding the democratisation of systems perceived as “democratic.”

According to Virno, the absence of a developed theory of multitude, that would capture the political consequences of its existence and functioning, also opens up tremendous possibilities. We are somehow back in the 17th century, and have to work out a system of notions that will allow us to invent a system different from the parliamentary democracy as much, as the system of parliamentary democracy was different from the monarchy.⁴ What a fabulous task this is! At the same time, however, so much work needs to be done! To reach the goal, we have to employ all tools we have at our disposal, but above all else, the most effective means of intellectual struggle: interception (as defined by Debord), poaching

(as defined by de Certeau) and profanation (as defined by Giorgio Agamben). From those I shall draw in the latter parts of the work. First and foremost, however, we need to keep a cautious eye on what is happening in front of our eyes and what is, I believe, a sign and a formative stage of a new order.

The departure point for those short considerations of the multitude as a subject of a democratic revolution is, to me, what I have mentioned not so long ago: the Arab Spring - a pan-Arab uprising that, over the span of a few months, led to a thoroughgoing reconfiguration of a political order of North Africa and the Middle East. I would like to stress immediately that I am no political scientist or, even less, a specialist in the field of the Arab world or Islam. I am not interested, however, in a political analysis of the dynamics between respective groups engaged in these struggles, and sociological enquiries into the causative factors of the conflict. I am but interested in the multitudinous aspect of the Arab Spring, and in allocating this aspect within the wider perspective of global, democratic transformations. I will allow myself here, however, to make a socio-political remark. What has happened - and still happens - in the Middle East, fundamentally contradicts most of sociological, anthropological and politological diagnoses of both the situations happening in these very regions, and the cultures of those regions. According to countless observers it is, allegedly, completely incompatible with the democracy and modernity, what is claimed to constitute the main reason for the much-publicised clash of civilisations.⁵ The British anthropologist Ernst Gellner voiced, as one of the very few, a vastly different opinion - and for that very reason, an opinion worthy of being recalled in the current context. In an 1981 issue of the “Muslim World,” he wrote: “according to numerous, straightforward criteria - the universalism, the attachment to the printed word, spiritual egalitarianism, equal contribution of all of followers into the sacred community, rational systematisation of social life - Islam is, amongst the three Western monotheistic religions, the closest to modernity [stressed by J.S.]”⁶ Therefore, democratic rebellions in North Africa and the Middle East might not actually be as unexpected, as they might initially appear to be, based on the CNN footage - or books by Huntington; and both males and females of Islam can become the males and females of democracy. Just as us, just as all males and all females.

Where, however, is the multitude that constitutes the core of our considerations? Right in front of our eyes, even though it might be hard

² Hardt, Negri 2009.

³ Virno 2004.

⁴ Virno 2004.

⁵ Huntington 2003.

⁶ Gellner 1981.

to notice. In order for us to notice it, we need, above all else, to change our viewpoint and, rather than seeing a number of national movements, we need to start seeing a Pan-Arab movement - a movement that is currently transforming the whole region. So it is not the people and nations of Egypt, Libya or Syria who have fought – and are still fighting – their rulers, but rather a Pan-Arab multitude seeking autonomy and emancipation. It can be clearly seen if we take look at the influences, mutual inspirations and transfers of practical knowledge, related to e.g. avoiding the police roadblocks, or gearing up against tear gas - between the activist groups of multifarious countries. Undeniably, the rebellions in different countries of North Africa and the Middle East were also conjoined through the mutuality of endeavours and standards of perfection and excellence. There is no need for a wide-range, empirical research done to prove this. Suffice to compare the demands painted down on the protest banners and websites (fighting the corruption, free and fair elections, freeing political prisoners etc.), which are all similar across the countries discussed. The media of ideological communication and discussion were the websites, with social media such as Facebook and Twitter playing a particularly important role. Primarily for this very reason, the events have been even reported as “The Twitter revolution;” this notion is not wholly appropriate, however, as it overestimates the role played by the media - who acted just and only as “the media,” so: as a middleman, an intermediary, rather than an originator or the source of ideas and concepts.



IN ACCORDANCE WITH A LOGICAL PRINCIPLE
THAT ONLY ONE COUNTER-ARGUMENT IS
NEEDED TO RENDER A GENERAL THEOREM NULL
AND VOID, THE EXAMPLES CITED SHOW THAT
WE CANNOT CONSIDER THE ARAB SPRING TO
BE A “MIDDLE-CLASS REVOLUTION”

Therefore the multitude is not the human beings in the streets of Cairo, Bengazi or Tunis, but rather a whole net of females and males engaged in the process of an autonomic communication and organisation. Unlike the mob, but just like the people, the multitude cannot be observed directly. (Possibly with an exception of the direct multitude, on which I shall elaborate in a while.) The multitude is visible only through the direct consequences of its actions. Its existence and organisation of has always – what needs to be stressed – had an autonomic character; this can be directly observed through an example of the Arab Spring. It is not a result of an initiative taken externally, e.g. by the USA and the CIA supporting

the opposition, or the European Union inciting local dissidents. The best example of that is the general feeling of unexpectedness and consternation that the Arab Spring has brought upon. The reason for such reaction is, amongst others, the fact that no centre of authority has ever done much to provoke the events of the last year. Those events were a result of just and only just the autonomic organisation of the Arabic multitude that mobilised itself, quite importantly, in accordance with the universal values: such as dignity, equality, justice, fight with poverty, etc. – and not particular issues of religious or ethnic nature. This needs to be stressed, due to the role played by faith and ethnicity in the Arab world, as perceived by the Westerners.

Another deeply multitudinous feature of the events of the Arab Spring is their class structure. Undoubtedly, the political engagement of the middle class played a key role in the Arab Spring. We cannot, however, say that it was a “bourgeois revolution.” There is not enough space here to present a meticulous analysis of that matter, but I would like to bring up two facts of high importance. Muhammad Buazizi, who’s *auto-da-fé* caused riots in Tunisia in December 2010, had in no way belonged to the bourgeoisie, and did in no way aspire to become a part of it. He had rather belonged to the cursed people of the land in their most obvious form: he longed for his work to ensure his own survival, and the survival of his family. He self-immolated as he has lost all hope that even so little would be possible. On a wholly different note: in January 2011, it would not have been possible to recapture the Tahrir Square back from the hands of the police and the army, if not for the mass participation of the impoverished from the Imbaba district of Western Cairo. That is where individuals became strongly mobilised against the Mubarak regime, and this is the very reason for the main battle of the Egypt Spring to take place on the Qasr El Nil Bridge - one that connects the western frontiers of the city with the city centre (most of the population of Cairo, including the middle class in particular, lives on the Tahrir Square side of the Nile river, but most of the protesters reached the Square from the western side, approaching it from the impoverished Imbaba district). Those two examples are not enough to thoroughly describe the class structure of Arab uprisings. It is also not my ambition to do this. In accordance with a logical principle that only one counter-argument is needed to render a general theorem null and void, the examples cited show that we cannot consider the Arab Spring to be a “middle-class revolution.” The diversity of groups and individuals engaged does not fit in this simplified notion derived directly from the theory of stratification.

In order to somewhat organise the considerations regarding multitude and the Arab Spring, I would like to attempt a final profanation and use the notions of Alain Badiou to describe the forms of multitude we have had to do with in North Africa and Middle East (it is also an unforgivable profanation at that, but Alan Badiou most certainly will never find out that his own notion has been recontextualised in order to expand upon the notions of his main opponent, Antony Negri). In “Le Reveil de l’histoire,” dedicated to the issue of Arab Spring, Badiou outlines three types of riots: immediate, latent and historical.⁷

The first one is an immediate reaction of an infuriated mob to an affront it has suffered. This was the case, for example, in 2005, on the suburbs of Paris. The latent riots are like a tinderbox that needs just a single spark to cause a gigantic fire, akin to a violent clash between the football fans and police following a particularly important football match. The most important, and most interesting, are the historical riots. They are the consequence of the immediate riots that become an Event (in the sense given to this term by Badiou, a moment of creation a new, previously non-existent opportunity). In order for this to happen, 3 elements are required: intensification (a model of an intense life of a revolutionist devoted to his struggle becomes the main model of subjectivity), concentration (a group of people fighting in the streets expresses the common will), and localisation (a precise place controlled by the movement becomes a space where a new, proposed order takes shape).⁸ It might be, maybe, possible to similarly classify the multitudes striving for radical, socio-political changes, and to speak of “immediate,” “latent” and “historical” multitude. Such categories would have to be, however, applied to cases differing from the ones mentioned by Badiou. The term “hidden multitude” could be applied, for example, to the Internet activists and hacking groups that only come to spotlight in moments they consider to be of the utmost importance (e.g. a revenge for the persecution of WikiLeaks). The process of transferral from the immediate multitude to the historical multitude would also, quite possibly, be different from the one employed in the case of riots. The main role would be played by expanding the class structure, so that it could encompass a variety of social groups. This is what happened in Poland of the 1980.⁹

What followed the events of Arab Spring is no less unexpected than the Arab Spring itself. 2011 might easily be hailed as “the year of multitude.” The main line of the development of riots and protests leads from the Tahrir Square, through Madrid’s Puerta del Sol Square, the streets

of London, up to the financial districts of New York’s Manhattan. The role that has been played by Arab Spring in this whole process is not only noticed by sociologist, political scientists or journalists, but also reaffirmed by activists from various parts of the world. “Tunisia is our university,” say Anna Curcio and Gigi Roggero, Italian philosophers and activists with links to UniNomade and Edu-factory,¹⁰ “Tahrir gave us hope,” say the Occupiers of New York’s Liberty Plaza.¹¹

I shall revert to the declarations stated above in due time. For the moment being, however, I would like to suggest a short, ethnographic journey into the world of the Occupy Wall Street Movement. Of particular interest to me will be not the political matter of the Movement as such, but its organisational form. The Movement was built around an ultra-democratic practice of the people’s assemblies, open meetings offering an opportunity for virtually every male and female to speak up, be listened to, and actively participate in decision-making. It is, to put it concisely, a type of a direct democracy that has been known to the mankind since the Ancient Ages (or even, as suggested by Martin Bernal - the author of “Black Athena,” since times preceding the Ancient Greece).¹² This type of gatherings could be seen as a certain attempt of immediate multitude to manifest itself, and thus it is worth, I believe, to have a closer look at the organisational practice of those gatherings.

Someone who participates in a people’s assembly for the first time, is bound to immediately notice, above anything else, the ongoing communication of the multitude with itself, that takes places in the course of such an assembly. It happens through a range of simple gestures that allow every male and female to express fundamental positions and emotions, such as agreement, disagreement, precariousness, impatience, etc.¹³ This system of gestures is not exclusively employed by the gatherings within the Occupy movement, and is also being used during the meetings of the most diverse types of groups and critical and revolutionary organisations: antiglobalists, anarchists, union activists etc. The system undergoes certain adjustments in each case, but the principal gestures are commonly accepted and widely understood.

There are straightforward and precise rules governing the way that the topics being put up for discussion are selected, but also governing

7 Badiou 2011.

8 Badiou 2011.

9 Majmurek, Mikurda, Sowa 2011.

10 Curcio, Roggero 2011.

11 Occupied Wall Street 2011.

12 Bernal 2006.

13 Brief description and explanation, see: L. Mason, General Assembly Hand Gestures, <http://vimeo.com/30440885>.

who is given an opportunity to speak, or how the minor workgroups are constructed - groups that, following the gathering, continue to work on issues they have been designated with. Further to this, an interesting solution has been found to the problem of gridlocks, that happen when the discussion in a group too large in size becomes too slow and complicated, due to the complexity of the subject discussed - or due to the emotional factor of such a discussion. Should such situation arise, the gatherings are being split into smaller groups, each comprised of a few individuals, who sit besides each other. In those smaller groups the matter is discussed over the time of roughly 10 minutes. Every male and every female can voice his or her respective concerns, shed some light on uncertainties, and confront his or her own views with the views of others. After such time-out, the main gathering is resumed, and the matters previously discussed are voted on. Many commentators, both females and males, voiced their concerns about the deliberative conception of democracy, as proposed by Jürgen Habermas,¹⁴ that the aforementioned practice is very akin to it. Not ruling out on whether those remarks are justified or not - according to my own, personal experience, the practice described is frequently an effective way out of a gridlock.¹⁵

A particularly interesting technique employed during some of the people's assemblies is the so-called "human microphone". Individuals in close proximity to someone who is giving a speech repeat, in a coordinated manner, every word that he or she says, to those who are located further away from the speaking individual.¹⁶ Employment of the "human microphone" is primarily motivated by the prohibition of usage of public address systems during gatherings. This has been practiced as far as the 1999 WTO Conference Protest in Seattle, as well as during the deliberations of people's assemblies in various cities of the USA in 2011 and 2012. Even though the technique might appear to be counter-productive as it prolongs the duration of every speech given, in reality it turns out to be a tool of many benefits. Every participant is fully aware that the "human microphone" is somewhat slow in operation, but that very aspect disciplines the speakers, and gives the others a reason to discipline those who talk too much and for too long.

¹⁴ Benhabib, Cornell 1987.

¹⁵ As a side note, it can be added that the empirical research conducted on the process of deliberation in parliamentary democracies confirm effectiveness of dialogue and exchanging arguments as a way to change somebody else's point of view, but also to change our own points of view. See: Steiner, Bächtiger, et al. 2004.

¹⁶ Illustration of this practice: see Occupy Wall St- Human Microphone, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoJBZxOh4bY>.

“ THE PEOPLE CONSTITUTE A GROUPING WRITTEN INTO THE LOGIC OF PARLIAMENTARISM, THEREFORE: INTO THE LOGIC OF REPRESENTATION; THE MULTITUDE HOWEVER REMAINS A COLLECTIVE SUBJECT OF DEMOCRACY THAT REJECTS THE IDEA OF REPRESENTATION

I see as very tempting an attempt to outline a psychoanalytic interpretation of the human microphone. The voice is, for psychoanalysis - principally Lacanian psychoanalysis - an object of a particular type: a part-object invoking the phantasmatic fullness of pre-phallic pleasure which has not yet been mediated by the Name-of-the-non-Father.¹⁷ According to the Slovenian psychoanalyst Mladen Dolar, the notion of the voice as a part-object, non-reductive residuum came to be possible largely due to the phonological reduction of the voice as the substance of language, as done by de Saussure.¹⁸ This statement can be easily converted to the language of political analysis. What the Occupy Wall Street Protesters, as well as people protesting in other parts of America and Europe are against, is the reduction of the voice in the political sense - thus an opportunity to have a proportional, but at the same time actual influence on how the contemporary world is being shaped; an opportunity to have a voice in the purely electoral sense. This is the sense of the "real democracy," that Hardt and Negri wrote about in an article published in "Foreign Affairs."¹⁹ The voice of both females and males, repeated by the human microphone, is a voice incarnated in a collective body of multitude; a voice that cannot be reduced to a parliamentary abstraction; a voice that constitutes a non-representative residue. The logic of political representation, that parliamentarism relies on, directly corresponds with the logic of differential structural analysis of the language - as both are founded on the absence and substitution. Voice - in the Lacanian sense, but also in the meaning employed by the "real democracy," is an incarnation of the presence that cannot be substituted, it therefore excludes all forms of representation.

Herein we reach the fundamental difference between the "people" and "multitude" as subjects of two radically different political systems. The people constitute a grouping written into the logic of parliamentarism, therefore: into the logic of representation; the multitude however remains

¹⁷ I use a neologism of this kind in order to maintain the two meanings of the Lacanian "Nom du pere" - "Name of the father" and "Prohibition of the Father" (French "non" being a homophone of "nom").

¹⁸ Dolar 1996

¹⁹ Hardt, Negri 2011.

a collective subject of democracy that rejects the idea of representation. The people are represented, but the multitude “presents itself,” or in other words: “is present.” The Polish language allows for an easier expression of the differences discussed than French or English, as it has separate words for similar, but slightly different verbs: one for the Latin-derived “represent,” and another for “present,”²⁰ which is of Slavic origin. They are not interchangeable, however, and should not be treated as such as it would be an error. “Presentation” does not have the prefix “re”- that indicates reoccurrence, absence and substitution that the “representation” boils down to (only what is absent can be represented, whereas the presence rules out representation). In the political sense the people can only give voice when the multitude speaks. The ambiguity of the term “to give voice” illustrates all the problems related to the parliamentary representation: “giving”- thus “transferring from one party to another and discarding something,” but also “giving voice,” akin to the “speak” command used with regards to a dog, a living being considered to be inferior to humans (whether rightly so, it is an entirely different matter; what is important here, however, is the pejorative connotation of “giving voice”).

The psychoanalytic exploration allows to capture the broader nature of the whole process: it is not difficult to point out that the people are the “figure of castration:” the people are comprised of both males and females who gained access to the political life, by accepting their own impotency and agreeing with that the officially established authorities are the only actual authorities, and with that the people cannot perform government duties as a whole, but only to give permission to be governed by those who present themselves as government candidates. We are immediately reaching, however, a fundamental problem that emerges when we attempt a psychoanalytical approach to multitude, particularly apparent when we operate within the boundaries of conceptual schema, as defined by Lacan, and as used by me - namely: how to devise a subject that locates itself outside castration or even without castration at all? Such things appear to be, immediately, not only impossible, but also internally contradictory: the subject is always the subject of desire and, as such, is the product of the process of castration giving access to the order of desires. There is no subject without castration. It thus appears that in psychoanalytical perspective the multitude, just like any other subject, cannot constitute itself as a subject if it does not agree for a castration. Although in Seminar XI on four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis Lacan speaks on “the subject of the drive” and recalls the “acephalic subject, the subject without

the subject-matter, bone, structure, trace,”²¹ he immediately expands, however, upon that it is a mere metaphor and that there is no subject in the adequate meaning of the word, other than the castrated subject of desire. We stand, therefore, ahead of an obstacle that is hard to overcome. The situation is not hopeless, however - or so I think.

Firstly, we can redefine the unconscious. In the Lacanian system of notions, the requirement of castration stems directly from an alleged nature of the subconsciousness, and, more precisely, from the fact that the subconsciousness is just as structured as the language is. Each and every language constitutes itself through multiple divisions and separations - between the signifying and signified, between the sign and its designatum, between the language and the speech. The subject cannot be simply present in such an order. Let us add: just like a regular citizen who, in a parliamentary system, cannot simply perform government duties. In order to become recognised, the subject also has to be broken, divided and crossed-through, according to Lacan. Just like - continuing this inspiring analogy - a female citizen needs to be represented by a female parliamentary representative. The definition of unconscious proposed by Lacan is not the only one possible - and even Lacan himself, in order to create his own, theoretical system, needs to redefine what the “unconscious” used to mean in the times long past. Lacan speaks about it openly in the formative paragraphs of the “XI Seminar,” when comparing his own definition of unconscious with the Freudian unconscious that is “a gap” (*une béance*).²²

We know a similar redefinition that allowed for another discourse to be created - schizoanalysis. It proposes to define the unconscious not in the image of a language, but in the image of a machine.²³ The consequences are fundamental, as the machine, unlike the language, does not have to represent and communicate anything, but - first and foremost - it needs to work, perform a certain, assigned task; perform some kind of manipulation on reality; in the context of schizoanalysis as such, the principle is the modification of fluxes. Other implications are well-known: the schizoanalytical desire is not founded on the absence, but on the production - therefore on the multiplication; there is no castration as the condition of subjectivity, as there is no paternal exception (Oedipus), there is not even one, single Oedipus but thousands of Oedipuses amongst whom the family triangle is just one of the elements misjudged by the

20 Alternatively translated as “to stand for” (Editor’s note-JVdB)

21 Lacan 1973.

22 Lacan 1973.

23 Deleuze, Guattari 1972.

psychoanalytical discourse. This type of ontology of unconscious is more strongly favouring the expression of multitude that can be described as a body-with-no-organs-of-government. Schizoanalysis also allows us to express the relation between multitude-as-such, and immediate multitudes that fight for the control over streets of Egypt, Spain or the United States. The former would be, in Deleuzian terms, a “virtual multitude,” the

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THE PEOPLE ARE THE MALE (JUST LIKE THE
PARLIAMENT), AND THE MULTITUDE IS
THE FEMALE (JUST LIKE AN OCCUPATION)

latter - the “actual multitude.”

This particular way of redefinition of the unconscious leads us outside the field of psychoanalytics - or so it may seem. It might also be asserted that schizoanalysis is just a new, different form of psychoanalysis, as it maintains a category fundamental for psychoanalysis: the notion of the unconscious. I find this dilemma to be of little relevance, and, rather than putting it up for consideration, I would rather suggest yet another attempt at a political application of Lacanian psychoanalysis, that would allow us to capture the multitude as a subject remaining outside of castration, while, at the same time, being a subject that can be described using a psychoanalytical language. In order to do this, we need to turn towards Lacan's works from the 1970s, and give particular attention to the “Seminar XX: Encore,” where Lacan introduces a fundamental distinction between the male subject and a female subject. The male, as a subject, is fully constituted through castration and its rule of exception - phallic belief of every male subject in that there is a certain X that has an access to a full pleasure, impossible to be achieved by the aforementioned subject. It translates well into the principles of operation of parliamentary democracy: as male and female citizens we all are excluded from actively performing governmental duties, with the exception of a certain X - our elected representative, who can enjoy the privileges associated with the above-mentioned. Furthermore, according to the logic of castration, we can only become a crossed-through subject of parliamentarism through accepting both the exclusion, and the exception to it. But, as Lacan says, there is the female, too. The female side (*côté*) of subjectivity is different. As a subject, the female also defines herself through the phallic function, but “is not whole (*pas-toute*) within the phallic function.”²⁴ There is one more thing, some kind of a female pleasure that resides outside the phallic function, and is thus not constituted through

castration. Consequently, this is the fundamental difference between the gender construction, and this scheme could be employed to describe, using the language of psychoanalytics, the difference between the people and the multitude as different types of subjectivity. The people are the male (just like the parliament), and the multitude is the female (just like an occupation). It is worth noting, in this context, that the arguments against the multitude participating in democracy closely resemble the arguments formerly used against women's suffrage - one can hear that the multitude, just like a woman - is too emotional, not sufficiently rational, too impulsive and too unstable to give her access to an authority of any kind.

Individuals who remember Lacan's twentieth seminar might have noticed a fundamental problem - the female pleasure, while remaining outside the castration, also locates itself outside a discourse of any kind, nothing can be said about that pleasure, and the pleasure itself cannot say anything about itself. It is a fundamental, political problem. But yet, Lacan says, there is a sphere of human experience where the female pleasure is achievable, even if there remains an experience that cannot be communicated - it is the mystic.²⁵ I would like to stress here that I am not a great believer in a post-secular thought, in particular as a citizen of the Third Polish Republic, a country that still has not undergone a complete secularisation, and for that very reason I have an issue with introducing both the religion and the religious language to politics. This notwithstanding, I believe it is worth mentioning what Slavoj Žižek said, while addressing New York's Liberty Plaza Occupy Wall Street Protesters in October 2011. According to him, the Holy Spirit was directly present amongst the Occupy Wall Street Protesters, and this was a presence non-intermediated by the Church. The definition of Holy Spirit suggested by Žižek works really well in the context I am interested in here: “Egalitarian community of believers who are linked by love for each other and who only have their own freedom and responsibility to do.”²⁶ It is, I would say, a very nice definition of multitude. It is hard to understand why Žižek and Badiou argue so heavily with Negri on all those conferences on communism, considering that Hardt's and Negri's “Commonwealth” culminates in something reminiscent of an anthem for love, which is ever so important for both Badiou and Žižek. It could be thought that such an introduction of terms and religious figures to a progressive, political discourse is a paradoxical evidence for the triumph of postmodernism. Personally, I do not think of this as a rightful interpretation. The post-secular thought could be, I think, derived from the Feuerbachian-Durkheimian

24 Lacan 1975.

25 Lacan 1975.

26 For the full movie of Slavoj Žižek's speech, see: Žižek 10-09-2011.

ascertainment - most certainly materialistic, or even positivistic - that the religion is a false consciousness, through which humanity in an alienated manner worships its own capability to create a community. It would not be difficult to prove, for example, that one of the main theses of Žižek's "Fragile Absolute," i.e. his interpretation of the figure of the Holy Spirit, repeats almost verbatim what Durkheim said almost 100 years ago in "Elementary Forms of Religious Life."

Let us go back to the field of politics and the issue of representation that I consider to be of crucial importance. The necessity for representation and exclusion of the people from governing directly has been formulated *expressis verbis* by the Founding Fathers in the first, modern parliamentary democracy. As Madison said: "The republic is different from democracy because its government is placed in the hands of delegates, and, as a result of this, it can be extended over a larger area. [The republic is characterised by] the total exclusion of the people, in their collective form, from any share in the work of government."²⁷ Using another conceptual system, we could say that the multitude cannot find itself within the parliamentary system, as it is the constituting power that does not want to constitute any constituted authorities, but to merely govern on its own, in a direct and autonomous manner. Consequently, directly at the heart of battles that took place throughout the whole 2011, there is the issue of representation. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri both suggest in "Declaration" that capitalism created four types (or modes) of subjectivity that allow capitalism to maintain its status quo, and to continue accumulation: the indebted, the mediatized, the securitized, and the represented. They also claim that the figure of the represented [subject] gathers together the figures of the indebted, the mediatized and the securitized, presenting the results of their subordination and degradation in a condensed form."²⁸ What we encounter here, then, is both the end and goal of the representation, as we could say by referring to the Derrida's use of the ambiguous French term "fin," derived from the work "Les Fins de l'Homme."²⁹ The mass rebellions against the regimes considered to be democratic reveal their truth, almost universally forgotten and altogether removed from the public debate: the goal of the political representation is not at all to affirm the power of the people, or to create the people's political subjectivity, understood as the possibility of conducting autonomous operations - but rather, as Madison says, "total exclusion of the people, in their collective capacity, from any

share in the government."³⁰ This exclusion, it needs to be said clearly, is very functional for capital - as it gives the capital an opportunity to influence the political process in a manner inconceivable in the real democracy (through various means: financing political campaigns, controlling the media and using them to create an atmosphere benefitting the actions of the capital, directly corrupting politicians, etc.). In this sense the parliamentarism is a political logic of what the postmodernism is a cultural logic - the late capitalism, according to Jameson.³¹ This association should not come as surprising at all. In the postmodern literature we find a ceaseless affirmation of the omnipresent mediation, representation, simulation, and unlimited semiosis, where signs refer to other signs only and never to [real] things, just like election promises refer to other promises only, and never to the real change. There are also other similarities of high importance: the role of the media in parliamentary mechanisms and postmodern culture, or a very cynical relationship between the power and the meaning.

It is entirely understandable to have fully legitimate doubts and recognise parliamentarism as a modern, rather than a postmodern system. I would like to remark, however, that I am here merely following the definition of postmodernism as suggested by Sloterdijk, Rancière or Giddens - who all stand against strong division into modernism and postmodernism, treating them both as essentially one and the same historical epoch,³² or "episteme" to refer, somewhat metaphorically, to the Foucauldian term. The relationship between the modernity and postmodernity, along with an apparent conflict between those two formations, is ideally captured, in my opinion, by Sloterdijk in his "La Mobilisation Infinite", where he suggests to approach postmodern as an undesirable, but logical, consequence of the modern. This relationship is illustrated by a metaphor of a relationship between the notion of private transportation and traffic congestion. They are evidently interrelated: the traffic congestion is an undesirable, but logical consequence of a widespread access to private transportation, and even if we see the traffic congestion as contradicting the postulates of quick and efficient mobility, that the private transportation is meant to represent, it is not difficult to indicate that both former and the latter are elements of the same set.³³ Such definition of the relationship between modernity and postmodernity allows explaining a theoretical poverty of many postmodern diagnoses. I could never, for example, understand what such authors like Bauman or Baudrillard had to say on capitalism

27 Madison 1788.

28 Hardt, Negri 2012.

29 Derrida 1992.

30 Madison 1788.

31 Jameson 2012.

32 Sloterdijk 2000; Rancière, 2007; Giddens 2008.

33 Sloterdijk 2000.

and its social consequences, that has not been already elaborated upon, in a better way, by Marx. Reading the “Communist Manifesto” would be enough to notice certain findings that are commonly accepted as discoveries of the postmodern: “revolutionising the means of production, thus the production relationships, thus the overall social relationships (...) uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, eternal uncertainty and unrest,” to be concise: “all that is solid melts into thin air.”³⁴ Therefore, according to the perspective taken here, parliamentarism is not a form of the people’s sovereignty, but a defence strategy against the possibility of mass emancipation, that is applied, for the most part, to defend what would evidently be the primary casualty of an authentic, public sovereignty, so a private proprietorship of the means of production - a strategy present since the dawn of modernity, which only recently, in what we call postmodernity, fully shows its reactive and anti-democratic appearance.

Mass uprisings, rebellions and occupations that have been reverberating through numerous parts of the world since 2011, turn towards this very postmodern universum of parliamentary democracy that keeps subsisting the trembling power of the capital. They all demand for that rotten system to be brought down, repeating a catchphrase that first gained popularity in Argentina in 2001: “QUE SE VAYAN TODOS!” - “They all must go.” Ben Ali - begone! Zapatero - begone! Cameron - begone! For this reason, amongst others, the Occupy and Protest movements of the present day seems, to some at least, to be lacking goals and postulates. The Movements do not expect the politicians, and those in the government, to do anything other than going away and letting the people make decisions about their own, respective lives, in a democratic way. Their voice, making us all aware that the parliamentarism has reached its end, is the return of the Real excluded from the symbolic order in operation, is an affirmation of direct presence against fraudulent representation of parliament that is being mediated and that has already been mediated. This is the struggle between the democracy and postmodernism. It proves that the political diagnoses, given once by Jean-Francois Lyotard and other postmodernists, become less and less current and relevant. Just as it was the case during Marx’s times, the grand narratives of democracy, emancipation and justice, hold the power to move the masses. Lyotard’s pessimism regarding politics (and what is political) was, in my opinion, directly related to the general pessimism and feeling of exhaustion typical for the West in the ‘70s of the 20th century that came primarily as a result of practical failure of the 1968 Revolution. Even in the Eastern Bloc the moods were different. More or less at the same time, when Lyotard voiced his pessimistic diagnosis in

34 Marks, Engels 1962.

1979, some grand, political ideas animated massive, social movements in Poland: Solidarity - with a name that recalls a great, universal idea allegedly unfeasible in post-modern times - mobilised 10 million people, effectively more than 1/4th of the whole society. It is true, that the ‘90s of the 20th century seemed to confirm the conclusion of politics (and the political), but the last decade with regularly returning protests of the anti-globalists, mass movements in Latin America, and - finally - the events of the 2011, proves that, despite postmodernist squawking, grand, political ideas are still very much alive, and ready to move the individual and collective imagination.

“

HOWEVER, 2011 SERVES AS A PROOF OF
A CHANGE IN SOCIO-POLITICAL DYNAMICS
WITH A POWER AND EXPRESSIVENESS
PREVIOUSLY UNHEARD OF

At this point we could ask whether the events of 2011 are new, and different enough from the movements and social protests we have come to know from the past, to require inventing new notions, and for new means of description to be sought? Is it really a groundbreaking moment? This question cannot be answered with a one-hundred-percent certainty, as the ‘groundbreakingness’ can be indicated *ex post* only, once the course of events reaches its conclusion. I would, however, risk making an argument that the current, global protests introduce new quality, and prove that it is a groundbreaking moment we are witnessing. Two key issues indicate this: the protesters radically reject an opportunity to act within the parliamentary system, which is expressed concisely by the slogan “They all must go” that I previously spoke of. The other key issue is a paradoxical trajectory, in global perspective, of the protests happening in 2011: an impulse to act in favour of a pro-democratic change has been born in the peripheral societies (moreover, in a region usually associated with an intense hostility towards democracy), and their struggles inspired citizens of the nations of the centre (termed as democratic), to go out in the streets and demand an increased democratisation of their political systems. A majority of social and political philosophy has made us used to look for an exact opposite of an influence line. Remarkably, in this respect, Marks and Fukuyama say the exact same thing: developed societies show the future to the developing societies. Obviously, this similarity is not hard to explain considering Hegelian inspirations of both those philosophers, but this similarity is symptomatic of a certain way of thinking that the modernisation theory is concluded by, and a way of thinking that peaked in popularity in the latter half of the 20th century. The events of 2011 show, that we are currently dealing with a situation that is an exact opposite of what is being prognosticated

and postulated by the theories of modernisation: today it is not the centre that shows the future to the peripheries while giving them an inspiration, just the other way round. First indicators of such shift could be sought in the influence of the anti-colonial rebellion on the events in Europe and the USA in the 1960s; however, 2011 serves as a proof of a change in socio-political dynamics with a power and expressiveness previously unheard of.

We could also indicate other symptoms of such change, although not all of them instil optimism. On the fringes of the shift we currently see a heavily-debated, French ban on face covering - one of the key issues for the Islamic women of that country. Discussing that matter in a highly-developed country of a centre, sounds somewhat like an ironic laughter of history, as in such a remote and “underdeveloped” country, as Turkey is sometimes perceived to be, the debate has been known since the times of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk - who decided to radically laicise his own country. There are plenty of tumultuous chapters in the struggle for enforcement of Turkey’s laicisation, including a forceful removal of a female parliamentary representative from a parliamentary building in the ‘90s of the 20th century, for wearing a traditional head-scarf. Who, 30 or 40 years ago, would have thought that France might be witnessing issues, debates and arguments, similar to those that Turkey has faced? It had appeared that an opposite could have taken place that the religion is a “song of the past,” and that laicism is a common and shared future for the mankind. Undoubtedly, Turkey as the “underdeveloped” country, was supposed to reach such future later than France.³⁵ It is not the case, however, and it is France that has found itself in the situation that has been known in Turkey for many years. We can, therefore see that the assumed underdevelopment of Turkey, at least in terms of the religious and customary sphere, would have to be recognised as an avant-garde struggle with problems of the type that the developed societies of the centre will have to face in the future. Opposite to what has been claimed by Marx and other followers of the Hegelian philosophy, it is the “underdeveloped” country that shows the “developed” one where the future does lead to.

Another example is a process that Ulrich Beck names as “Latin Americanisation of labour,” aptly described by an alternative term, “precarisation.” Deterioration of working conditions of dependent labour in developed countries results in approximation of conditions that have been known to the peripheries for years: lack of stability, ongoing uncertainty, dysfunction of the welfare state, professional degradation of the well-

educated individuals, etc.³⁶ Despite a modernisation promise, capitalism is not able to guarantee welfare to the peripheral societies and, furthermore, is damaging the social achievements of the societies of the centre.

In the conclusion, I want to mention yet another process that reveals the paradoxes of de-modernisation, namely: the development of neoliberalism. As a doctrine and practice it is an offspring of politicians and theoreticians from the centre - so-called Washington Consensus - it has been, however, initially introduced at the peripheries: in South America and Eastern Europe, after the fall of Eastern Bloc. Neoliberal reforms of so-called post-communist countries constituted a groundbreaking moment, as they were a reiteration that allowed universalisation. They have, thus, played the same role for neoliberalism, as the Haitian Revolution did to the French Revolution. The case of Greece, currently being damaged by neoliberal reforms, is another groundbreaking moment: for the first time a core country, a membership state of the European Union, NATO and OECD, collapses under the weight of capital. What is interesting, on the purely financial side of things the faith of Greece looks remarkably similar to the fall of the countries of the Eastern Bloc. Greece has been defeated by debt. There is a story going around on how, in 2003, one of the American hospitals has witnessed a male individual waking up from a coma after a period of 12 years. The man could fully comprehend what had happened to him, but there was one thing he refused to take in: that Bush was still a president, and that the Gulf War was still going strong. I share a similar feeling when reading reports on the crisis of sovereign debt in Southern Europe, and when I recall my own childhood from the late ‘80s and early ‘90s of the 20th century: the main topic appears to be a debt that cannot be serviced, then a country goes bankrupt, and neoliberal experts come en masse to the rescue. This is why I am concerned that the neoliberal future of Greece - and if all progresses go as expected then also the future of France, the United Kingdom and the USA - this is well known to me. I have lived it for the past 20 years.

35 Lerner 1958.

36 Beck 2002.

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photo by T. Lazar

Male protecting his head from very heavy rain with a trash bag, Zuccotti Park, New York

THE CHILDREN OF REAGAN'S HIPPIES

TOBY MILLER

article
abstract

IN THIS ARTICLE THE AUTHOR ATTEMPTS TO EXPLAIN THE EMERGENCE OF THE COGNITARIAT IN THE HISTORY OF COLD-WAR FUTURISM, TECHNOPHILIA AND THE NEW RIGHT OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY AND DETAIL THE RISKS OF CYBERTARIANISM IN ECOLOGICAL AND LABOR TERMS. HE ARGUES THAT THIS COULD BE CONSIDERED THE BACKGROUND FOR THE EMERGENCE OF THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT.

COGNITARIAT, NICL, CONSUMERISM, CYBERTARIANISM, PRECARIOUS LABOR, TECHNOTOPIA, REAGAN, MEDIA, COLD WAR

keywords

“In a First Wave economy, land and farm labor are the main *factors of production*. In a Second Wave economy, the land remains valuable while the “labor” becomes massified around machines and larger industries. In a Third Wave economy, the central resource—a single word broadly encompassing data, information, images, symbols, culture, ideology, and values—is actionable knowledge—A Magna Carta for the Information Age.”

The manifesto quoted above was promulgated in the mid-1990s and it is the dominant common sense of today. But the *Magna Carta for the Information Age* is in fact a *mestizo* child of the sixties. Its signatories (Esther Dyson, George Gilder, George Keyworth, and Alvin Toffler) were cybertarian disciples of Ronald Reagan, the unpleasant progeny of an unlikely *liaison* between Republican Party politics and hippy fantasies.¹ This brief article will explore the backdrop to this bizarre history and examine its implications for contemporary cultural labor. For five decades, the New Right of the Republican Party has railed against the “Great Society” state-based liberalism. Its devastating defeat at the 1964 Presidential election seemed like a death rattle. But that was soon followed by Reagan’s successful 1966 campaign for the governorship of California, which he launched with the following words: “I propose... “A Creative Society” ... to discover, enlist and mobilize the incredibly rich human resources of California [through] innumerable people of creative talent.”² Over the succeeding decades, the legacy of those words has been a contradictory *mélange* of market anti-statism and the counter-culture, as Reagan and his kind gradually accreted a motley assortment of true believers, from opponents of the American War in Vietnam to critics of welfare programs. Despite what appeared to be his cultural antonym at the time, it is entirely appropriate that the summer of love was also his first summer in office.

Reagan’s principal domestic legacy was twofold: he reversed the state’s role in democratically redistributing wealth and wrought havoc on labor organizing. Subsequent fellow-disciples of inequality—the various Bushes, William Jefferson Clinton, and Barack Hussein Obama

¹ Turner 2006.

² Reagan was not original. In 1848, Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote that ‘[a] creative economy is the fuel of magnificence’, Waldo 1909-14.

II—carried on this work. They also subscribed to the utopic, alternative aspects of neoliberal ideology that Reagan’s proto-gubernatorial address heralded. Why? These have been crucial components of the Global North’s economic shift, from agriculture and manufacturing to services and culture. Blending New-Age ideology, consumerism, and technotopia helped spread routine exposure to precarious work beyond just the working class, who lacked cultural capital, towards those in the middle class with plenty of it. This discourse has managed to bind seemingly contradictory tendencies together through a nerveless faith in the myth that an unending flow of new technology can override socio-economic inequality.

Of course, such fantasies predate Reaganism. Consider George Orwell dissecting just this rhetoric seventy years ago. His critique resonates today:

Reading recently a batch of rather shallowly optimistic “progressive” books, I was struck by the automatic way in which people go on repeating certain phrases which were fashionable before 1914. Two great favourites are “the abolition of distance” and “the disappearance of frontiers”. I do not know how often I have met with the statements that “the aeroplane and the radio have abolished distance” and “all parts of the world are now interdependent.”³

Sound familiar? Of course it does. Technological determinists’ lack of originality and tendency to repeat exploded myths as if they were new and true refuses to lie down and die. “Peace on Facebook” claims that the social-media site can “decrease world conflict” through inter-cultural communication, and Twitter modestly announces itself as “a triumph of humanity.”⁴ Equally romantically, but with a franker commitment to capital accumulation, bourgeois economists argue that cell phones have streamlined hitherto inefficient markets in remote areas of the Global South, enriching people in zones where banking services and commercial information are scarce due to distance and terrain. Exaggerated claims for the magic of mobile telephony in places that lack electricity, plumbing, fresh water, hospital care and the like include “the complete elimination of waste” and massive reductions of poverty and corruption through the empowerment of individuals.⁵

This is one more *cliché* dalliance with new technology’s supposedly innate capacity to endow users with transcendence, but no less powerful for its banality because of the interests it serves and the cult of newness it subscribes

3 Orwell 1944.

4 The Economist 2010.

5 Jensen 2007.

to.⁶ Cell phones and the like are said to obliterate geography, sovereignty, and hierarchy, replacing them with truth and beauty. This deregulated, individuated, technologized world makes consumers into producers, frees the disabled from confinement, encourages new subjectivities, rewards intellect and competitiveness, links people across cultures and allows billions of flowers to bloom in a post-political cornucopia. People fish, film, fornicate, and finance from morning to midnight, from Marx to Godard (minus the struggle). Consumption is privileged and labor and the environment are forgotten. How very jolly.

“

THE COLD-WAR FUTURISTS SAW THAT WHAT WE CAN NOW DISCERN AS PRECARIOUS MENTAL LABOR COULD DELIVER HUGE GAINS IN PRODUCTIVITY

Time magazine exemplified the utopic silliness of these tendencies in its choice of “You” as 2006 “Person of the Year,” declaring that “You control the Information Age. Welcome to your world.”⁷ The discourse incarnates reader, audience, consumer, and player autonomy—the neoliberal intellectual’s wet dream of music, movies, television, and everything else converging under the sign of omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent fans. The dream invests, with unparalleled gusto, in Schumpeterian entrepreneurs, evolutionary economics, and creative industries. Its true believers have never seen an “app” they didn’t like, or a socialist idea they did. Faith in devolved media-making amounts to a secular religion, offering transcendence in the here and now via a “literature of the eighth day, the day after Genesis.”⁸ Machinery, not political-economic activity, is the guiding light.

THE COGNITARIAT

Technophilic fantasies are profoundly connected to a significant trend in the Global North’s political economy of employment, where disorganized capitalism/post-Fordism exploits highly educated, occupationally insecure cultural workers both at home and abroad. Toffler named this group “the cognitariat” thirty years ago.⁹ Prior to signing the cybertarian *Magna Carta*, he had wandered the same Cold-War corridors of futurism as National Security

6 Ogan, Manaf et al. 2009.

7 Grossman 2006.

8 Carey 2005.

9 Toffler 1983.

Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski,¹⁰ American Academy of Arts and Sciences prelate Daniel Bell,¹¹ and professional anti-Marxist Ithiel de Sola Pool.¹² They predicted that information and communication technologies would remove grubby manufacturing from the Global North to the South and consolidate US cultural and technical power, provided that the blandishments of socialism and negative reactions to global business did not create national or international class struggle. The Cold-War futurists saw that what we can now discern as precarious mental labor could deliver huge gains in productivity.¹³ In the words of lapsed-leftist cultural theorist and inaugural President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development Jacques Attali,¹⁴ a new “mercantile order forms wherever a creative class masters a key innovation from navigation to accounting or, in our own time, where services are most efficiently mass produced, thus generating enormous wealth.” Cold-War futurism wanted to nurture, indoctrinate, and direct the next formation of that class.

Many legatees of futurism appear to imagine that this is their own, new discourse. Urbanists, geographers, economists, planners, cultural studies folks, and policy wonks have all been central to its development and dispersal.¹⁵ Unconsciously following the playbook written decades before, they argue for an efflorescence of creativity, cultural difference, import substitution, and national and regional pride and influence thanks to new technologies and innovative firms.¹⁶ This allegedly gives rise to an “aristocracy of talent,” where mercurial meritocrats luxuriate in ever-changing techniques, technologies, and networks.¹⁷ Labor is acknowledged in this brave newness, provided that it is abstracted from physical, dirty work,¹⁸ as per Toffler, Bell, de Sola Pool, and Brzezinski’s prescriptions.

The high priest of today’s version of futurism, Richard Florida,¹⁹ speaks of a “creative class” that is revitalizing post-industrial towns in the Global North devastated by the relocation of manufacturing to places with cheaper labor pools. He argues that formerly wealthy cities can be revived through tolerance, technology and talent, which he measures by the number

and proportion of same-sex households, broadband connections, and higher degrees respectively. (*A propos*, Florida’s claim to own the “creative class” as a concept is asserted with the US Patent and Trademark Office via registration number 3298801 <http://tess2.uspto.gov>).²⁰

Remarkably few social scientists have had anything of worth to say on these topics, but there are some noted exceptions. Max Weber wisely insisted that technology should principally be regarded as a “mode of processing material goods,”²¹ thereby directing us away from the *Magna Carta* rhetoricians. Harvey Sacks emphasized the repeated “failures of technocratic dreams[:] that if only we introduced some fantastic new communication machine the world will be transformed.”²² Marcuse predicted that far from liberating all and sundry, innovations in communication technology would intensify managerial coordination.²³ And Herbert I. Schiller noted that information technology is an “infrastructure of socialization,” synchronizing “business cultures,” organizational models, “institutional networks,” and modes of communication and cultural production in the interests of capital.²⁴

Their example encourages us to consider some examples of how the new freedoms associated with today’s innovations are double-sided. Take the cell phone, trumpeted above as a great tool for achieving market equilibrium. An equally compelling reality is the new nightmare it has created for public-health professionals, because prostitutes at risk of sexually-transmitted disease increasingly communicate with clients by phone and travel to a variety of places to ply their trade. This makes them less easy to educate and assist than when they work at conventional, singular sites.²⁵ And when old and obsolete cell phones, like other communication technologies, are junked, they become electronic waste (e-waste), the fastest-growing constituent of municipal cleanups around the Global North. E-waste generates serious threats to worker health and safety wherever plastics and wires are burnt, monitors smashed and dismantled and circuit boards grilled or leached with acid, while the toxic chemicals and heavy metals that flow from such practices have perilous implications for local and downstream residents, soil, and water. Much electronic salvage and recycling is undertaken in the Global South by pre-teen girls, who work with discarded television sets and computers to find precious metals and dump the remains in landfills.

10 Brzezinski 1969.

11 Bell 1977.

12 de Sola Pool 1983.

13 Bar, Simard 2006.

14 Attali 2008.

15 Brint, Turk-Bicacki et al. 2009.

16 Cunningham 2009.

17 Kotkin 2001.

18 Mattelart 2002.

19 Florida 2002.

20 Thanks to Bill Grantham for directing me to the Office’s Trademark Electronic Search System.

21 Weber 2005.

22 Sacks 1995.

23 Marcuse 1941.

24 Schiller 1976.

25 Mahapatra, Bidhubhusan et al. 2012.

The e-waste ends up there after export and import by “recyclers” who eschew landfills and labor in the Global North in order to avoid the cost and regulation of recycling in countries that prohibit such destruction to environment and workers. Businesses that forbid dumping in local landfills merrily mail it elsewhere.²⁶



THE GLOBAL NORTH RECOGNIZED FIFTY YEARS AGO THAT ITS ECONOMIC FUTURE LAY IN FINANCE CAPITAL AND IDEOLOGY RATHER THAN AGRICULTURE AND MANUFACTURING—SEEKING REVENUE FROM INNOVATION AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, NOT MINERALS OR MASSES

That said, the very tools of domination unleashed by utopianism can work in favor of social and environmental justice. Toffler’s concept of the cognitariat has been helpfully redisposed by Antonio Negri²⁷ to describe the casualized workers who boast significant educational qualifications but labor in the unpredictable vortices of capital, academia, and government. They are among those laboring in the sweat-shop conditions of Florida’s beloved “creative cities.” This cognitariat plays key roles in producing and distributing goods and services, creating and coordinating culture in precarious roles as musicians, directors, writers, journalists, sound engineers, technologists, editors, cinematographers, graphic designers, and so on. Perhaps even futurists.

Members of the cognitariat frequently collude with their own oppression and insecurity through dreams of autonomous identity formation that find them joining a gentry poor dedicated to the life of the mind that supposedly fulfills them and may one day—somewhere, somehow—deliver a labor market of plenty.²⁸ Cognitarians putatively transcend organizational power, thanks to the comparatively cheap and easy access to making and distributing meaning afforded by internet media and genres. This new openness is said to erode the one-way hold on culture that saw a small segment of the world as producers and the larger segment as consumers. Today we are apparently all cultural consumers and producers (prosumers), and we delightedly and easily challenge old patterns of expertise and institutional

authority.²⁹ But cognitarians also confront inevitable contradictions, for even as they obediently trot out the individualistic beliefs enunciated above, they operate within thoroughly institutional contexts: private bureaucracies, controlling investment, production and distribution across the media; public bureaucracies, offering what capitalism cannot while comporting themselves in an ever-more commercial manner; small businesses, run by charismatic individuals; non-government organizations, of whatever political stripe and contingent networks, fluid associations formed to undertake specific projects.

What goes on in this cybertarian world? A lot of it is about corporations blithely exploiting prosumers and cognitarians through market research and product placement. Fans write zines that become screenplays. Coca-Cola hires streetwise African Americans to drive through the inner city selling soda and playing hip-hop. AT&T pays San Francisco buskers to mention the company in their songs. Urban performance poets rhyme about Nissan cars for cash. Subway’s sandwich commercials are marketed as made by teenagers. Cultural-studies majors become designers. Graduate students in New York and Los Angeles read scripts for producers then pronounce on whether they tap into audience interests. Precariously employed part-timers spy on fellow-spectators in theaters to see how they respond to coming attractions. Interns at marketing firms orchestrate Astroturf campaigns on social media to simulate organic interest in corporate products. Opportunities to vote in the Eurovision Song Contest or a reality program disclose the profiles and practices of viewers, who can be monitored and wooed in the future. End-user licensing agreements ensure that players of corporate games on-line sign over their cultural moves and perspectives to the very companies they are paying in order to participate.³⁰ Even reactionary bodies like the US National Governors Association recognize the reality: “routine tasks that once characterized middle class work have either been eliminated by technological change or are now conducted by low-wage but highly skilled workers.”³¹

Business leeches want flexibility in the people they employ, the technologies they use, the places where they produce and the amounts they pay—and inflexibility of ownership and control. The neoclassical *doxa* preached by neoliberal chorines favor an economy where competition and opportunity cost are in the litany and dissent is unforgiveable, as crazed as collective industrial organization. In short, decent and meaningful work opportunities are reducing at a phenomenal pace in the sense that, for a high proportion of low- and middle-skilled workers, full-time, lifelong

26 Maxwell, Miller 2012.

27 Negri 2007.

28 Gorz 2004; Ross 2009; Neff, Wissinger, Zukin 2005.

29 Graham 2008, Ritzer, Jurgenson 2010.

30 Miller 2007.

31 Sparks, Watts 2011.

employment is unlikely.³²

Hence the success of firms such as Mindworks Global Media, a company based outside New Delhi that provides Indian-based journalists and copyeditors who work long-distance for newspapers whose reporters are supposedly in the US and Europe. This deception delivers 35-40% cost savings to employers.³³ Or consider Poptent, which undercuts big competitors in sales to major advertisers by exploiting prosumers' labor in the name of 'empowerment.' That empowerment takes the following form: the creators of homemade commercials make US\$7,500; Poptent receives a management fee of US\$40,000; and the buyer saves about US\$300,000 on the usual price.³⁴ In other words, the principal beneficiaries of innovations by the "talented amateurs" of the cognitariat—interns, volunteers, contestants and so on—are corporations.³⁵ The culture industries largely remain under the control of media and communications conglomerates. They gobble up smaller companies that invent products and services, "recycling audio-visual cultural material created by the grassroots genius, exploiting their intellectual property and generating a standardized business sector that excludes and even distorts, its very source of business," to quote *The Hindu*.³⁶ In other words, the cognitariat creates "cool stuff" that others exploit.

Here's the reality. The Global North recognized fifty years ago that its economic future lay in finance capital and ideology rather than agriculture and manufacturing—seeking revenue from innovation and intellectual property, not minerals or masses. By the 1970s, developing markets for labor and products, and the shift from the spatial *sensitivities* of electrics to the spatial *insensitivities* of electronics, pushed businesses in the Global North beyond treating countries in the Global South as suppliers of raw materials, viewing them instead as shadow-setters of the price of work, competing amongst themselves and with the Global North for employment. That process broke up the prior division of the world into a small number of industrialized nations and a majority of underdeveloped ones, as production was split across continents. Folker Fröbel, Jürgen Heinrichs, and Otto Kreye³⁷ christened this phenomenon the New International Division of Labor. They sought to comprehend what Andrew Herod calls "the economic geography of capitalism[,] through the eyes of labor"³⁸ and went on to generate a New International Division of Cultural Labor (NICL).

32 Orsi 2009.

33 Lakshman 2008.

34 Chmielewski 2012.

35 Ross 2006-07; Marcus 2005.

36 Ramanathan 2006.

37 Fröbel, Heinrichs, Kreye 1980.

38 Herod 2001.

Here is my short story about encountering the NICL. I arrived in Brisbane in 1988, during Hollywood's protracted writers' strike and was billeted with a prominent film scholar I had just met who went on to become a key advocate of creative-industries discourse. That first night, we sat in front of his ample television set. A local politician was being interviewed on the news about plans for a "Cairns International Film Festival." The idea was that tourists would book travel to this North Queensland city on the mistaken assumption that "Cairns" was "Cannes." (The distance between these places is 14,498 kilometers.) I looked across at my new colleague, the hermeneut within me ablaze. What would local knowledge make of this madness? His face was cast in a half-smile. No words were needed. The oddity of that press interview and the fact that it occurred just as Hollywood was looking to Queensland as a site for making drama series offshore to counter California unions, made it clear that Hollywood was exploiting Australia's reserve army of cultural labor in order to undercut the writers' strike. And that made me think about culture as changing in the same way as manufacturing.

Labor-market expansion and developments in global transportation and communications technology have diminished the need for co-location of cultural management, labor and consumption. Popular and high-cultural texts, computer-aided design and manufacture, sales, marketing and information can now be created and exchanged globally, based on the division of labor. The NICL has been most dramatically applied to film and television production and sport.³⁹ It is part of the system that keeps cognitarians in their place, along with the prevailing ideology under which they labor. Alerting them to these realities is an urgent task. Cognitarians ignore them at their peril, as do those of us who learn from them and seek an exchange informed by history and ecology rather than amnesia and delusion.

39 Miller, Nitin et al. 2005; Miller, Geoffrey et al. 2001.

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INDIGNADOS

A FASHION PASSÉ?

ANNA VISVIZI

article abstract

CAPTURED BY THE CONCEPT 'INDIGNADOS', THE VARIETY OF STREET PROTESTS THAT SWEEPED EUROPE IN 2011 ATTRACTED CONSIDERABLE MEDIA ATTENTION. THEIR MAGNIFYING LENS PLAYED CONSEQUENTLY SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN BOOSTING THESE PROTESTS' VISIBILITY, CASTING THEM AS A MOVEMENT IN THE MAKING, AND HAILING THEM AS A NEW QUALITY OF PROTEST OR SOCIAL MOBILIZATION. FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS THOUGH 'INDIGNADOS' PROVED UNSUSTAINABLE AS A CONCEPT. THAT THE DISCUSSION ON 'INDIGNADOS' CONTINUES IN SOME CIRCLES INDICATES EITHER THAT SOME REFUSE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE FACT THAT 'INDIGNADOS' ARE A FASHION PASSÉ OR THAT THE IDEA AND THE POWERFUL BRAND THAT THEY ACQUIRED ARE ABUSED FOR VERY SPECIFIC POLITICAL PURPOSES.

EUROZONE CRISIS, INDIGNADOS,
DISCOURSE ANALYSIS,
GREECE, MEDIA

keywords

Different types of protests, actions, campaigns and other forms of social mobilization that swept Europe in 2011 were interpreted by the media as expressions of dissatisfaction with austerity policies implemented across the European Union (EU) in response to the eurozone crisis. By default, the same socio-political happenings have been linked in popular discourse with crisis of legitimacy and with the democratic deficit in the EU. At the source of these happenings was the Spanish May 15 (15-M) protest, which began as a demonstration against Internet piracy legislation scheduled to be implemented by the government. That it eventually turned into the occupation of Madrid's La Puerta Del Sol was inspired by the occupation of Tahrir Square in Egypt in 2010/2011. Initially the gathering's purpose – apart from the Internet regulation – was to protest against mass youth unemployment and electoral politics. Eventually it developed into a defence of the right to occupy the Puerta del Sol.¹ According to some accounts, 30,000-40,000 protestors were mobilized in Madrid and 80,000 in Barcelona to march against high unemployment, the policies and conduct of Spain's political class, and to demand 'real democracy'.² Similar happenings, though of different size and scale, followed across Europe.

Captured by the concept 'indignados'³ or an equally popular US-born term 'Occupy',⁴ this variety of socio-political happenings attracted considerable media attention. Consequently, their magnifying lens played significant role in boosting these protests' visibility,⁵ casting them as a salient social development, possibly as a movement in the making. The protests reached their peak in 2011; attempts to gather and occupy public space were evidenced throughout the summer of 2012. It is doubtful though that the year 2013 will bring new evidence of similar events. In this view, although initially a number of commentators praised the emergence of a new quality of protest or social mobilization, it seems that the efforts of keeping the idea alive notwithstanding, 'indignados' are a fashion passé. As a styled attempt at creating a new form of protest that failed, 'indignados' resemble a bubble that

1 Robinson, 2011.

2 Charnock, Ribera-Fumas, 2012.

3 The term 'indignados' was used by the Spanish press to refer to a wave of street protests in early 2011. As such, it identified the protestors with the best-selling book *Indignez-vous*, written by Stéphane Hessel. It is worth noting that a similar word, i.e. *Wutbürger* (enraged citizen), is frequently employed as a German synonym of 'indignados'. Voted the word of the year 2010, the concept 'Wutbürger' is entrenched in a slightly different context, see: (Kurbjuweit 2010).

4 'Occupy' serves as a reference to protests in form of occupation of public space. The first protest of this form 'Occupy Wall Street' took place at the New York City's Zuccotti Park in Autumn 2011.

5 Berseman (in Wolff, 2012) argues 'Occupy Wall Street' was actually silenced by the media.

burst. The objective of this paper is to dwell on this issue. To this end the first part explores the question of how it was possible to entrench ‘indignados’ in the discourse on the eurozone crisis in the first place, and accordingly to raise convincing claims about the relevance of their cause. The following section offers an insight in the academic debate on ‘indignados’ and dwells on their conceptualization entailed therein. Next, the phenomenon of *aganaktismeni*, i.e. the Greek version of ‘indignados’, is discussed against the background of the Greek crisis. In the final part, the question of why the protests proved short-lived is addressed.

1. CONTEXTUALIZING DISCONTENT: ‘INDIGNADOS’ AND DISCOURSES ON THE (EUROZONE) CRISIS

The media played a fundamental role in shaping the image of protests inspired by the occupation of Madrid’s Puerta Del Sol. By placing these protests and demonstrations in context of the debate on the crisis and thus by presenting these happenings as crisis-related, on the one hand, the media were able to offer an alternative to the worn-off accounts of crisis and reform. On the other hand, anticipative of people’s compassion and thus interest, they were hopeful of improving their popularity and outreach. By successfully entrenching ‘indignados’ in discourse on the eurozone crisis, convincing claims as to the relevance of their cause could be made. This in turn increased the bearing of the media coverage on ‘indignados.’

That it was possible to anchor ‘indignados’ in the discourse on the crisis is related to the fact that the critical debate on the crisis and its management offered a wide range of arguments validating claims of the emergence of a new quality of protest. Two major threads can be distinguished in the critical debate on the crisis and its management across Europe. The economically-inclined commentaries focus on fiscal consolidation, austerity programmes, the reform process and the role of the EU institutions in addressing the crisis.⁶ In this context, diverse facets of austerity policies implemented across Europe tend to be discussed. The second debate oscillates around questions of democracy, legitimacy and accountability, solidarity, social justice, and sovereignty and their condition in times of crisis.⁷ The narrative on ‘indignados’ is located in-between these two debates, whereby the notions of austerity and democracy are particularly relevant in context of the discussion on social mobilization.

6 De Grauwe 2013; Gros 2013; Blyth 2013a.

7 Sen 2012; Habermas 2012; Mazower 2012.

The central tenet of the anti-austerity debate is that austerity policies cannot work.⁸ “The worthy but narrow intentions of the European Union’s policy makers have been inadequate for a sound European economy and have produced instead a world of misery, chaos and confusion.”⁹ In this debate, austerity is understood as government’s policies consistent mainly with cuts in public expenditure (mostly on health and education) for the sake of fiscal adjustment. It is argued that “savage cuts to essential public services, to aid to the needy and so on, actually hurt the country’s prospects for successful adjustment”¹⁰ and that “these spending cuts are a case of inflicting pain for the sake of inflicting pain.”¹¹ Austerity policies, so the argument goes, are the source of ‘depression’ and people’s suffering in the eurozone’s periphery.¹² It is argued that austerity “is a dangerous idea, because it ignores the externalities it generates.”¹³

Given the social consequences of what tends to be referred to as austerity policies, Krugman¹⁴ argues that “We’ve basically had an unethical experimentation on human beings going on across the world right now.” Therefore, austerity policies and their consequences for the society endow the citizens with the right to protest against purposeless policies. The following comment is exemplary in this context:

“Much commentary suggests that the citizens of Spain and Greece are just delaying the inevitable, protesting against sacrifices that must, in fact, be made. But the truth is that the protesters are right. More austerity serves no useful purpose; the truly irrational players here are the allegedly serious politicians and officials demanding ever more pain.”¹⁵

As far as the debate on democracy is concerned, it is driven by a conceptualization of the crisis seen as a threat and a major source of challenges to democracy and its functioning. On the one hand, the narrative points to a lacking legitimacy of the EU institutions and/or the EU’s elite to design specific policy responses to the eurozone crisis. This “technocracy without democratic roots,” this elite approach to managing the response to the crisis estranges the EU citizens from the idea of Europe and gives rise

8 Blyth 2013.

9 Sen 2012.

10 Krugman 2012a.

11 Krugman 2012a.

12 Krugman 2012b.

13 Blyth 2013: 2.

14 Krugman 2013.

15 Krugman 2012a.

to euroscepticism.¹⁶ In other words, “Europe is witnessing the “bursting of a legitimacy bubble.”¹⁷ The legitimacy problem leads to euroscepticism, which in turn “enables parties of the extreme left and right to become more mainstream.”¹⁸

“

ARGUED IN THE DEBATE ON DEMOCRACY THAT
ECONOMIC HARDSHIP CAUSED BY AUSTERITY
POLICIES AGGRAVATES FEELINGS OF FRUSTRATION
WITH THE CRISIS AND DISSATISFACTION WITH
POLICIES IMPLEMENTED BY RESPECTIVE
GOVERNMENTS ACROSS EUROPE

In a similar fashion, it is argued in the debate on democracy that economic hardship caused by austerity policies aggravates feelings of frustration with the crisis and dissatisfaction with policies implemented by respective governments across Europe. Therefore, it fuels xenophobia, racism, and intolerance, while at the same time affecting solidarity among the EU member-states. The question of democracy in this way is related in the discourse on the crisis with the policies of austerity, whereby the latter is seen as undemocratic and anti-democratic. The anti-democratic nature of austerity is linked in the debate to the (lacking) legitimacy issue. Its anti-democratic character is derived from the notion that austerity – as it is argued – undermines societal well-being. Since in this sense it also contradicts the idea of a democratic Europe,¹⁹ it is austerity that is held responsible for failures of democracy such as xenophobia, racism, and radicalisation of politics. In this context, Krugman²⁰ labels the proposition that the “crisis can be solved by technocratic governments imposing structural reform and austerity” as insanity. Implicitly a case for unorthodox measures to navigate the crisis is made, legitimizing in this way discontent and protest. Likewise, when Habermas²¹ eloquently suggests that Europe is trapped in a dilemma of legitimacy and accountability, whereby difficult political and economic reforms need to be introduced to preserve the euro, he also acknowledges that unpopular policies will “meet with spontaneous popular resistance.”

16 Habermas 2013.

17 Weiler 2013.

18 Weiler 2013.

19 Sen 2012.

20 Krugman 2012a.

21 Habermas 2013.

Overall, at the core of the anti-austerity and pro-democracy debate rests the argument of lacking legitimacy and porous accountability. By pointing to recession, the impact of austerity policies on the economy and the society is highlighted, whereby at the same time a nexus between austerity and threats to democracy is established. In this context, social mobilizations (protests, demonstrations) are portrayed as expected, justified, and a spontaneous expression of peoples’ dissatisfaction with austerity seen as a wrong method of addressing the crisis. The popular discourse on ‘indignados’ – several variations of which have been reproduced by the media – taps into these arguments and employs them as a conceptual leverage to validate claims of the emergence of a new form of social mobilization. As images of (frequently irrelevant to the austerity issue) protests and demonstrations had been commonly employed in reporting on the crisis, ‘indignados’ became a recognizable item in the popular discourse on the crisis. The question is how real a phenomenon it is and how to conceptualize it. The following sections deal with this issue.

2. CONCEPTUALIZING ‘INDIGNADOS’

The literature on ‘indignados’ and ‘occupiers’ depicts them as mobilizations gathering seasoned activists and individuals driven by apolitical motivation. For instance, in the case of Madrid, “the net-based piracy campaigns were catalysts.”²² They were joined by anti-globalization anarchists and radical collectives as well as by a variety of individuals, mostly in their 20-30s. In contrast, political parties, such as the communist Green Left Unity, as well as trade unions were absent from Puerta del Sol. The protests in Germany,²³ Greece and other European countries followed the same pattern of participation. Taking into account the diversified population of protestors and the variety of incoherent claims they raise, the question is what are they an instance of.

In the academic debate, these protests – seen as a unique, new form of social mobilization – are said to be representative of ‘*subterranean politics*’.²⁴ That is, they are displays of “phenomena that are not usually visible in mainstream debates.” ‘Subterranean politics’ depicts therefore the differences of the new form of mobilization and other forms such as social movement and civil society.²⁵ “Unlike previous mobilizations and protests, [subterranean politics] generate a sense of public excitement wherever they

22 Robinson 2011.

23 Kaindi 2013.

24 Kaldor, Selchow 2012: 1, 8.

25 Kaldor, Selchow 2012: 2.

happen,” thus creating a specific resonance in the mainstream political debate.²⁶ “The protests and demonstrations, the new political initiatives and the new parties, are not necessarily a reaction to austerity. They were and are about a profound loss of trust in current political élites.”²⁷

In an attempt to capture the specificity of these displays of social dissent, Kaldor and Selchow²⁸ point to their following characteristics. First, they are said to express general frustration with the failure of the political elite and with political practices. They are also said to express frustration with the lack of meaningful participation. Second, they are of emancipatory, rather than of populist, nature. Third, they pioneer their own forms of participation as well as techniques of dialogue and democratic practice. Fourth, the participants place emphasis on the subjective experience of participating in politics in a new way. Alternative forms of protest are seen as an attempt to reconstruct democracy out of the participants’ own actions. Fifth, experimenting with different forms of participation such as daily assemblies and consensus decision-making, results in horizontality and ‘leaderlessness’ of these mobilizations. Sixth, marginal emphasis is placed on ‘Europe’ as a political community or as a public space. Except for a small ‘expert minority,’ Europe is invisible. Seventh, mobilizations of this sort tend to be smaller, less widespread, less joined up, more localized and less interconnected than similar phenomena in previous years. Most importantly, it is suggested in the same report that the 2011 and 2012 protests expressed dissent with failures of democracy, rather than represented a case against austerity policies.²⁹

If a kind of kinship between ‘indignados’ and ‘Occupy’ can be established, then an interesting view on ‘indignados’ emerges from quite recent volumes published in the US on the ‘Occupy’ protests.³⁰ One of their distinctive features is that ‘Occupy’ “foreswore a concrete political agenda – a choice that in the eyes of Occupiers themselves was vindicated by the course of events.”³¹ Although they would raise a number of complaints against the political and economic order, they did not offer any ideas about how to address them; nor did they present any political postulates to the authorities. It is argued that the fact that the Occupiers did not present a “reasonable set of demands ... was precisely about disobeying that kind of conventional

political grammar [that would require them to do so].”³²

This instance of “political disobedience” is another feature of ‘Occupy’. That is, in contrast to traditional civil disobedience understood as “accepting the consequences of breaking selected laws in order to highlight the injustice of those laws,” “political disobedience” is about refusing to engage with the existing political order at all.³³ Another frequently noted feature of ‘Occupy’ is diversity. It is said to positively condition their power and political impact.³⁴ From a different angle, similarly as the ‘indignados,’ Occupiers seem to be excited by the allegedly new forms of participation, including assemblies and consensus-based decision-making process. The notion of subjective experience and the process of reconstructing democracy out of their own actions blend with the “festive, expressive and artful”³⁵ nature of Occupy and ‘indignados.’ As one of the commentators phrased it though,

“The aesthetic, self-expressive value of the Occupy movement is undeniable – and clearly inspiring for many. If those disempowered by the political rot and economic false dawn that led to the crisis found Zuccotti Park to be a place of therapy, of re-empowerment, that is something to celebrate.”³⁶

Another take on ‘indignados’ sees them as large-scale action-networks. In this view their defining feature is the innovative way they use digital media. Research suggests that it goes beyond sending and receiving messages. Networks of this kind employ modern communication technologies to enable personalized public engagement. Communication becomes in this context “a prominent part of their organizational structure in stark contrast to social movements and issue advocacy.”³⁷ The phenomenon of ‘indignados’ is seen as a large-scale action-network. In this view it is “based on connective action, i.e. based on personalized content sharing across media networks; dependent on it; introducing digital media changes thus the core dynamics of the action.”³⁸

The academic debate triggered by the ‘indignados’-style protests across Europe, as well as by the ‘Occupy’ demonstrations in the US, is very

26 Kaldor, Selchow 2012: 5.

27 Kaldor, Selchow 2012: 8.

28 Kaldor, Selchow 2012: 1-16.

29 Kaldor, Selchow 2012.

30 Graeber 2013; Lasn 2012; Mitchell 2013.

31 Sandbu 2013.

32 Harcourt 2013.

33 Harcourt 2013.

34 Wolf 2012.

35 Lasn 2013.

36 Sandbu 2013.

37 Bennett, Segelberg 2012.

38 Bennett, Segelberg 2012.

consistent in its depiction of the basic characteristics of these mobilizations. A coherent picture of ‘indignados’ emerges where diversity, vaguely defined interests and a plethora of incoherent complaints, lack of concrete political postulates, are expressed in a festive and artful manner. Rather than on politics, their focus is directed on the process of debating and re-inventing democracy. Europe and its policies remain nevertheless largely absent from the “interminable debates on procedure that run into the early morning.”³⁹ In some respects, the academic debate endows ‘indignados’ with unfounded gravity and validates claims of their alleged transformative role in modern society. As a result, a one-off event (even if spread across the continent) is cast into a social phenomenon, a new form of social mobilization; prematurely so. The following section, by reference to the case of Greece, adds empirical focus to this discussion.

3. AGANAKTISMENI, I.E. GREEK ‘INDIGNADOS’

The crisis in Greece attracted considerable attention worldwide and over time acquired the status of an icon in the discourse on the crisis. It represented many (social, political, economic) problems and challenges that other countries tried by recession are facing today, Greece represents a laboratory of the crisis. As the sovereign-debt crisis and the ensuing recession worked as catalysts for the Spring 2011 protests, a glimpse at the Greek *aganaktismeni* should be informative of certain features/tendencies inherent in the ‘indignados’-style happenings elsewhere in Europe.

Accounts on the sources of the sovereign-debt crisis in the Greece and the ensuing recession are numerous in the literature. Essentially, a set of endogenous (including delayed structural reforms, overregulation, an abusive role of the state in the economy) and exogenous (including the secondary consequences of the 2008 global financial crisis) variables led Greece to the brink of losing access to financial markets in early 2010 and contributed to the escalation of the crisis onwards.⁴⁰ As a means of avoiding default, the Greek government requested financial assistance from the EU and the International Monetary Fund. Since May 2010 three financial assistance and reform programmes for Greece were launched. Two generous debt restructuring schemes followed. The major objective of the two Economic Adjustment Programmes was to restore Greece’s fiscal balance, ensure its solvency, modernize its economy and revive growth. However, since the official level

of unemployment in Greece reached the dramatic level of at least 27% at the end of 2012 and macroeconomic indicators displayed a fifth successive year of economic recession (-7.1% GDP in 2011 and ca. -6.4% GDP in 2012), the appropriateness and efficiency of the assistance and reform programmes for Greece remains an open question. In this context of enduring recession, rising unemployment and poverty, faced with parliamentary debate on additional fiscal austerity measures, a peaceful 40-days gathering took place on the Constitution Square in front of the Greek Parliament in Athens in May-June 2011.

The media eagerly drew comparisons between the events in Madrid and those in Athens, hailing the return to democracy.⁴¹ “The public debates of the outraged in Athens are the closest we have come to democratic practice in recent European history.”⁴² The 40-days gathering represented a spontaneous grassroots mobilization that involved individuals of different interests, such as unemployed, students, public employees, pensioners etc. that shared the same vague and general resentment toward the government and the parliamentarians. This peaceful street demonstration sought to reproduce the methods of protest employed in Madrid, with one or two tents set to “occupy” the square and with some groups of demonstrators engaging with activities like dancing, chanting and performing etc. The attendance would decrease day by day, however, and eventually the Constitution Square emptied. No similar event has taken place in Athens since.

Of course, some argue that the Greek *aganaktismeni* did not disappear; that they returned to their neighbourhoods to engage with other forms of activism. In this line of argumentation, the June 2011 gathering served as a catalyst and a social setting necessary for the surge of localised, grassroots activism.

“...two years on, local people are attempting to help those worst affected by the crisis, those who’ve slipped off the bottom rung. ... [Constitution] Square’s occupiers forged strong networks of thriving – if underfunded and under-equipped – neighbourhood assemblies that provide the services the state has cut.”⁴³

By means of clarification, assistance to people in hardship is not necessarily a form of activism, particularly – as it is the case in Greece – where help and support networks are organized first and foremost by the

39 Robinson 2011: 8.

40 Visvizi 2012a.

41 See also: Visvizi 2012b.

42 Douzinas 2011.

43 Wilshire 2013.

Church, by the municipalities, by private TV stations and by some political movements/parties. From a different angle, although *aganaktismeni* disappeared from the Constitution Square, attempts at keeping the concept alive can be identified. Though not very successful, these attempts have a lesson to offer in that their genuine character needs to be questioned. For instance, a website *aganaktismeni*⁴⁴ has been launched as a platform of mobilization. The website's logo displays a slogan typical to the left-wing organizations, i.e. "United for the world change." The same website features a link to an amateur film⁴⁵ that seeks to re-create 'Greek indignados' as a valid and functioning form of social mobilization. In this production, Athens' meat market is employed as a metaphor of social butchery being the outcome of austerity measures implemented by the government. – Even if, under certain circumstances, the artistic value of the production could be derived from its references to naturalism, the value of the arguments (displaying ignorance, lack of knowledge, and bias) presented therein cannot be defended. The point is that the website – and for that matter other sites⁴⁶ of similar content – and the film, as well as networking that frames these sorts of activities, are not representative of the spontaneous grassroots mobilization of May-June 2011. On the contrary, the idea that spurred the mobilizations of 2011– as well as the 'brand' that they acquired – is abused for political purposes.

Clearly, media coverage on Greece gives reasons to believe that protest is inherent in the Greek crisis. On the one hand, the media may have accustomed foreign viewers to images of demonstrations, protests, and riots as being the day-to-day reality of Greece. On the other hand, the demonstrations and riots – usually accompanied by pictures of violence – used to be interpreted by Western media as voices of social discontent and resistance to austerity measures introduced by the government since 2010. The point is that the specific to the media 'selective reporting' on developments in a country, reporting driven by 'highlights' and 'breaking news,' like a false mirror produces dysmorphic images of reality. The Greek reality is more complex than that. That is, apart from the 40-day *aganaktismeni* demonstration of Spring 2011, two more groups of protesters should be distinguished.

First, there are demonstrations and marches recognizable in the media coverage for their frequently provocative eye-catching banners. These demonstrations are organized by trade unions representing, depending on the context, different cohorts of the public sector employees. Owing their

44 <http://www.aganaktismenoi.com>.

45 Menditto, Ricca, 2012.

46 <http://www.crisis-scape.net/about>

privileges, power, fixed assets, and frequently political careers to the socialist PASOK, the unionists remain unwilling to give up any of their privileges for the sake of restoring fiscal balance and possibly implementing some structural reforms. As ever, the degree of politicization of these mobilizations is very high. Today, in contrast to protests of the last 10 years or so, their major political affiliation is that of SYRIZA rather than of PASOK. Second, the broader international audience may be familiar with images of bursting Molotov cocktails, fire, and devastation of the city. Riots in Athens are not anything new. For the last 15 years or so, anarchists have been organizing violent disturbances in the centre of Athens once or twice per year with or without any specific justification. The scale and the magnitude of these kinds of violent riots fluctuate over time. For instance, the scale of the riots of May 2011 – misinterpreted as something exceptional and directly related to the EU/IMF rescue package – was of an average intensity.⁴⁷

Overall, Greek 'indignados,' albeit inspired by developments in Madrid the same year, substantiate an argument of failed mobilisation. The Spring 2011 gathering in Athens was not matched by similar street happenings afterwards; *aganaktismeni* prove to have been a short-lived phenomenon. Interestingly though, the powerful 'brand' that this mobilization acquired thanks to media interest, has outlived the idea itself. Today, it is being misused as a means of attracting interests, support and participation in mobilizations serving very specific political interests. The following section will dwell on the question of why the protests proved short-lived, but also offers an insight into this issue.

4. A FASHION PASSÉ, I.E. REFLECTIONS ON THE MEANING OF 'INDIGNADOS'

'Indignados' brought a wave of fresh air into the overly technical debate on the crisis largely incomprehensible for a layman. Spontaneity, enthusiasm and diversity served as the engines behind the gatherings and the source of their popularity. Although the media, and to a large extent the academia, embarked on a project of validating the relevance of 'indignados' casting them as a novel form of social mobilization, the mass street protests that peaked in Spring 2011 proved a short-lived phenomenon. A nexus was established by the media between the protests and the way of managing the eurozone crisis. Research suggests nevertheless that the protests served as an expression of overall frustration of the society with the political elite, not so much with the crisis. The debates on austerity and democracy in times of crisis offered arguments to legitimize the displays of popular dissent,

47 Visvizi 2012a: 26.

which then were cast by the media and some academics as a new form of social mobilization. As the case of Greece suggests, after initial outbursts of enthusiasm the protestors returned homes. Similarly, the protests in Italy serve as a case of failed mobilization.⁴⁸ Even in Spain, La Puerta del Sol, “is a relic of the past.”⁴⁹ In this view, ‘indignados’ was a one-off event and people’s participation in demonstrations of this kind was a matter of a fashion.

Against this backdrop, to address the question of why ‘indignados’ proved short-lived it is useful to consider the following hypotheses: Were ‘indignados’ unified by dissent or rather were they carried away by naïve enthusiasm and delusion? How should one interpret diversity, ‘leaderlessness’ and horizontality identified as their defining characteristics? How novel are the forms of participation that ‘indignados’ embarked on? How democratic is their attempt at re-creating democracy out of their own action?

In the media narrative on the protests, ‘indignados’ were cast as a uniform movement, i.e. unified by discontent with the policies of austerity and their alleged negative impact on the state of democracy in the EU. Berseman⁵⁰ suggests that diversity inherent in ‘Occupy’ served as a source of their power. In this view, diversity was linked with an open character of the mobilization, which in this way was particularly attractive to a variety of supporters. As the critical mass of protestors gathered, their bargaining power increased. However, evidence presented in the literature suggests that since diversity requires complex interaction, rather than constituting a source of power it served as an obstacle to mobilization and its efficacy.⁵¹ As diversity led to internal breaks, the inability to bypass differences and political divides, had undermined the protestors’ ability to employ their potential efficiently. The study of the Spanish case confirms this: That is, the Spanish ‘indignados’ split into “activists from alternative social movements and the other emerging around the ‘young indignados.’”⁵² As a result, “a drift [emerged] ... within the movement from merely citizenist positions towards others which [were] more clearly anticapitalist.”⁵³

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HOW DEMOCRATIC IS THEIR ATTEMPT AT
RE-CREATING DEMOCRACY OUT OF THEIR OWN
ACTION?

48 Zamponi 2012.

49 Robinson, 2011: 8.

50 Wolff 2012.

51 Zamponi 2012.

52 Taibo 2013.

53 Taibo 2013.

Diversity and mass require discipline and organization. These two are, however, incompatible with ‘indignados’ claims about ‘leaderlessness’ and horizontality. On the one hand, attracting considerable numbers of participants required a form of coordination, be it via social media. On the other hand, making the masses of protestors occupy the squares demanded at least a minimum form of organization. In this view, ‘leaderlessness’ was a delusion. In a similar manner, the existence of internal breaks in mobilizations⁵⁴ suggests that claims to leadership were not alien to protestors. Thus, the argument of ‘leaderlessness’ may suggest that people who steered the mobilizations remained unknown. In this way, however, a shadow is cast on the alleged spontaneity of the protests.

Reflecting on the forms of participation implemented during the occupations and on ‘indignados’ urge to re-create democracy triggers the following thoughts. On the one hand, the forms of participation such as popular assemblies and consensus-voting are not new to history. Let alone that abuses of the free and democratic character of these methods of participation were reported in ‘Occupy.’⁵⁵ However, the fundamental problem with ‘indignados’ claims about democracy is that by seeking to re-construct it out of their own subjective experience, in essence they are undemocratic. In other words, by voicing the argument ‘real democracy now,’ they express a belief in the superiority of their take on democracy as compared to the existing democratic system. By occupying public space, thus making it inaccessible to others, they ignore the principles of the democratic process to induce change. This is not democratic.

At the discursive level, ‘indignados’ (or maybe we should say their certain politicized factions) talk about the establishment of a new form of decision-making that prospectively would replace the existing one. In this view, ‘indignados’ are quite authoritarian in their claims, whereby the legitimacy of these claims, so it seems, is derived from the mass of protestors. The point here is that the sheer mass of those who demonstrated neither makes their arguments valid nor gives them the right to impose them on the rest of the society. Let alone that the June 2011 protestors raised a plethora of claims. The virtues of democracy should not be derived solely from majority rule. That the majority of voters may be right about a given issue does not derive from the fact that they outnumber their counterparts. Likewise, the counterparts are not wrong because there are less of them.⁵⁶

54 Zamponi 2012; Taibo 2013.

55 Sandbu 2013.

56 Visvizi 2012b.

Protests and demonstrations may serve as a way of expressing dissatisfaction but in order for it to be valid eventually protestors need to succumb to the democratic process. Since the ‘indignados’ did not, their impact on politics was doomed to be very limited. Overall, it seems that ultimately, diversity – so crucial to their popularity – proved the biggest weakness of ‘indignados.’ In this context, attempts to portray the ‘Occupy’ or ‘indignados’ failure as their deliberate withdrawal to political disobedience⁵⁷ or to other forms of activism⁵⁸ are not convincing enough for one to overlook the fact that they vanished into thin air. That the discussion on ‘indignados’ continues in some circles indicates either that some refuse to acknowledge the fact that ‘indignados’ are a fashion passé or that the idea and the brand are abused for very specific political purposes.

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photo by T. Lazar

Frozen man heating in the light of the morning sun, *Zuccotti Park, New York*

THE MOLECULAR STRIKE¹

GERALD RAUNIG

TRANSLATED BY AILEEN DERIEG

essay

17 SEPTEMBER 2011. A DEMONSTRATION MARCH THROUGH LOWER MANHATTAN CHOOSES AS THE DESTINATION OF ITS DÉRIVE A SMALL PARK NEAR THE ENORMOUS CONSTRUCTION SITE OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER. ZUCCOTTI PARK IS A FORMERLY PUBLIC, NOW PRIVATIZED SQUARE BELONGING TO THE REAL ESTATE CORPORATION BROOKFIELD PROPERTIES, NAMED AFTER ITS CHAIRMAN JOHN ZUCCOTTI. ON OLDER MAPS OF THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT, HOWEVER, THIS SQUARE HAS A DIFFERENT NAME: LIBERTY PLAZA. THE DEMONSTRATORS HAVE NOT CHOSEN TO OCCUPY THIS TERRITORY BECAUSE OF A UNIVERSALIST INVOCATION OF FREEDOM, BUT RATHER BECAUSE THEY WANT TO SET A FURTHER COMPONENT OF THE ABSTRACT MACHINE IN MOTION THAT HAS DRAWN LINES OF FLIGHT THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE YEAR, ESPECIALLY THROUGH THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION.

And the most intensive line of this abstract machine was probably the Egyptian part of the Arab Spring with its center in Tahrir Square, the “Place of Freedom.” By purposely occupying another place of freedom at the edge of Wall Street, the precarious occupiers seek not only to interrupt subservient deterritorialization, the flows through the global financial center, but they also take up the practices, with which current activisms de- and re-territorialize their times, their socialities, their lives in new ways. In his last course with the title “The Courage of Truth”¹ Michel Foucault explored the scandalous life of the Cynics, to which he applied the colorful term of “philosophical activism.”² It was not his intention to attribute a privileged position to the activity of the philosophers, even less to reduce activism to a cognitive capacity. Rather, the Cynic philosopher served as a backdrop for a more general form of activism, of changing the world, of newly inventing worlds. For Foucault in later years, philosophical activism was an “activism in the world and against the world.”

The Cynic philosopher is, first of all, the exemplary, anecdotal, almost mythical figure of Diogenes, with no permanent residence, at most a tub, living his life completely in public, scandalously all the way to masturbating in public, practicing *parrhesia*, the manner of “saying everything,” even if it is associated with great risk, which in Cynicism conjoins the art of existence with the discourse of truth. Foucault’s endeavor of a “history of life as possible beauty” situates this old Greek Cynicism as the pivotal point of a whole genealogy of scandalous, disobedient, self-forming forms of living. Foucault sees historical actualizations of Cynic activism in the minoritarian heretical movements of the Middle Ages, in the political revolutions of modernity, and – somewhat surprisingly – in the theme of the artist’s life in the nineteenth century. And here I would add to the Foucaultian genealogy the new activisms of the twenty-first century: anti-globalization movement, social forums, anti-racist no border camps, queer-feminist activisms, transnational migrant strikes, Mayday movements of the precarious. Now since last year there has been a tremendous intensification of these new activisms in the wider Mediterranean region: from the waves of university occupations to the revolutions of the Arab Spring, all the way to the movements of occupying central squares in Greece, Spain and Israel. Day-long sit-ins at the Kasbah Square in Tunis, revolutionary occupations of Tahrir Square in Cairo, Acampadas in the Puerta del Sol in Madrid, tents

1 Foucault 2011.

2 The original French term “militantisme” is translated in the English version of the course as “militancy.”

in the Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv. Much could be said about what these new activisms have in common. They are all about appropriating real places, about a struggle against precarization, against extreme competition and against the drivenness of contemporary production, largely dispensing with representation and weaving a transnational concatenation of social movements. There are, however, three specific vectors, on which these activisms enter new territory: in their search for new forms of living, in their organizational forms of radical inclusion, and in their insistence on re-appropriating time.

1. INVENTING NEW FORMS OF LIVING

When Foucault brings art into play, following the revolutions in his genealogy of the Cynics, it is not classical aesthetics or an existentialist theory of art that concerns him, but rather art that is “capable of giving a form to existence which breaks with every other form,”³ a form that forms itself, newly invents itself, an “aesthetics of existence.” Aesthetics as ethics, as the invention of new modes of subjectivation and of new forms of living (together), existence as aesthetic object, life as a beautiful work. This ethico-aesthetic aspect of forming life is by no means to be understood as an individualistic stylization of life: even though dandyism and existentialism certainly also belong to the genealogy of the aesthetics of existence, the term does not refer to an aesthetization of the artist’s existence. Instead, Foucault’s examples go in the direction of relationship, of exchange, and not in the direction of the pure and autonomous implementation of a self-relation. Forming life as living together takes place at the microphysical and the macrophysical level, in the forming of the individual body, in the forming of social relations. In his lecture, Foucault explicitly says about this: “By basing the analysis of Cynicism on this theme of individualism, however, we are in danger of missing what from my point of view is one [of its] fundamental dimensions, that is to say, the problem, which is at the core of Cynicism, of establishing a relationship between forms of

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FORMING LIFE AS LIVING TOGETHER TAKES PLACE AT THE MICROPHYSICAL AND THE MACROPHYSICAL LEVEL, IN THE FORMING OF THE INDIVIDUAL BODY, IN THE FORMING OF SOCIAL RELATIONS

³ Foucault 2011.

existence and manifestation of the truth.”⁴ Philosophical activism is not about a model philosophical or artistic life beyond relations, at the edge of the world. Cynics live in the midst of the world, against the world, with the horizon of an *other* world; in Foucault’s words, they have “laid down this otherness of an *other* life, not simply as the choice of a different, happy, and sovereign life, but as the practice of an activism on the horizon of which is an *other* world.”⁵

This understanding of an other life enabling an other world applies all the more to the collective Cynicism, or rather: the molecular Cynicism of the new activisms today. In this kind of molecular Cynicism, it is not the individual philosopher, not the dandyesque artist, not the existentialist activist that is at the center, but rather the exchange relations of singularities testing disobedient, non-subservient, industrious forms of living.

If today’s revolutions are not only taken as molar, as – in a narrow sense – political projects, but rather also as molecular revolutions, then the aesthetics of existence takes its place alongside the political project as a “continual and constantly renewed work of giving form [to life],”⁶ to living together. A contemporary concept of molecular revolution requires the ethico-aesthetic level of transforming forms of living into a beautiful and good life, as well as the becoming of forms of living together across continents: micro-machines, which in their singular situativity form disobedient modes of existence and subjectivation, develop arts of existence and life techniques, as well as translocally dispersed, global abstract machines. The molecular revolution also comprises the “ethical revolution” that is called for at the end of the manifesto of the Spanish occupiers of M-15. The multitude that occupied the many main squares of Spain beginning on 15 May for several weeks is not particularly interested in gaining symbolic space and media attention. The occupiers take over the occupied squares, they appropriate them and make them their own, even though they know they are only there for a certain time. This time, however, is decisive, an extraordinarily important time of their lives, the time of assemblies and the social time of living together, of residing and sleeping in the occupied squares. Their new ethico-aesthetic paradigm seeks revolution in the forming of their own lives and of living together. The call for an ethical revolution is thus not at all a kind of first demand for different, better politicians, nor simply the obvious demand that corrupt

⁴ Foucault 2011.

⁵ Foucault 2011.

⁶ Foucault 2011.

politics should resign as a whole. Instead, it is a demand to themselves, a call for fundamental transformations, for the fabrication of non-subservient machinic modes of living, for disobedient industries, for non-conforming forms of living together.

2. INVENTING NEW MODES OF ORGANIZATION

When today's activism turns against a one-sidedly molar procedure, this does not mean that they neglect aspects of organization and reterritorialization. Yet the streaking of time and space finds its own molecular procedures. Molecular modes of organization are not organic, but rather orgic-industrious, not centered around representation, but non-representationist, not hierarchically differentiating, but radically inclusive. Molecularity does not focus on taking over state power, but it takes effect in the pores of everyday life, in the molecules of forms of living. Molar organization arises as striating reterritorialization, it focuses struggles on a main issue, a main contradiction, a master. In a molecular world of dispersion and multiplicity, a different form of reterritorialization is needed, inclusive and transversal, beyond individual or collective privileges. Transversality means that the movements of reterritorialization and deterritorialization do not pursue particular goals; they do not establish and secure privileges. Instead they smooth and streak territories by crossing through them. The special rights of every single singularity are diametrically opposed to all individual or collective privileges. Yet these special rights only exist where every singularity can fully live its own specialness, try out its own form of concatenation, streak its own time. There is no privileged position for the intellectuals, for art or activism. Molecular struggles are struggles that emerge incidentally and spread further through what is incidental to the incidentals. No master heads the molecular organization.

The Cynic philosopher is an anti-king. Philosophical activism is not practiced in the form of sects, communities, in the form of small numbers. Instead, there is no community at all in Cynicism; the Cynic form of philosophical activism is, according to Foucault, "in the open, as it were, that is to say, an activism addressed to absolutely everyone."⁷ This kind of openness evolves in the practice of the new molecular activism. In the language of the activists it places radical inclusion at the center of assemblies, discussions and actions. An "activism addressed to absolutely

everyone," and yet nevertheless not operating universalistically, but transversally, like the tent camp in the Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv, for example, following which the largest demonstration for social justice in the history of Israel took place in early September 2011. Radical inclusion means here, most of all, establishing an open milieu, in which the right to a place to live is not only demanded for everyone, but also acted out straight away in protest. The tent assemblages, the assemblies, the discussions are already living examples of the radical inclusion and transversality of the movement.

In the case of #occupy wallstreet, the tendency to radical inclusion is evident primarily in the invention and development of general assemblies. These are not so much "general assemblies" in the conventional sense, but rather transversal assemblages of singularities, which renew the grassroots-democratic experiences of the anti-globalization and social forums movement, further developing them into a form of polyvocality – for instance in the invention, almost by chance and out of necessity, of a new procedure of "amplification:" because the police forbid them to use microphones, megaphones or other technical means, they began to repeat every single sentence from the speakers in chorus. The functionality of this repetition consists, first of all, in making the speech intelligible for hundreds of people in an open air setting. Yet the chorus as amplification here is neither a purely neutral medium of conveyance nor a euphoric affirmation of the speakers. It can happen that the chorus, whose voice is speaking the same thing, proves to be radically polyvocal and differentiated: one voice supports the speaker with hand signs, the next declares dissent with other hand signs, and the third has turned away from the speaker to better ensure the amplifying function for the others listening.

3. INDUSTRIOUS RE-APPROPRIATION OF TIME

Just as the Cynic philosopher seeks scandal in the offensive transparency of his life, the new activism speaks clearly by taking the empty promise of "public space" at its word. This is the exercise, as widely visible as possible, of deviant modes of subjectivation, not or not only in the nakedness, placelessness and promiscuity of the Cynics, but most of all in playing with the paradox of the public: public space does not exist, and most of all not in the smooth spaces of urban centers, whether they are the touristic non-places of the Puerta del Sol or the Rothschild Boulevard, whether it is

⁷ Foucault 2011.

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THE OCCUPIERS TAKE THE SPACE AND TIME
SERIOUSLY THAT THEY SET UP, STRIATE, STREAK,
TAKING TIME FOR LONG, PATIENT DISCUSSIONS
AND TAKING TIME TO STAY IN THIS PLACE,
DEVELOPING A NEW EVERYDAY LIFE, EVEN
IF ONLY FOR A SHORT TIME

the privatized sphere of Zuccotti Park, or whether it is the heavy traffic of Tahrir Square. And yet, or specifically because of this, the new activisms occupy the central squares, turn them into common-places, as a paradoxical provocation of normativity and normalization. And beyond this spatial re-territorialization, it is primarily the re-appropriation of time that marks the protestors' modes of action. In the midst of the nervous poly-rhythms of precarious life, in the midst of this mixture of drivenness and melancholy, they invent a surplus, in the midst of subservience they create a desire to not be taken into service in that way. In the midst of hurried timelessness, the precarious strikers insist on different time-relations, they streak the time in the patience of assemblies, in spreading out living, residing, sleeping in the squares, feeling their way to the first rudimentary possibilities of a new form of resistance, the molecular strike.

The occupiers take the space and time seriously that they set up, striate, streak, taking time for long, patient discussions and taking time to stay in this place, developing a new everyday life, even if only for a short time. In an otherwise boundless everyday life, the molecular strike spreads out these small new durations of everyday life. Its institution, however, first requires an eventual break with subservient deterritorialization in machinic capitalism. The molecular strike is both: duration and break. It is not leaving, not dropping out of this world, no time-out. The molecular strike is the breach in the time regime of subservient deterritorialization that we drive in, in order to try out new ways of living, new forms of organization, new time relations. No longer a struggle merely to reduce working time, but rather for an entirely new streaking of time as a whole. In machinic capitalism, it is a matter of the whole, the totality of time, its entire appropriation. The molecular strike struggles for its reappropriation, its streaking, piece by piece. The new Wobblies will be no Industrial Workers of the World, but rather Industrious Workers of the world, a gigantic industry carrying everything along with it, not submitting to subservient deterritorialization, at the same time a reterritorialization, an industrious refrain, a dangerous class that will no longer let its time be stolen.

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[UN]GRATEFUL SLAVE

GENDER DIMENSION OF THE "DANGEROUS CLASS" OF PRECARIAT

IZA DESPERAK

article
abstract

THIS TEXT ANALYZES THE ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF THE TERM AND CONCEPT 'PRECARIAT'. IT PRESENTS THE CONCEPT OF GUY STANDING FROM A WIDER PERSPECTIVE AND IN COMPARISON WITH THE IDEAS OF ZYGMUNT BAUMAN, GEORGE RITZER, JEREMY RIFFKIN AND IMMANUEL WALLERSTEIN. IT FOCUSES ON THE GENDER DIMENSION OF PRECARIETY IN CONTEMPORARY WORK AND LIFE, AND POINTS OUT THE PARTICULAR PHENOMENON OF THE 'UN-GRATEFUL SLAVE', PREVIOUSLY USED TO DESCRIBE GENDER-RELATED MECHANISMS OF LABOR MARKET DISCRIMINATION. THE PAPER TRIES TO ANSWER WHETHER GENDER DIFFERENTIATES THE SITUATION OF MEMBERS BELONGING TO THIS 'NEW DANGEROUS CLASS' OR IF PRECARIETY MEANS MORE EQUALITY IN INEQUALITY. THE EMPIRICAL BASIS IS DRAWN FROM SEVERAL RESEARCHES, CONDUCTED BY THE AUTHOR IN LODZ, POLAND, BETWEEN 2004 AND 2010.

keywords

PRECARIAT, PRECARIOUS LABOR, FEMINISM, GENDER, DISCRIMINATION, WOMEN, INEQUALITY

The term 'grateful slave' was coined by Catherine Hakim, and popularized in Polish discourse by Henryk Domański, who used it as a title of his two books describing the situation of women in the new labor market of the transforming societies of Central Europe.

The term, referring to a past racist society, describes the paradox of women's surprising satisfaction with unsatisfactory occupations and unsatisfactory positions in the labor market. In a way, women replace previous slaves, also accepting their subordinate position. This paradox is often used to explain the practice of discrimination – women seeing themselves in stereotypical categories, having lower salary expectations than men, accepting worse working conditions and being less determined in demanding a raise or promotion. It might also be used to accuse women of self-discrimination: "it is your own fault, isn't it?," as in the case of American journalist, Mika Brzezinski, arguing that women deserve lower pay so long as they don't ask for a rise. Although no one accuses the Afro-Americans or ancient Rome slaves of being responsible for their slavery, such accusations are used against contemporary demands for equal pay. In fact, this phenomenon occurs not only in the case of gender inequality in labor market.

Then, term 'precariat' was coined and popularized by Guy Standing in his work *The Precariat – the new dangerous class*¹ and rapidly became not only popular, but even a fashionable phrase. When I started my first research on precarity, in 2010, the term didn't exist in Polish and was not detected by popular web search tools. Today, even if it is still mainly used in expert discourse, mass media often quote it. Such rapid growth of awareness of this new phenomenon might be explained by its significance – or, otherwise, by the role of journalists, constituting a large part of the precariat (at least in Polish mass media) and thus vividly interested in this subject.

Today in the Polish language the term precariat is often understood narrowly as employing without employment, on the basis of so-called 'trash-contracts' or pressed 'self-employment'. But employment becomes precarious also in different conditions, as in the case of academics, being employed on the basis of temporary or even permanent jobs, but due to new requirements towards this group is recently more often threatened to lose their jobs. Internal divisions in academia are determined by the type of employment: the lowest level is occupied by doctoral students without stipends, then those doctoral students with a scholarship and a few badly paid assistants, or lecturers employed on temporary civil contracts, the highest level is occupied by professors with an equivalent of a tenured position.

¹ Standing 2011.

Precariat is defined not only by precarious work, but also by precarious life. According to Zygmunt Bauman, announcing the decline of stability with the new liquid life in the modern world, labor relation became comparable with love and marriage. In the past, as he points out, both spheres were firm and secure, as determined for a lifetime: you were to perform the same job and have one spouse only. On the contrary, nowadays we can expect neither one job nor one partner, as liquid modernity guarantees none of them and offers insecurity instead. Although the process of loosening bondages of traditional marriage is generally viewed as an advantage of gender revolution, the parallel process in the labor market is criticized. The situation of an employee, who can be fired at any moment, and situation of a wife (or husband), whose partner may leave him/her whenever she/he wants is a situation of subordination and inequality. The employee has less control over his/her own position than the employer; wives have less control than their husbands, and the future of the loving partner is decided by this partner, who doesn't love anymore. Neither an employment contract, nor a marriage certificate result in equal positions of the parties, in case of labor relations the asymmetric hierarchy favors the employers.

Precarious work might have resulted from the Marxian process of alienation of the worker, an experience repeated nowadays by employees of McDonaldized companies as described by George Ritzer.² Jeremy Rifkin's concept of decline of the global labor force³ describes similar processes as precariat theories. The exploitation of a work force sets borders between a core and a periphery as in Wallerstein world system – even if we observe the end of capitalism “as we know it.”⁴ Transformation of work has been a harsh experience of changing Eastern and Central Europe societies, re-introducing free market rules into work relations; with the result that work and world have become precarious in a very short time. New stratification patterns in transforming Polish society are being determined by new divisions concerning the labor market position: divisions between the employed and unemployed, between employers and employees, between self-employed and employees, between temporary workers and permanently employed, between those who benefit from employment contracts and those working illegally, between working in private sector and private one... Only the rapidness of transition could result in great stress or even – according to Janina Frentzel-Zagórska's term; “transitional neurosis.”⁵

Polish diagnoses of transition and new phenomena in the labor market and social structure vary a lot. Marek Ziółkowski points out the

process of re-evaluation of resources.⁶ The old pattern of social stratification was rapidly changing. Some sociologists were looking into the new middle class, absent during the ‘real socialist’ state. Others recorded the ‘new poor’ – not only unemployed, under welfare or excluded by disability or lack of qualifications demanded by new labor market, but also those working full time, but unable to satisfy their basic needs. The first discourse diagnoses of both policy-makers and mass media recommended training and re-training, including not only professional, but also soft skills. Another idea was to accuse wrong specializations of education chosen by the young generations, so the educational and training counselor profession was to be developed. Furthermore, the youngsters themselves were accused of inappropriate educational aspirations, and the workers of too high expectations.

In 2010 I published a research-based text on situation of university graduates in Lodz, the third biggest city in Poland. It was published by ‘FemTank’ (Feministic think tank) as a result of a research project conducted by the Leftist Feminist Network ‘Rozgwiazda’ (Starfish), which intended to research the new phenomenon of precariat. In fact, it happened to be one of the first published research-based texts on the subject. Then, together with Judyta Śmiałek, who worked with me, we tried to study the results on the basis of her own research on workers of a factory located in one of the Special Economic Zones. At the same time I realized, that had met precariat during my previous research projects, without knowing it.

In 2004 my research concerned feminization of poverty. I was 38 then, a mother, had a job, some sort of career, economic independence and my own flat. One of our interviewees was ten years younger, and at 28 she was a graduate with three university degrees in different specializations, living together with her parents, having only some temporary or volunteer jobs and unpaid trainings. In her education she combined acquiring full teaching qualifications with art studies and a specialization in art education. Moreover, she started a new course of fashion design, to fit to the profile of Lodz – a city with textile industry traditions aspiring to become the new centre of fashion. She spent years studying, and was still a student. She tried to work in her field, but apart from a training period succeeded only in getting a short substitute teaching job. To pay for her next studies, she had to take any job. She was completely depending on her parents, living with them and spending all her irregular earnings on the university fees. She never earned a penny for her future pension, nor for social or health benefits, and she started to be afraid that she would never become a pensioner, or even obtain any fulltime job as in next few years, after which time she would be too old to be accepted.

2 Ritzer 1993.

3 Rifkin 1995.

4 Wallerstein 1999.

5 Frentzel-Zagórska 1994.

6 Ziółkowski 1997.

Her story resembled the stories of my next interviewees conducted a few years later. She tried hard to fulfill social and market expectations: to multi-study, become multi-skilled, study expectations and conditions of labor market and plan her career adapting to them – without success. The more she studied the fewer employment chances she had. Although by not specializing in very academic courses, but looking for practical, however professional education, she became over-qualified, as many women at that time. Young women, who learned the lesson of gender discrimination in the labor market, were also trained to believe that thanks to studying and working hard they would be able to overcome that gap. That is why still observe the process of feminization among students, recently also on doctoral level. “Being a woman, you have to be twice as good as a men” – they heard, and they tried to do their best to achieve highest standards. But this does not pay off on the labor. While the research from 2004 focused only on women, in 2010 I met with both men and women with several university diplomas facing the reality of temporary jobs, badly paid and with no chances for promotion, trying to avoid precarious work, but having no escape.

My next contact with precarious work was by occasion also linked with gender-related research. In 2007, together with a group of my students, we organized a social audit (some researchers would classify it as an [anti]-discriminatory experiment).⁷ Seven pairs of students of different sex prepared their ‘twin’ CVs and were to apply for a job. The students were recruited from the advanced group, at the moment of the research the majority of them had both diplomas and important professional experience, so they didn’t have to pretend that. The only falsification in their CV was pretending that both of them, a female and a male one, possessed identical education, qualifications and experience – and that element was thoroughly prepared to seem genuine. The only difference between two candidates according to the CVs- was their sex. Such prepared pairs of candidates were to answer job offers and send their own applications, to be able to take part in the recruitment process. The research main idea was to check whether both candidates were treated equally, and, according to the literature concerning labor market gender discrimination and earlier findings, I expected to find inequalities favoring male candidates. We were to compare both differences in earlier stages of recruitment, as the number of answers for candidates’ applications, the number of invitations to interviews, and the conduct of recruiters (we decided to send both candidates to the same amount of interviews and hoped they would be invited by the same companies when applied for the same positions).

The research results were surprising. First of all both male and female students experienced similar barriers – they didn’t get any answers

for their applications and were not invited to any interviews at the beginning of the research period. In a sense, we found no difference connected with the candidate’s sex, as both sexes were searching a job in vain! After three months and sending hundreds of applications the majority of “candidates” received no answers! Such a failure of twentyish graduates, with a diploma and job experience, having a lot of extra skills (driving license, knowledge of foreign languages, teaching qualifications) was another sign of this growing new class: precariat. The best candidates, whose profiles we had prepared so carefully, were not needed in local labor market. It was nothing new for the participants of the research – many of them had experience of working abroad, after their previous studies or during university vacations, they found working abroad easier then to find than a job with a decent pay in Poland. They possessed a quality which was considered great advantage in transforming Poland: fluent English, some of them were graduates of English philology, and thanks to this they could obtain a bit better jobs in Great Britain than majority of seasonal migrant workers. In comparison with a typical university graduate they were even over-qualified. What could the labor market offer to their less outstanding peers?

To be able to continue our research project we decided that our ‘candidates’ were to accept all jobs, even those not requiring university degree, and to visit shops in newly opened big shopping centre to apply for a assistant job in person. The candidates also tried to apply for typical student vacation jobs, such as waiting in open-air pubs and restaurants. In fact, during six months of the research project, the only job offers found by the candidates proposed the position of shop-assistant or waiter/waitress. But finally, none of the candidates was accepted for such a job in the end.

“

ARGUED IN THE DEBATE ON DEMOCRACY THAT ECONOMIC HARDSHIP CAUSED BY AUSTERITY POLICIES AGGRAVATES FEELINGS OF FRUSTRATION WITH THE CRISIS AND DISSATISFACTION WITH POLICIES IMPLEMENTED BY RESPECTIVE GOVERNMENTS ACROSS EUROPE.

The only jobs they were offered proved to be not jobs at all, and interviews they were invited to – were no interviews at all. The so-called ‘job offers’ were in fact training courses, to be paid by a candidate itself. The organizers of such practices promised employment after the training, but such declarations didn’t look reliable and no one decided to risk his/her own money to check them out. Another trick used by false employers was inviting candidates to what were supposed to be interviews; ask them whether they were ready to prove performing the skills mentioned in their

⁷ Koss-Goryszewska 2010.

CV (communication skills, goal-orientation, and dedication to the job). Candidates who confirmed their will were sent to the street to sell products or services (expensive toothbrushes or frequent user cards) and promised to be paid after they sold an specific amount of them. The direct sale task was not a job, as the 'employees' didn't get any contract, usually they didn't get any money even if they succeeded and sold some products. At the beginning of their workday they were promised that the most successful candidates would be employed – but at the end of the workday they learnt they didn't sell enough to deserve employment or any remuneration. The next day, a new group of deceived candidates were trying to sell something in the street... Another trick was to 'test' the candidates in call centers, and offering them 'trainings' which meant working for free in many cases. Call center jobs were the only real ones the candidates were offered, and in one case a candidate was accepted.

Another surprising result in this research was the gender of the group of most wanted candidates: women got more offers. But the offers either considered jobs considered as typically female ones, as a street seller or call-center operator, or they were offered trainings or unpaid work instead of a job, as described above. Female candidates were preferred as either more talented in communication skills or as more likely to accept obviously deceiving 'offers,' in fact the male candidates more often disapproved invaluable offers. On the one hand women seemed to be more needed by precarious labor market, on the other – by accepting its unfair rules they worsened their own position and legitimized labor market inequality, just as the grateful slave theory, mentioned above, explicates.

The next research project, started in 2010, focused on precarious work. It consisted of a focus group interview with a group of people who could have become Young Urban Professionals ten or twenty years earlier and participant observation of workers at the assembly line in one of the special economic zones. One of the goals of this research was to compare both groups. The first one consisted of graduates and degree holders of Lodz's best universities, aged between 20 and 35. Some of them did more than one MA degree, had various extra skills, competences and diplomas (only two of them hadn't completed the full cycle of their studies at the time of the research). None of them succeeded in the labor market, even though they weren't unemployed, the jobs they managed to get were unsatisfying. First of all, the participants were so badly paid, that they were financially dependent on their parents, some of them living together. Secondly, the jobs were not below the level of their aspirations developed during university studies, and gave no chance of promotion. Moreover, the participants didn't hope to change their professional position in near future, and were frustrated by the contrast between their earlier expectations and the reality of the labor market. The only advantage of their job was they had a position

of white collar and a feeling of superiority over blue collars. However, they were happy having a steady, stable job, finding it a value in precarious labor market.

The second group, studied in the course of hidden participant observation, conducted by Judyta Śmiałek, was constituted by blue collars: workers of one of the factories in Lodz's Special Economic Zone. Precarity of this job is defined by the division of workers into three groups: the foremen and other superiors, having strong bondage with the factory and needed by them; the workers employed with a contract – and thirdly, the group of workers employed through temporary job agencies. Some of the workers were studying; several had also a university degree, but identified themselves as workers. Some of them even expressed superiority over those with a university degree trying to work according to their education and considered them losers, even if envied them more suitable office hours.

Both group of employees – white and blue collars – belonged to the new class of precariat. Low income and low prestige in case of white collars were compensated by stability of their jobs, so they didn't complain openly and were accepting their situation in a way. They internalized the neo-liberal discourse to such extent, that they self-accused themselves for their 'bad luck:' having chosen a wrong specialization or not performing well enough during an interview. They also accused the state's educational policy, responsible for the establishment of new private universities and the – in their opinion – unfair competition of their graduates, "doing their degree just to obtain a job in a warehouse." They didn't express any direct criticism concerning their managers, nor the companies they were working for, even if they broke the labor code and treated employees as slaves – they understood their power and entitled them to act to maximize profits and minimize costs, even when their own rights were just the costs to be reduced.

On the contrary, the blue collars, who considered themselves victims of exploitation, and expressed that (for example in their chat forum complaining being treated as a 'part of a floor, the boss can walk over'), accused the bosses and companies of unfairness and were far away from legitimizing that. The white collars knew their rights – but didn't protest



SUCH A CONCLUSION DOESN'T MEAN THAT EVERYONE TODAY BECOMES A WOMAN IN THE LABOR MARKET, AND WE ARE EQUAL IN INEQUALITY

when someone broke them, accepting un-paid extra working hours as a matter of fact. Blue collars, less educated, knew their own rights and were ready to act to protect them, they would protest fiercely against unpaid extra hours or reduction of the obligatory 15-minutes break, even though their real position in negotiations with employers was much weaker. So, from those two groups, the most privileged, at least by education, were acting as grateful slaves, while the disadvantaged group of temporary workers represented the ethos of a working class, a value so important in the historic 'Solidarity' movement of the 1980s. In a sense, their better educated peers did not only lose this value, but in their collective behavior resembled minority groups, accepting discriminatory conditions without a word of protest. Nevertheless, their attitude can be explained: understanding the general rules of the labor market, having read Bauman and other writers, they decided on an unpopular but logical strategy of exchanging their university degrees for the guarantee of stability in a precarious world. Accepting low salaries and getting rid of formal guarantees of fair treatment in the labor market, accepting slight forms of discrimination and legitimizing a neo-liberal order they believe that will, sooner or later, succeed.

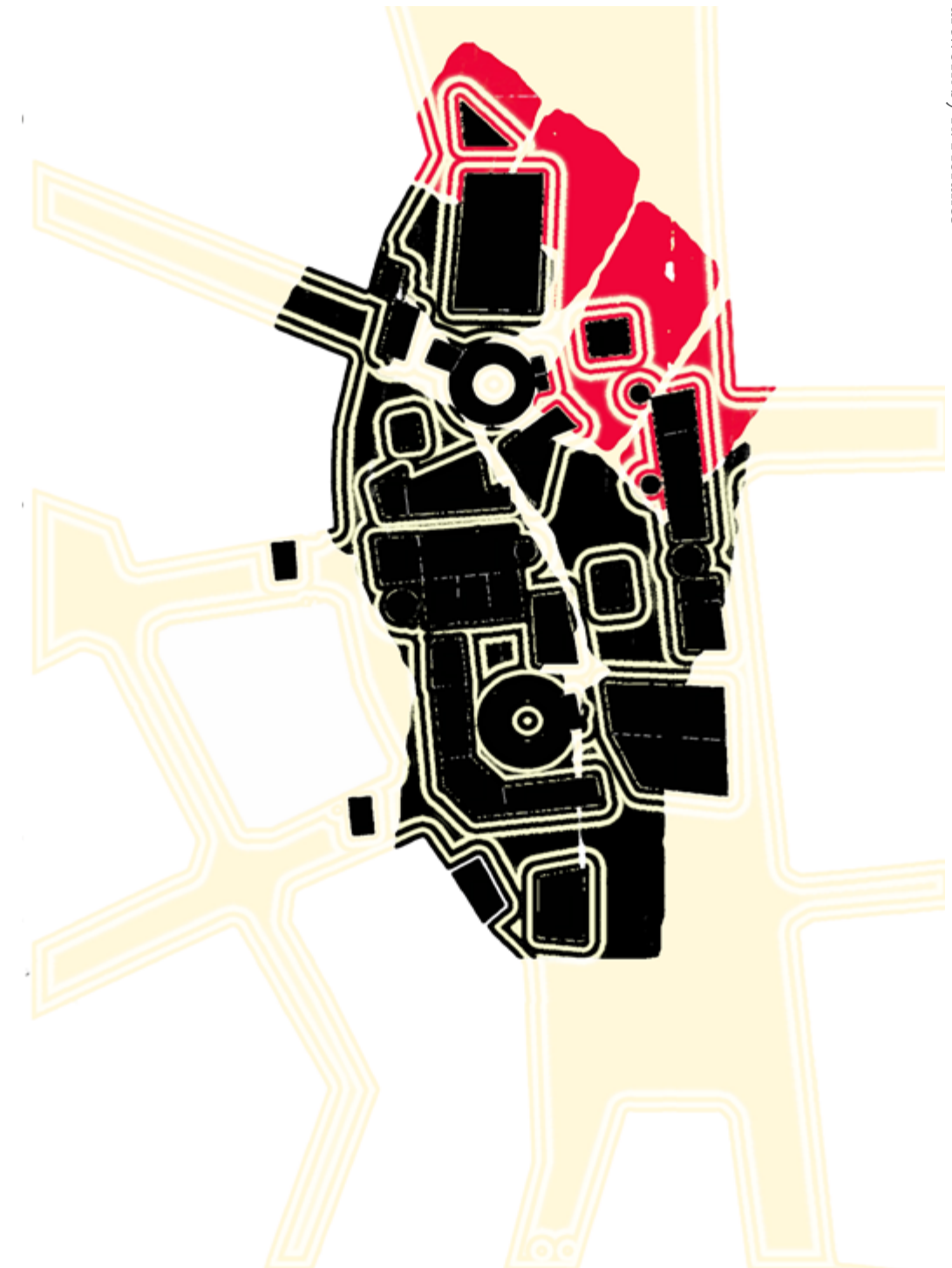
Such a conclusion doesn't mean that everyone today becomes a woman in the labor market, and we are equal in inequality. Women in both groups experienced different consequences of precarious working conditions: Both female and male white collar employees complained that they couldn't decide to have children, even if they wanted to or felt it was high time to do so – the oldest participants of the research were 35 then, and none of them had children. At the moment one of them, whose economic position became more promising, was going to become a father. But in the case of women, the costs of probable parenthood would be higher and meant the risk of losing their job, while a partner's salary wouldn't be sufficient for a living of three. The precarious world is not limited to the labor market, so the risk of losing a partner – or a flat, for instance, increases together with the precarity of the work. In case of the second group, among the factory assembly line workers, who represented wider were parents, who felt pressured to accept the job to support their children, or having decided to take it as an extra job together with the pension, to be able to help their growing-up or grown-up children. More often it were women who were driven by such motivations. As long as mothers are more responsible for children than their fathers - the precarity will be more dangerous for women. Women are also those, who tend to dominate among temporary workers and other victims of the precarious labor market. Future researches on precariat should include gender dimension into analysis tools.

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Urban fist

artwork by R. Floranes

JAPAN'S "LOST GENERATION" A CRITICAL REVIEW OF FACTS AND DISCOURSES

JULIA OBINGER

article
abstract

SOCIAL REALITIES IN JAPAN HAVE BEEN CHANGING FOR ROUGHLY TWO DECADES AND THOSE YOUNG JAPANESE DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY THE „HIRING ICE AGES“ HAVE BECOME KNOWN AS A „LOST GENERATION.“ THE MEDIA DISCOURSE CONCERNING THIS PHENOMENON HAS BEEN DIVERSE, PUTTING FORWARD A NUMBER OF EXPLANATIONS FOR THIS DILEMMA, WHILE OFTEN YOUNGER GENERATIONS HAVE BEEN BLAMED FOR THEIR SITUATION. THIS PAPER CRITICALLY EXAMINES THE FACTS AND DISCOURSES SURROUNDING THE EMERGENCE OF THE „LOST GENERATION“ IN THE 1990S IN JAPAN, HIGHLIGHTING POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS WITHIN THE DISCOURSE.

LOST GENERATION, PRECARIAT, JAPAN, NEET, EDUCATION, UNEMPLOYMENT, POSTGRADUATES, LABOR MARKET

keywords

From the 1990s onwards, Japan has experienced dramatic social and economic shifts that have changed the outlook on Japanese society significantly. Prolonged periods of low economic growth and recessions paired with structural change – meanwhile dubbed as the “lost 20 years” – coincided with a rapidly aging population and led to a pluralization of employment patterns, family structures and gender relations. These phenomena are interrelated in their causes and consequences, while especially the issues of social disparity and precarity have become focal points of social and economic research, consequently attracting significant media coverage and meanwhile leading to a sustainable shift in the self-perception of many Japanese.

WHAT IS THE SPECIFIC BACKGROUND IN JAPAN?

Within the logics of a globalized marketplace and an ever-present need for more flexibility and profit, the basic mechanisms that lead to precarious lifestyles are generic and occur in many nations. Japan is no exception in this regard, but the social structure and institutional frameworks in which these developments are taking place are indeed particular. During the post-war era of high economic growth and general prosperity, Japanese society has come to be seen as “homogenous middle class society.” Though not at all a universal social reality, this image of an equal society was nevertheless largely accepted as a positive collective self-image, which in turn was perpetuated by politicians and journalists. The outlook on Japanese society and social roles was and is moreover shaped by a general belief in meritocracy, self-responsibility (*jiko sekinin*), and the pursuit of financial prosperity. Having said that, Japanese society still works as a rigid circular model comprising the distinct spheres of education, employment and family.¹

The cornerstone of the Japanese social structure is an ideal standard life course where social tasks and roles are allocated according to a highly institutionalized and gendered pattern. Generally speaking, such an ideal life course for men includes attending a prestigious university, subsequently entering civil service or a larger corporation as white-collar employee with a job guaranteed for life and seniority-based wages, as well as becoming the sole breadwinner of a family; for women, education is equally important, whereas her post-graduation life should focus on marrying an “ideal-type” husband, becoming a full-time housewife and raising their – ideally one or two – children in an equally “ideal” fashion. This implicit “standard life course” has significantly shaped the aspirations and experiences of Japanese post-war generations. Following such an institutionalized life course and becoming

¹ Honda 2011.

a *shakaijin* – or full member of Japanese society – implies a guarantee for well-being, stability and happiness; for Japanese society as a whole it meant more than half a century of social, political and economic stability and prosperity. On the downside, there is an immense invisible pressure to conform to these “middle-class” values, and becoming and functioning as a *shakaijin* does not leave much leeway, as deviances in terms of employment, life courses and lifestyles are not exactly encouraged in Japan. It is interesting to note that despite an apparent pluralization of values and lifestyles in recent years, the above mentioned “middle-class ideals” are still attractive for many Japanese, and persist even though social realities have been changing.

Comparative studies have long shown that Japan is not an exception in terms of social homogeneity and mobility, or economic equality in international comparison with other developed nations.² One of the indicators of this actual inequality is the Japanese economic system, where large-scale corporations dominate the Japanese market. These are supported by an intricate network of SME³ subsidiaries, which are excessively dependent on their client corporations. As a consequence, there is a definite duality in terms of working conditions, as larger companies offer their employees superior remuneration packages with extensive fringe benefits, better working conditions, and oftentimes a lot more prestige as compared with those of SMEs. Moreover, there is a fundamental duality between the standard, full-time employees (or *seisha'in*), who work in unlimited employment contracts, and non-permanent, part-timing or free-lancing non-standard workers (*hiseisha'in*). In the Japanese case, there is a strict delineation between these two types of employment, where only a standard employment is perceived as “ideal” in terms of the gendered, normative “standard life-course.”

““MIDDLE-CLASS IDEALS” ARE STILL ATTRACTIVE FOR MANY JAPANESE, AND PERSIST EVEN THOUGH SOCIAL REALITIES HAVE BEEN CHANGING

While the former type of employment usually is associated with a white-collar male employee, females, as well as junior and senior workers overwhelmingly fill the latter type⁴ One should also keep in mind one of the peculiarities of the Japanese hiring system, where the yearly formalized and intensively competitive job-hunt for fresh graduates is the integral step

towards the Japanese “standard life course.” Those who miss this one-off opportunity for securing employment will face repercussions throughout their working life, as mid-career transfers are – at least in larger corporations – rare.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE “LOST GENERATION”

After the 1990s burst of the asset bubble, and when Japan was affected by fallout from the Asian financial crisis and the “Dot-com Crisis,” prolonged periods of economic stagnation and recession followed suit. The ongoing process of deindustrialization moreover aggravated the Japanese crisis, which was also intensified by global competition, the excessively rigid and dualistic labor market paired with a very unfavorable demographic development, as well as an insufficient public welfare system.

From the mid-1990s onwards, these socioeconomic developments in connection with the Japanese employment structure led to the emergence of a “lost generation,” when fresh graduates were amongst the first casualties of the crisis, falling through the cracks of the Japanese hiring system. This “lost generation” (or *rosu jene* in Japanese) is not a clearly defined scientific term, but rather a social category produced by recent discourse. It usually comprises those age cohorts born between the late 1970s and early 1980s, who were trying – but often failing – to get a foothold into the Japanese employment system after the mid-1990s at the height of recession.

Even those who came from renowned schools and colleges, and previously had been recruited already during their senior years, saw their chances of becoming *shakaijin* greatly diminished. The smooth transition from school to work for young graduates faltered because corporations had resorted to a hiring freeze, which was later dubbed „hiring ice age” (*shūshoku hyōgaki*). This hiring freeze hurt young jobseekers most, as the structural particularities of the Japanese system of “lifelong employment” prevented the corporations from laying off their senior workforce. As a result, the jobless-rate amongst those aged 15–29 years rose much steeper than that of older age cohorts during the years 1994 to 2004. The peak of joblessness of new graduates in the age bracket between 20 and 24 was reached in 2003 when it hit 9,8 %, which is nearly double the overall unemployment rate.⁵ Since then, the Japanese job market for graduates has experienced repeated slumps,

² See e.g. Chiavacci 2008.

³ SME: Small and Middle-sized Entity. (Editor’s note – JvdB)

⁴ JILPT 2011

⁵ MIC 2012.

while the post-“Lehman-Shock” era has even been called “super ice age of hiring,” which only recently has shown some weak signs of thawing.⁶

Under these circumstances, most of those searching for jobs however had to significantly downgrade their expectations to less prestigious – and less secured – posts in smaller companies, while some graduates even completely exited the labor market and became *NEET* (short for Not in Education, Employment or Training), of which in 2011 roughly 600.000 persons were counted.⁷ In fact, even for those who bridged the gap with other temporary jobs – roughly comparable to the phenomenon of the *génération précaire* in France and Germany – their prolonged period of “job-hopping” put them at a strong disadvantage in competition for standard employment. What aggravates their situation is that even when the general employment situation temporarily relaxes, the available posts are usually filled with fresh graduates, and *not* with those who have waited for one or several years. Only as recently as in 2010, an “ethics charta” to address this problem was drafted by the Japanese Business Federation, which stipulates the inclusion of recent graduates from the past three years in the yearly pool of applicants.⁸ Still, as a consequence of the employment “ice ages,” the number of young males who are nominally underemployed rose disproportionately and has remained high ever since.⁹

The process of this “casualization of labor” was further facilitated by the gradual neo-liberal reforms by the ruling conservative LDP between 1996 and 2007 (and most famously under Premier Koizumi Jun’ichiro after 2001), which have had a lasting impact on the structure of the Japanese labor market. Initially devised as a measure to bring Japan on par with global competition in a climate of rapid economic change, these reforms led to a growing deregulation of employment in the private sector. As relevant labor laws were relaxed significantly in order to open up new industries for the systematic use of non-regular staff, the number of non-regular employees soared in Japan especially after 1999, amounting to nearly 34% of the total workforce in Japan in 2009.¹⁰

This category of irregular or atypical employment in Japan can further be subdivided into a number of official and unofficial categories, like

part-timers (*pāto*), so-called *Freeters*¹¹, freelancers, day-laborers (*hiyatoi rodōsha*), contract workers (*keiyaku sha’in*) or dispatched workers (*haken sha’in*). It must be noted that not all of these forms of employment structurally led to precarious living conditions, and especially the Japanese service sector has smoothly relied on (female) non-regular staff for decades.

Still, what seems to be the problem now is the ongoing deregulation and opening of further branches for this type of employment, from which the employers benefitted unilaterally: they gained more flexibility with much less financial responsibility in the long run, while simply passing the entrepreneurial risks on to the individual employee. In order to ameliorate the situation for such employees, the government has amended the Worker Dispatch Law in 2006, which however in some cases led to adverse effects: the new legislation maintained that all temporary workers must be transferred to a regular, unlimited employment contract after three full years of working for the same company. But instead of offering a chance for upward mobility, this legislation prompted some employers to terminate temporary staff immediately when their three-year employment period expired. This practice of the so-called *haken-giri* first came to light in late 2008, when a large number of temporary workers in the manufacturing industry were laid off, conspicuously exactly three years after the 2006 legislation came into effect. In order to close these loopholes, a further amendment of the legislation has been passed in late 2012, whose effects are still to be seen.¹²

Facing the above described rigid dual employment system, being underemployed or employed with a temporary contract can prove as a real poverty trap. Most such non-standard forms of employment do neither offer pay rises nor bonuses, paid leave nor holidays, nor access to training nor other fringe benefits. Moreover, many irregular employees do not participate in the state pension scheme (voluntarily or involuntarily), while they receive only little – if any – unemployment assistance.¹³ Thus compared to the standard white-collar contracts, non-standard employment in Japan often spells lower security, lower chances on upward career mobility, as well as the danger of immediate social decline in case of contract termination. Especially workers with a low level of skills and little social and cultural capital have slim chances to hedge against the risks of unemployment and social decline.

6 MHLW 2011.

7 For a thorough discussion of problems concerning this social category, its publications and quantitative aspects, see: Toivonen 2012.

8 MHLW 2011.

9 Kosugi 2006, JILPT 2011.

10 JILPT 2011.

11 One very distinctive group of irregular workers in Japan are the so-called *Freeters*, who are officially defined as 15–34 year old workers, who regularly switch from job to job; many of these posts are on a temporary basis and paid on an hourly basis. While the work done does not necessarily have to be unskilled, a large proportion of *Freeters* can be found in the tertiary sector, working in Japan’s restaurant industry or at convenience stores.

12 MHLW 2012.

13 Obinger 2009a.

Relying on public welfare for these irregular employees is not an option: the current system of social security stems from times of austerity in the mid-1970s, when an emphasis was laid on the “traditional” informal Japanese family-centered welfare (*zaitaku fukushi*), which held citizens responsible for helping themselves and their next of kin. Moreover, this system was based on the then prevailing standard model of a nuclear family with a male breadwinner in full-time employment, where much of the social security was actually provided by employers: with a seniority-based pay-system, generous bonuses and jobs virtually guaranteed for a lifetime, added to subsidized health insurance and pension schemes which often included the employees’ family, an extensive national safety-net seemed unnecessary. Within this logic, only minimal public assistance was granted if either the family safety net was insufficient or failed, or the head of a family became *physically* unable to earn an income. While this system might have worked well in past times of virtual full employment and ongoing economic growth, it clearly does not account for those who are today structurally excluded from the labor market or have no familial or corporate safety net to rely on.¹⁴

Especially the living conditions and future outlook of the “lost generation,” whose chances of ever becoming a regular employee (or *seisha’in*) are slimming, are subject to much concern. Not even speaking of the consequences for private consumption or loss of tax revenue, their low income leaves them fewer possibilities for accumulating savings or for contributing to the Japanese pension system. Their financially precarious situation moreover triggers a fundamental insecurity, feelings of social exclusion and deprivation. The unfortunate amalgam of a financially weak situation, paired with bleak prospects and personal insecurity also has had a significant influence on the likelihoods of marriage and parenthood within these groups. While the recent delay of marriage and growing numbers of singles can be attributed to a variety of causes – some of which are wholly unrelated to economic factors – irregularly employed males are apparently not exactly sought-after marriage partners: they are more than twice as likely to be unmarried by the time they reach 39 than their regularly employed peers.¹⁵ It is needless to say that in an already rapidly shrinking society like Japan, the refusal to marry and have children (births out of wedlock are still very rare in Japan)¹⁶ spells out further demographic disaster.

14 Obinger 2009b.

15 Butkiewicz 2012.

16 OECD 2012.

THE “PRECARITY-BOOM” AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Economic recessions, neoliberal reforms, irregular employment entered public discourse via (semi-) academic publications and intensive media coverage, and many Japanese have become more aware of social and personal risks and the difficulty in fulfilling a “standard” life course.

The debate on social change emerged roughly by 1998, with the buzz-word of an “unequal society” (*fubyōdō shakai*) created by economist Tachibanaki Toshiaki (1998). Later key words are for example “underclass society” (*karyū shakai*),¹⁷ “inequality society” (*kakusa shakai*)¹⁸, “society of unequal hopes” (*kibō kakusa shakai*)¹⁹ as well as “society of new hierarchies” (*atarashii kaikyū shakai*)²⁰ and “slide society” (*suberidai shakai*).²¹ Social categories like the “lost generation”, consisting of “working poor”, “Freeters” and “NEETs” were formed and stigmatized along with an explicit polarization of Japanese society into groups of “winners” and “losers”. Such statements were put forward by pundits with quite diverse agendas that reflect their various viewpoints on economic, social, political and cultural aspects, both on a macro and micro level; but they are united in their declaration of a new social order after the dissolution of the “homogenous society.”

“ SOME OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS PATHOLOGIZE THE YOUNGER GENERATIONS’ PERCEIVED INACTIVITY AS A SIGN OF “APATHY” AND “PASSIVITY,” AND PUT FORWARD CERTAIN SOCIAL TRENDS THAT THEY INTERPRET AS DEVIANT AND SOCIALLY DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR

While some of the public accounts – especially those which were brought forward by persons affected – were sympathetic and acknowledge structural causes, others attested younger Japanese a mere “unwillingness” to make an effort. They pathologize the younger generations’ perceived inactivity as a sign of “apathy” and “passivity,” and put forward certain social trends that they interpret as deviant and socially destructive behavior. Symptoms of this behavior are for example lack of interest in educational attainment and achievement, a collective consumption aversion, a deliberate “gender-bending” as well as a general lack of interest in relationships, marriage, and

17 Miura 2005.

18 Tachibanaki 2006.

19 Yamada 2004.

20 Hashimoto 2007.

21 Yuasa 2008.

child-bearing.²² Western scholars additionally decry the lack of a typical “social destruction” and sense of innovation on the part of younger Japanese: “There is no discernible, anti-establishment political movement among young people, no organized efforts to create a better society; young people tend to accept without protest their apparently diminished prospects in life.”²³ According to Mathews (2004) social structures are de-facto transformed by precarious groups like the Freeters, but not in an organized fashion. Rather, they take the role of “unwitting victims,” who initiate social changes only through their unintended precarious lifestyles. These assertions mirror a growing concern with younger generations who do not fulfill the expectations attached to their social roles. Thus, I argue that this “precarity boom”²⁴ which focused on the lost generation of young adults, overlaps with a more general and long-term youth discourse. Within this strand of the discourse, commentators hold the younger generations jointly responsible for their own distress; those who are unable – or unwilling – to reach the mainstream ideals are thus portrayed as rightful “losers” in Japan.

Moreover, what is conspicuous about the corpus of Japanese coverage of this “new” poverty is the lack of a historical perspective: in contrast to the only recently popularized discussions, the *fact* of precarity is absolutely not new to Japan. In fact, marginal groups like the homeless, day laborers, ex-convicts, or illegal immigrants, thus those possibly living under the most precarious conditions in Japan for two decades, are hardly ever subject of these newer mainstream media reports. Rather, the accounts focus on those who recently and unexpectedly experienced a social decline, and whose lifestyles are outrageously precarious in light of their expected social status, like the “highly educated working poor” (*kōgakureki wākingu pua*) or the “internet café refugees” (mostly young people who are unable or unwilling to rent an apartment on their low-wage jobs and spend their nights in small internet café cubicles). I thus argue that it was not the presence or emergence of poverty in itself, or the social deprivation and inequalities that shocked the Japanese public; rather, it was the advent of a fundamental uncertainty, the seemingly complete overhaul of existing paradigms, as well as the lasting effect on middle-class life course models. While a general precarity of marginal groups has tacitly been accepted for many decades, the shift in affected groups has led to anxieties within the Japanese public.

In retrospect, it seems that the impact of new social problematics as presented by scholars and popular writers were largely amplified by

22 See e.g. Kotani 2004; Miura 2009; Yamaoka 2009; Yamada 2009; Matsuda 2009; Marx 2010.

23 Mathews, White 2004: 6.

24 Gebhardt 2010; Ida 2008.

the intensive media coverage, which presented personal accounts of the “new poor,” and made the issues more tangible for average Japanese. Soon, not only news reports, but also literary works, TV variety shows and even popular drama series picked up these new social developments. Poverty and precarity paradoxically became popular items, leading to a proper “precarity boom.” Against this background, it is hardly surprising that the idea of a transformation of Japanese society and social realities became ingrained in the minds of many Japanese, who readily accepted the seeming unraveling of social structures as a new paradigm.

This is to say that the self-perception within Japanese society drastically changed during the course of only a few years from an “equal and homogenous society” to a “disparate society,” as the *awareness* of inequality and increasing personal risks within society rose significantly. Even though there was no empirical (economic) evidence to support this perception, official and academic surveys after the 1990s document how the self-attribution to the middle classes continuously decreased, while that to the lower social strata increased. Moreover, a growing number of Japanese declare to be dissatisfied with their current living conditions and the situation of Japanese society as a whole, and feel anxious about their future.²⁵ While these very general assessments obviously grossly neglect the more nuanced realities, it is important to point out that even the intangible *feeling* of being at risk can have implications for Japanese society as a whole, leading to less interest in social participation.²⁶ In fact, not only the working poor themselves feel the consequences of their precarious conditions, as also the reproduction of poverty is becoming an ever increasing problem in Japan.

— REALLY A GENERATION LOST? —

It goes without saying that – in comparison to previous decades – social cleavages in Japan indeed have been widening, social risks are mounting, while living conditions are deteriorating. However, there hardly is a complete and utter collapse of all social structures – or a mass precarization of Japanese society as feared by some – underway. Yet, concepts of “precarity,” “poverty” or “deprivation” have different connotations according to each individual, depending on factors like age, social background, political alignment, and social and cultural capital. Moreover, the national and regional context, in

25 See e.g. Tachibanaki 2006a; ISM 2008; Ida 2008; Hommerich 2011.

26 Hommerich 2011.

which an image of precarity, deviance and “normalcy” are defined against a certain set of values, traditions, political system and individual beliefs play also an important role.²⁷

In the Japanese context, due to the seeming lack of viable alternatives for a lifestyle outside of the mainstream, many young adults now more than ever try to hedge against the increasing risks. They aspire to the security that the “standard life course” of their parent generation promises, and strive to attain best possible educational credentials in order to enhance their personal portfolio and overall life chances.

Still, not all young Japanese aspire to the past ideals of the *shakaijin*, and neither do they feel threatened by possible social exclusion. Instead, as sociologist Furuichi Noritoshi (2011) points out, many young adults are coming to terms with their seemingly diminished prospects on social mobility, security and participation. While the former ideals of a “normal” mainstream life course and lifestyle are no longer attainable for them, they also find them excessively constrictive and increasingly *unattractive*. He thus argues that many feel rather content with their current lifestyle, exactly because they have given up hopes for future improvement. Instead of harboring ambitions for future achievements, which they might not be able to realize anyway, they instead shape their current lifestyles according to their wants and needs. Cultural anthropologist Miura Atsushi draws a similar conclusion in his famous book on the „underclass society“ (*Karyū Shakai*, 2005): in his view, belonging to a lower stratum of society not necessarily has to result in discontent or feelings of social exclusion.

In fact, there are commentators who see a certain trend towards emancipation from oppressive career- and lifestyle norms and conformity, as well as a trend towards a pluralization of life courses. This might point to an ongoing process of social innovation, catalyzed by the subjective changes in self-assertion within Japanese society. Cassegard (2010) for example describes how for the past two decades Japanese intellectuals have interpreted the sociopolitical changes as a “fracturing of incrustated elitist circles,” and the end of the “blind trust” in Japan’s post-war social and political order. Leheny (2006) states that certain structural and institutional characteristics of Japanese society like seniority-based promotion and gendered employment practices have for decades hindered creative development, while the partial breakdown of these structures should induce a much needed innovation. While many graduates have come to realize that even the best of educational credentials no longer warrant professional success, more and more young Japanese often aspire towards role models that achieved success outside of institutionalized

structures; one evidence for this argument is the slight increase of members of the “lower class” Japanese, who start their own enterprise – a traditionally rather risky endeavor in Japan.²⁸ At this point, it must be made very clear that such accounts and apparent trends cannot (yet) be verified by solid empirical evidence.

Against the earlier assessment of the “apathetic” Japanese youth, there is tangible evidence for further potentials within the current socioeconomic vicissitudes: as early as in the mid-1990s, some young temporary workers and *Freeters* founded loose networks, where they experimented with new forms of collective activities, or, as Mōri (2005: 21) puts it, a “new class relation under a post-modern condition, a new political consciousness and a new way of life.” There are a number of innovative examples of such urban groups, amongst which *Shinjuku Cardboard Houses Village* (1994–1998), *Dame Ren* (1992 –) and *Amateurs’ Riot* (*Shirōto no Ran*) are perhaps the most well-known.²⁹ While their agenda is often unclear and not easy to grasp with the framework and vocabulary of conventional political and social movements in Japan, they must nevertheless be acknowledged as a form of social participation. Some of these actors and networks have specifically formed in order to support their peers in precarious situations, like the “Network against Poverty” (*Han Hinkon Nettowāku*). Founded in 2007, it includes, amongst others, a single parent organization and a Freeter Union.³⁰ Moreover, activists of this small but vibrant scene have branched out and now engage in a number of direct actions concerned largely with precarity, and constitute the Japanese representation of the Global Justice Movement, the Euro-Mayday-Movement, or the Occupy Movement.



WHILE MANY GRADUATES HAVE COME TO REALIZE THAT EVEN THE BEST OF EDUCATIONAL CREDENTIALS NO LONGER WARRANT PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS, MORE AND MORE YOUNG JAPANESE OFTEN ASPIRE TOWARDS ROLE MODELS THAT ACHIEVED SUCCESS OUTSIDE OF INSTITUTIONALIZED STRUCTURES

While this is only a brief snapshot of a larger issue, it is striking that precisely those young Japanese who – at least partially – live and work outside the existing norms and structures emerge as actors of radically new forms of political, social and cultural participation. This can be attributed to the fact that these groups see little point in engaging within institutions that have

27 Götz, Lemberger 2009.

28 Sakai 2005.

29 Mōri 2005; Fukui 2012; Obinger 2013a.

30 Amamiya 2007, Anti Poverty Network 2012.

long written them off as a “lost generation” and would not accept them as “full” members.

CONCLUSION

Japanese society is facing a number of dramatic changes in recent years. These concern not only the economic situation or the demographic development, but also the general outlook on life among different generations. As the numbers of non-regularly employed young Japanese are rising and the so-called “lost generation” is coming of age, the formerly deeply engrained sense of security and equality, interlinked with an ideal of a “standard” life course is vanishing, while a new awareness on a social stratification, precarization of living conditions are proliferating. Increased media coverage, both nationally and internationally, reflects such growing awareness, while some pundits claim that members of the “lost generation” themselves are responsible for their plight and focus on the perceived “apathy” by younger cohorts.

At the same time, we must not overlook the numerous projects initiated by these very members of the “lost generation,” who fight for more recognition and legislative changes. Thus, I would like to put forward the notion that it is not proliferation of precarity in itself, but the paradigm shift in public perception will open up new avenues of thinking, especially in the field of social and political participation.

It is however questionable whether this gradually rising awareness among the Japanese will lead to a fundamental change in attitudes and – even more importantly – to a sustainable change in recruitment and social security policies. Only if the structural obstacles are eliminated, can the Japanese precariat hope for a real and long term improvement in their situation. In this context, it is unclear how the return to the conservative LDP government with its agenda of *Abenomics* and further deregulation will have impacts on the issues brought forward in this paper.

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photo by T. Lazar

Young people resting, Zuccotti Park, New York

IN FLUX: PRECARIOUS LABOUR AND FRAGILE HOPES

“ I DON'T THINK IT'S HELPFUL TO SPEAK ABOUT THE VOICELESS WITHOUT ENABLING AND FACILITATING THAT VOICE' – SAYS EWA JASIEWICZ. "IT LACKS CREDIBILITY; IT CAN REPRODUCE DISEMPOWERMENT; IT DOESN'T CHALLENGE THAT UNEQUAL POWER DYNAMIC' – SHE ADDS. POLISH-BORN JOURNALIST ANALYSES CASUALISED WORK-PLACES, LEVERAGE CAMPAIGNS AND THE COLLECTIVE NEED TO BUILD AN IDENTITY.

INTERVIEW WITH **EWA JASIEWICZ**
BY AGNIESZKA FILIPIAK, ELIZA KANIA

Who are precarians – are they a new class or just a group of outraged, young people?

The precarians are not young – this could be a myth that originates from people thinking that precarity is new somehow or that agency and casualised¹ work is relatively new and applies to new people in the labour market. The truth is that many migrant workers end up working through agencies and become casualties of casualisation, but migrant workers are of all ages and generations and by no means all young. I would say that my experience of organising in casualised workplaces showed me that workers were of many different backgrounds and age groups. What united them was poverty, lack of choices, lack of power, all being exploited, and many of them unable to speak English.

Which keywords would you include in the precariat pocket dictionary?

Vulnerable, exploited, un-organised, divided, hyper-casualised, tenacious, defiant, angry, unsustainable, in flux.

Is there any common denominator among the representatives of this group?

A common denominator is that they are on temporary contracts or zero hour contracts. The common denominator isn't anything inherent or even specific to an industrial sector per se as you are getting a lot of casualisation and precarious work for example in Academia, even in the public sector, through outsourcing. Largely though, my experience is that a common denominator is poverty or financial insecurity: low wages, low-tech work, in large workplaces.

But precariousness also exists in more “middle class” and smaller workforce workplaces. I guess a commonality is that they are all being controlled by capital to a larger extent than workers on contracts or in stable jobs. Another would be that most are not trade union members. They are not organised. They do not collectively bargain – even though, they have the potential to do so.

Is it truth, that lots of precarians appreciate some aspects of unstable work?

No. I think that's fiction. I have met perhaps 1% of people who hold this opinion. The overwhelming majority of workers that I have worked

¹ To casualise: to become casual, to convert from regular to casual. (Editor's note – JvDB)

with as an organiser, feel manipulated by the conditions and power relations that they are subject to. They want stability and choice and regular work – in order not to call or be called up at the end of the day to find out whether they have work or not. They resent living under fear about whether they can make ends meet because at any point they can be told ‘sorry, no more work for you.’ And certainly, they feel afraid of joining a union or organising because again, they are in a vulnerable position where they can be sacked effectively without any repercussions. They feel as if they have no rights, no protection, no support. Many have referred to feeling like machines. I’m talking here mainly about workers in manufacturing, grocery retail logistics, construction, aviation, and agriculture. It’s not that workers here see themselves as victims, or that they cannot experience anything positive within their working environments or relationships but they are highly aware of not having any power or very limited power or security.

You are quite familiar with Guy Standings’ book: “*The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*.” What could be your main objections to his conception?

Standing compiled a lot of useful statistics and his analysis was useful and is important. His book is well worth reading! But, my main problem with the book is that there is a stark absence of voices of precarious workers. There is virtually no self-representation; too much objectification. The front cover shows faceless workers sitting on the ground in “hi vis vests,”² and by the end of the book they are just as faceless as they were in the beginning. There was almost no representation of precarious workers organising or resisting, and while it’s true that there are not that many examples, but Unite, the Union I work for did undertake this task as have others like the RMT³ and Unison⁴. Delving deeper, making use of the experiences of union organisers in order to reach these voiceless and faceless people, should have been a part of the book’s narrative and I mean that in a political way – I don’t think it’s helpful to speak about the voiceless without enabling and facilitating their voice. It lacks credibility. It can reproduce disempowerment; it doesn’t challenge that unequal power dynamic.

² High visibility vests: typical safety gear worn by workers operating with and near vehicles. (Editor’s note – JVdB)

³ RMT is a British trade union, with more than 80,000 members from almost every sector of the transport industry. (Editor’s note – EK)

⁴ Unison is the biggest public sector trade union in Great Britain with more than 1.3 million members (Editor’s note – EK)

I felt that his analysis about how the working class can turn to fascism, not organised in its own interest – in the context that there wouldn’t be a working class voice in it – was alarmist and felt demonising and restrictive in terms of class identity and agency. It felt very “othering” and ‘let’s be afraid of ‘these angry people.’ And as for the constitution of the precariat as a new class – no, I don’t agree with it as a separate class. Precarity is a form of exploitation, an advanced form and state of casualisation, a state of work devoid of rights, but the class is the same, the position is the same. It’s just that the nature and form of exploitation has changed, intensified, capital is stronger; the relationship between capital and worker has become one of increased domination by capital.

What experience connected with working for the “*United*” association would you consider the most enriching?

The leverage campaigns we are involved in – these involved a much more confrontational attitude, a street and protest-informed tactic, and one where we feel like we were winning and actually where I feel as a worker, most in control of my own labour. It also felt good to see such organisation grow in a workplace and see people become empowered and resist, but workplace organising can often not win and we can find ourselves undermined and locked out and sometimes, ignored.

When we take the agenda and support workers in their struggle – workers that have decided fully on fighting back and were already engaged – and we back them up, that feels like a confidence-building, abuse-challenging, fight that we can win and unions do need to be more combative and responsive and able to include non-members and resistance outside the workplace. They also need to exert power over companies that feel above the law and unaccountable. Leverage has been used on the London Buses campaign, BESNA (Building Engineering Services National Agreement), MMP (Mayer Menholf Packaging) and now, the Big One – Crossrail and the shameful and illegal practice of blacklisting and union busting.

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THE MAIN CHALLENGES ARE TO BUILD OUT AN ORGANISATION, COLLECTIVE IDENTITY AND A CULTURE OF RESISTANCE

Is it possible and valuable to organise precarians in the way trade unions are organized?

Definitely, but the arenas of struggle are changing and the involvement of new people, workers and activists from outside as well as inside the workplace is needed to address these changes. We sometimes do need to take the fight outside of the workplace in case an organisation isn't strong enough on itself; especially in light of the nature of precarious work and the level of power employers have over workers, can result that organising in casualised workplaces is risky and difficult. Such organizations are prone to demolition very easily: e.g. your casual agency worker activist, being identified by the bosses as one of the organisers, can be easily dismissed. In those situations, you need to be able to threaten the employer with consequences from a different direction.

What, in your opinion, is the biggest difference between the Polish and British labour space at the level of employee's awareness?

There may be a greater sense of community in Poland and perhaps less migrant labour within Polish workplaces, which can result in a lower language barrier between workers. I don't know enough about Polish workplaces to be able to compare. I once had a Polish organiser – a young guy – to describe *Solidarność* as the biggest collective action and workplace mobilization that you can possibly imagine, and that it failed. It had undermined his faith in collective action. If it can arise on such a massive scale as it did in Poland and still get co-opted, diverted and stifled by Capital, then, is there really hope? I wonder how common that view is in Poland. The flipside is that I would think that workers in Poland had and have a more intimate experience of workers co-operatives, small land plots and union organisation which mean there has been more of social security net for people and that can create more confidence. Also fighting an authoritarian government, censorship and fascism - the history of Poland is so different in terms of extremes of oppression and destruction, followed by collective rebuilding and then the polarisation of narratives and beliefs in capitalism vs. communism. These histories do have implications for how people view power, their own relation with power access and how it is generated locally.

What are the main challenges for the so-called precarians? Should they be more specific about their demands?

The main challenges are to build out an organisation, collective identity and a culture of resistance. I know what my demands and that of many people I worked with would be but, saying what demands should other people should have is difficult.

Demands I have heard frequently are – contracts, permanent contracts, union membership rights without being victimised for being a member, overtime pay, higher pay, shorter hours, more family-friendly shifts, equality with directly employed workers. But there are also more radical demands to be made or perhaps, more sustainable and fundamental demands to be voiced that can bring about serious change – workers' control of workplaces, co-operatively organised and managed production and services. An economy orientated towards maximising human welfare, respect, wellbeing, time, personal freedom, collective and personal responsibility, environmental protection and sustainability. And end to the rule of money, an end to class, progressive taxation, democratic control on levels of production and consumption, energy generation, construction and governance.

Ewa Jasiewicz is a Polish-born journalist and human rights activist, living in Great Britain. Jasiewicz was one of the few western journalists present in Gaza during the Israeli attack on the turn of 2008 and 2009, known as the „Cast Lead.” Her reports from Iraq and Palestine appeared in such journals like “The Guardian,” “The Daily Telegraph,” “The Independent” and “Le Monde Diplomatique.” She took part in the controversial convoy with humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip attacked on 31 May 2010 by Israeli commandos, which resulted in the death of nine activists and about 20 injured. She is the author of the book „Light the Gaza Strip.” Currently she is working as a social activist, dealing with workers rights.



photo by T. Lazar

Portrait of a man with a pig-face, Zuccotti Park, New York

RETHINKING THE SYSTEM

AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL PROTESTS AS A RESULT OF THE CRISIS IN THE FINANCIAL MARKETS CANNOT BE CARRIED OUT WITHOUT CONSIDERING STRICTLY ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE. IN THIS INTERVIEW ECONOMIST AND JOURNALIST STEFANIE MÜLLER PROVIDES THIS SCIENTIFIC APPROACH BUT ALSO SHARES SOME OBSERVATIONS DRAWN FROM HER MANY YEARS OF RESIDENCE IN THE EUROPEAN HEART OF THE PROTESTS – MADRID, SPAIN.

INTERVIEW WITH **STEFANIE MÜLLER**
BY ELIZA KANIA

What are the main differences between precariat and proletariat?

I think that the term proletariat refers to industrial workers while precariat includes all the badly paid service workers, some of them even have an academic carrier. It is more about financial exploitation than a physical one. The difference is that Precarians are totally aware of their situation, they have travelled, they have more knowledge and a lot of them a very good education, which makes it even harder for them to stand the situation. You have more precarians in countries like Spain where you nearly have any social benefits and just the family as your last chance.

Which changes in the economic system in the past decades affected the situation of people called the precariat mostly?”

What changed is the big difference between salaries and bonuses of the top-management and the lower middle class people. Since in countries like Spain so many people go to university it is nothing special anymore. The companies do not remunerate academic background; it is like a condition that is not rewarded anymore.

What would you describe as neo-liberal policies, and how does it relate to the situation of the precariat?

In think that precarious is not the right term to describe the increasing poverty of educated people in a society and the increasing wealth of people that just speculate but do not contribute to the society. We should rethink the whole salary system and pay for instance a lot to teachers, politicians and doctors and much less to services like advertising, movies or the whole financial world that do not contribute directly to the well-being of a society. We lost all feeling about the real value of things and services. Everything got out of control with a lack of transparency in the financial world.

How did the economic crisis, which started in 2008, influenced the situation of protesters?

I think that the global protests take place against the established system of corruption, nepotism and a big difference of middle-class

people and top class. Part of the low middle class has become poor because of the crisis. People are furious about the financial business in general. Financial economy has become more important than industrial economy. We speculate, but we do not progress anymore.

Which demands of the protesters on Wall Street - in economic terms – you found the most important?

I agree with the lack of transparency they criticize and I am against speculation the way it take place today. It is very dangerous!! We just have to see how we suffer because of a crisis provoked in 2008 and how the prices for groceries are increasing although the demand does not surpass the offer.

If you could compare the situation of protesters in Europe with the situation of the protesters in the United States - what would be the common denominator, and what would be the biggest difference?

In Europe we try to maintain our social system and the social guarantees as free health care system etc., in the States the protests are more related to Wall Street and banks. We also talk in Europe about corruption and a lack of transparency on where the public money is spent. In the US they criticize and focus on speculation and the “Wall Street System.”

You live in Spain. Recently we read about intensifying evictions, unemployment among young people still remains at a high level. What do you think, as an economist, was the biggest mistake of the Spanish in case of this situation?

The biggest problem in Spain is the lack of confidence in democratic processes and the missing rigidity to pursue violations of existing laws. There is no transparency, neither in the management of the monarchy, nor in the spending of public funds. A big problem as well is the shadow economy. The controls do not work. There is no coherent action of politicians or entrepreneurs. In the end a lot of independent institutions are serving economic and political interests.

What could be solutions for the future of countries such as Spain or Greece?

The way out of the crisis for Southern Europe is to take democracy and its obligation more in account. To make the distribution of public funds more transparent so that people are willing to pay taxes and do not evade fiscal obligations. The judicial branch has to be more independent; organized crime has to be pursued more severely.



THERE DOES NOT EXIST PURE CAPITALISM,
THERE DOES NOT EXIST A FREE ECONOMY.
EVERYTHING IS BASED ON PERSONAL INTEREST

Protesters say that the system in its current form is an anachronism and that we face big changes. How to change the economic system in order to suit the current needs of society? Is there, in your opinion, an alternative to capitalism in its current form?

I believe very much in systemic change to a system that considers more the well-being of the whole of society like promoted by Christian Velbert from Austria. We have to rethink the redistribution of money and responsibilities; and change the role of the state in the whole system. But the consumers and all citizens have to participate in this process. We cannot blame others, we have to change things if want them to get changed. I think we are in a process of redemocratization. Up to now we played to be democrats, now we have to be them.

I would like to invoke the famous thought of Ludwig van Mises, who said that a feature of modern capitalism is mass production of goods for consumption by the masses. As a result, in his view, it systematically improves the standard of living of the masses. According to this conception capitalism promotes an ordinary man and elevates him to the status of “bourgeois.” What are in your opinion the greatest achievements of this system?

There does not exist pure capitalism, there does not exist a free economy. Everything is based on personal interest. Not the best company is winning, not the best politician. The state intervenes not for the good of the society but just because the government depends strongly on the banking system, their money deliverer. The state debt is so big, that democracy and free economy cannot work properly anymore. In a purely capitalistic system the banks would go bankrupt if they did not calculate their risk well enough. Companies should

not threaten government with cutting jobs and by lobbying; the way we know it should be forbidden. There is no alternative to a money based system, with salary differences and different social classes. Communism is not possible in a democratic system.

What is the biggest drawback of capitalism that strikes at the heart of social equality and egalitarian distribution of income?

The weakness of capitalism is that it needs a strong regulation that considers the well being of the society and not of some companies. But the state cannot intervene. Like Adam Smith proposed the state should offer the conditions, and these legal conditions should be the frame of the economy, respected by everyone, but then it should be like an invisible hand. Subsidies, a too strong welfare state and a complex bureaucracy and fiscal system just hinder the well-being of everybody. The best social policy of a state is to set the conditions so companies can create jobs, but sustainable jobs. People should be properly paid. And the syndicates have to concentrate on their main task: to guarantee the rights of workers. They should work in their interest and not in the interest of political parties.

How do you relate to the concept of the citizen's income/basic income guarantee?

I think it is good to fix a minimum wage and to fix a maximum wage too.

What other economic solutions to reduce the problems of precariat and precarity in the future would you propose?

I propose to distribute wealth better, on the whole planet. To do that we have to accept that luxury and wealth is limited, we have to stop living as there were unlimited resources on this planet, we have to reconsider our role in society and governments should re-enforce citizenship.

Stefanie Müller has a PhD in communication and economics. She is a foreign correspondent for newspapers such as Die Zeit, Wirtschaftswoche, Die Telebörse, Strategies Europe and leading German business newspaper Handelsblatt in Madrid. She is the creator of German websites like: *madridfuerdeutsche.com*, *barcelonaefuerdeutsche.com* and *Planet-bpm.com*, a site for European youngsters to connect young ambitions. Her work has already been recognized by the European Commission. Moreover she cooperates with Spanish media programs like *Gestiona Radio* and *TV 13*.



photo by A. Bocheńska

Arriving in Paris

SPANISH DREAM

AMIRA BOCHEŃSKA

essay

BARCELONA ATTRACTS PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD; I'M ALSO ONE OF THOSE WHO FELL IN LOVE WITH THIS CITY. I'D ALWAYS DREAMT OF LIVING CLOSE TO THE BEACH, EATING SEAFOOD, DRINKING GOOD SPANISH WINE AND LIVING THAT MAÑANA-KIND-OF-LIFESTYLE.

FOR THAT REASON I DECIDED TO MOVE TO SPAIN, DESPITE NOT SPEAKING A HINT OF SPANISH, KNOWING ONLY A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE THERE AND NOT HAVING ANY WORK LINED UP.

It turned out that I moved there just before the social movement known as “15M” (the protest was launched with a gathering on the 15 of May, one week before local elections) or “Spanish Revolution” had begun. Plaza Cataluña, once filled up with tourist and pigeons, was suddenly occupied by thousands of people gathering in open debates, banging on pots, raising tents, drawing slogans, sitting in and around the square, talking and talking – what were they talking about? I didn’t have a clue, but it was evident that something very important was taking place.

I kept returning to Plaza Cataluña with my friend Alberto, who was trying to explain me - in Spanglish - what was going on. I kept listening and watching. People of all ages, from all social backgrounds were uniting together working towards a common goal. They were angry at the current political, economical and even social crisis, they wanted change, believing that none of the current governmental representatives were necessary, as we – together – could all work as one, think and discuss issues in a truly democratic way, and would be able to make real change.

That was so exiting! Could we really change this system that had failed to serve those it was created for? And if we could - which way would



photo by A. Bocheńska

People gathering for open debate, Barcelona, May 2011

it all go? Well, most of those questions today remain unanswered, but in order to facilitate any change, it's important to participate.

Returning to the square every day, watching those people acting in solidarity; helping each other and distributing as much guidance and information as possible inspired me. I could not stay passive. The only thing I could do - given my language limitations - was to document the events by making videos and taking pictures.

I started taking pictures and sending them to Poland. I tried to explain what was happening, to get people interested and spread information that could not be found in mass media. However, my terrible Internet connection combined with the lack of fully comprehending the situation I was capturing meant I was forced to seek assistance. The day I was at that point, I decided to visit one of the tents that had a hand written note on the front that read: 'Media International Commission.'

15M INDEPENDENT MEDIA

Inside that tent, which by the time of my visit was barely standing and vulnerable to wind and rain, there were people working, eating and sleeping in central Barcelona just as there were in other cities where squares were occupied. This is where the new Independent Media were created.

People in the "International Media Commission" tent were friendly, I was a stranger but at that moment it didn't matter who you were, where you were from and what you had been doing before. As long as you could help with disseminating information you were welcome. My contribution was limited, as I didn't understand Spanish and therefore could not translate debates, manifestos or proposals, but the fact that I wanted to help and that there was another laptop 'on board' was good enough.

I've always heard that Spanish people are disorganized, lazy and clash with others, depending from which part of Spain you are coming; but my experience of working with many of them could not have been any different. In the *Pl. Cataluña* tent city, organization was treated with the upmost importance: maps, work schedules, debate progresses - were

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I'VE ALWAYS HEARD THAT SPANISH PEOPLE ARE DISORGANIZED, LAZY AND CLASH WITH OTHERS, DEPENDING FROM WHICH PART OF SPAIN YOU ARE COMING; BUT MY EXPERIENCE OF WORKING WITH MANY OF THEM COULD NOT HAVE BEEN ANY DIFFERENT

all documented and explained in detail. In the media commissioning tent the main issue was to organize the wave of information for specific websites and social networks, to make it easy for everyone to access wealth of information. It was under the roof of this wobbly tent I met Hector who used to write novels describing his vision of a better world. And then all of the sudden found himself applying his vision to everyday life. From that moment on, Hector was structuring and spreading the knowledge acquired and information being produced. I asked him how he envisioned the progress of such independent media.

Hector - The use of the media in the 15M Movement is widely understood because the majority of its content is composed by qualified but unemployed youth. From the moment on that Indignados showed up on the streets, the most common tool used was technology. And this, coupled with the need to maintain constant communication has created a powerful alternative system. Various collectives have been researching and using alternative technologies to create their own media and form of democracy. In other cases they have dealt with existing platforms such as blogs, Twitter or Facebook for organizing themselves itself and informing others about what was happening.

It is not uncommon nowadays to find virtual meetings rendered dynamically with surgical precision usually to identify the group experience that had been assembled in the streets. Indeed the interaction between the virtual world and the street is one of the great achievements of the movement, such as the great post-15M (15th May) mobilizations like 25S (25th September) or 23F (23rd February) convened by the network through online meetings and networking. In the field of communication there exist mixed projects combining technology, communication and the street. For example "Peoplewitness" is a network of live streamers that begun organized work since November 2011. They help to spread the voice of communities strongly hit by austerity measures, while

traditional media only offer an official version of Europe's recession and blame the most disadvantaged collectives while protecting banks and politicians. Members of "Peoplewitness" have recently toured in countries like Algeria, Poland and Portugal with a series of workshops on media activism.¹ The movement is also building its own archive, its own Wiki. 15Mpedia is a collaborative Wiki where the young history of the movement is written and additional actions are updated with an amazing speed.²

Democracy 4.0 includes blogs for citizen participation like "Propongo"³ where collectives or individuals may add topics up for discussion and voting. There also exists a site for participatory democracy that includes meeting rooms and a custom detection system to prevent fraud.⁴ In the meantime the organization Web 4.0 democracy explains why we should use these new democratic practices.⁵

VIRTUAL AND OTHER WAYS OF COMMUNICATION

An important element of the communication in the 15M movement is that it's very 'horizontal' as it does not have any leader. During assemblies every participant has the opportunity to submit a proposal that later is agreed or disagreed upon with the people gathered at that time. During those meetings all sort of subjects are discussed, both prepared speeches and spontaneous ideas.

It was during one of those assemblies that someone proposed the idea of organizing marches from various cities

¹ More info can be found on: <http://rising.globalvoicesonline.org/microgrants2013/spain-peoplewitness/>

² For those interested see: <http://wiki.15m.cc/wiki/Portada> (The site is available in multiple languages.)

³ Source: Propongo 15M.

⁴ Source: Virtual Pol.

⁵ Source: Demokracia 4.0.

towards Madrid. The concept was to walk on foot across the land and meet with people along the way to bring them information and ideas that being were discussed in cities and to hear other opinions and contributions to movement. It was a beautiful idea that reminded me of folktales of people crossing the land to discuss philosophy, politics or new innovations. But in the current context of the Internet era, this seemed an even more exciting concept. In this way no one would be excluded and one does not need to live in the big city, or be a member of social networks to take part of the "Spanish Revolution."



Cold morning during marching towards Brussels, October 2011



BOTH OLD AND YOUNG, INDIVIDUALS AND WHOLE FAMILIES WALKED AND ORGANIZED OPEN DEBATES IN THE TOWNS ALONG THE WAY TO MADRID

of the People”⁶ as a gift to the Parliament. The aim was not only that the Parliament should consider those postulates as it was conceived for people themselves. What mattered more was to activate people and help them to communicate verbally and virtually in a bid to make changes at a local scale that sooner or later would become global.

The weeks on the road that followed were challenging. With little access to internet, no mobile phones or any other devices to obtain information it was hard to tell if anyone apart from us – the walkers and the people we met along the way would actually know about this march. But when we arrived in Paris we discovered the government had been following us. Peacefully protesting, walking and talking, was somehow deemed a potential threat. Could modern day *Don Quixotes* be seen to be terrorists? Warily entering Paris with backpacks and heads full of ideas, we were treated as criminals, immediately surrounded by the police. With our long days and short nights we were too busy getting from town to town and organizing assemblies, we hadn’t factored in enough time to find out how the organization of the independent media had been functioning. I spoke to Oli, who participated in the ‘media international commission’ tent in Barcelona as well as in all events related to the marches. He explained how the organization of the independent media looked like at the time.

Oli Bourgeois Garcia & Ben Karl Tanswell – When the marches left Spain in early August, a new window opened on the *indignados* planet. The first New-Yorker Indignados that had spent weeks camping in Zucotti Square, proposed a Global date, on the 17th of September 2011 (known as 17S), against international financing, banking and the Stock Market.

This new frame of international dialogue encouraged us to find reliable channels to consolidate and develop open ways to internationalize the movement. From e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, Bambuser through smart phones, our own local networks, public networks, and hacking signals... we jumped to exploiting Skype, swiftly stopping the use of webcams and limiting ourselves to chat, with a moderating system and possibility for

⁶ Source: *Marches indignées à Bruxelles*.

each person to use its turn to speak, recalculated to our own assembly methodology.

The marchers had been walking for more than a month, and they were already toppling the technical limitations of these channels especially with the added difficulties of connections and equipment available to the walkers. In extreme cases they ended up going to the few using mobile phones or far away cybercafés. The coordination with Spain to the other international platforms for the marchers was vital – sending articles, pictures, audiovisual messages, giving voice to their actions and their route.

The preparation of the 17S, synchronized with the arrival of the marches and the planned big demonstration (*indignados* style) in celebration of the opening of the public assembly known as **Agora Paris**. We were totally co-ordinated with the communication and international platforms of Paris, and Brussels. The relationship Occupy Wall Street (OWS) skyrocketed with the global success of its international calling and the foundation of the new powerful American movement.

The first technical problems with the online assemblies were resolved when we discovered and optimized Mumble and pads (titan pad), creating the dynamic international relationships of the movement. The organization of big events like 17S and Agora Paris, and afterwards 15O (manifestation of 15th October) and Agora Brussels (international open debates that took place in Brussels)⁷ irremediably drove us to develop a team of international legal advisers and lawyers, which was built up by autodidacts. Since more than 300 arrests and a few wounded during the *Events of Paris* from 17th to 23rd September 2011, ended up being badly defended by a reduced and improvised legal team, more support was needed as this team was immediately submerged in an avalanche of work regarding press relations and legal advice.

The international platforms soon equipped the press and coordination department with assistance of the legal team. The input of writers, legal advisors, video editors, photographers, translators, etc. was reflected in the excellent coordination and preparation of 15O and Agora Brussels. Organization was built up partly from improvisation and also experience from the squares. Computers were found, volunteers appeared, the media centres gathered information to make more decentralization possible and promote overall internationalization, and people came

⁷ Source: *The Marches to Brussels*.

to charge batteries and download/upload material. Connectivity was vital from here on. In Brussels we came to develop two media centres: one technical, hidden and fully equipped, another in situ, improvised with connection problems. During the Agora Rome connection problems and infrastructure reached their limits, which resulted in a gap in international communication.

The outcomes of the events in Paris and Brussels were positive: marching had been monitored and people were interested and provided the opportunity to discover more information and ways to get involved. We walked on the streets and information flowed above us in the airwaves. When we eventually reached Brussels and connected with people from other marches, we were very happy but also exhausted. The fact that police welcomed us with notifications that we could not camp in the park further complicated our situation. Instead, City Hall allowed us to stay in abandoned building that used to belong to a University. Some people insisted on their right to stay in the park, but I didn't, the prospect of staying inside the building, with a roof above us didn't sound like such a bad idea to me at all. The reality of human nature quickly hit home though, having a bit comfort made some of us lazy, long and tiring weeks of marching caught up with us when all of the sudden we could rest.

But other people that come over to Brussels, from all parts of Europe, to help out with the organization of 15O (manifestation for the 15th of October) did not rest. From morning till evening they held meetings and assemblies in different rooms. It was difficult to reach common decisions as there were so many people and we all communicated in three languages – English, Spanish and French.

At the time, with the action going on in the USA there was plenty of new motivation. That was probably the biggest mobilization organized through Internet and verbal communication, which did not get mass media



photo by A. Bocheńska

In one of the rooms in the University where we stayed, *Brussels*, October 2011

coverage in my experience. Something changed after October the 15th, it wasn't just the Spanish Indignados or people in OWS anymore, but people were questioning democracy and our future across hundreds of countries now. Mass media could no longer stay silent about this global movement.

Many people that took part in the marches moved to the countryside and tried to stay away from the struggles that they could face in cities. Others decided to keep marching, this time towards the mother of democracy –



photo by A. Bochenńska

Athens – to organize an agora in Acropolis. My friend Alberto and I decided to go back to Spain and edit all the recorded material. My Spanish dream appeared to be much more interesting than I could ever have dreamt.

Since then I also moved away from the city, to islands, first Tenerife and now Malta. Life is simple, without many expectations, no intrusive advertising in my face, no vast supermarkets but also far away from witnessing how creatively people are working in order to make some changes. Over the past year I visited various cities a few times to record bigger protests and I was amazed at how independent media networking has developed.

Internet TV, radio and plenty of websites are giving constantly updated information. Newspapers, blogs, films and reportage can easily be found for anyone looking for them. Informative websites that I often visit are “Toma la Tele”⁸ where I search for visual and written sources, and for more general web I recommend ROAR (Reflections on a Revolution).⁹ This website provides a great source of information for everyone that wants to read about the struggles of societies in crisis and for those who agree with the outraged people on the streets. I would say, don’t just read about it, get involved – anyhow – anyway, as together we can make change happen.



photo by A. Bochenńska

⁸ Source: *Toma le tele*.

⁹ Source: *Roar Magazine*.

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regional ISSUES

264 *Political Future of the Korean Peninsula: An Attempt at Forecasting* article by **Rafał Wiśniewski**



photoreport by **Szymon Paż**

THE SELECTION OF PHOTOS TO 'REGIONAL ISSUES' ARE IN OUR OPINION, A HUMBLE WAY TO PRESENT THE INTERNAL REFORMS OF CHINA AND ITS AMALGAM OF ANCIENT VALUES, AUTHORITARIANISM, WESTERNIZATION AND ECONOMIC PROGRESS. THE PICTURES HAVE BEEN TAKEN RECENTLY IN BEIJING, NEAR PUDONG AND IN XIAMEN – A SMALL CITY (TO CHINESE STANDARDS) AT THE SOUTH CHINESE SEA, WHERE A SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1981. THE PICTURES WERE TAKEN BY BARTŁOMIEJ ZGLIŃSKI AND SZYMON PAŻ, BOTH WITH A KEEN EYE FOR CAPTURING THOSE SMALL DETAILS OF LIFE.



photoreport by
Bartłomiej Zgliński

UNDEREXPLORED DIMENSIONS OF BEIJING'S FOREIGN POLICY, AT THE TIME OF LEADERSHIP CHANGE

IT HAS ALREADY BECOME A FASHION AMONG SCHOLARS AND PRESS COMMENTATORS TO DESCRIBE THE 21ST CENTURY AS THE "AGE OF ASIA." SUCH ASSESSMENTS BECAME UBIQUITOUS FOR A GOOD REASON. BY ALMOST ALL YARDSTICKS COMMONLY USED TO MEASURE POWER AND INFLUENCE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (BE IT POPULATION, GDP, TROOP NUMBERS, MILITARY SPENDING, TRADE AND INVESTMENT FLOWS, ETC.) THIS REGION CAN EASILY BE DESCRIBED AS THE MOST DYNAMIC IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD.

As the spotlight of international attention turns towards Asia, it inevitably sheds most light on the biggest, most powerful and influential state of this area – namely the People's Republic of China. With the world's largest population, an economy second only to the USA, their permanent seat at the UN Security Council, second biggest defence budget on the planet and substantial arsenal of nuclear weapons, it easily occupies a high place on every ranking of world's leading powers.

As the global balance of power shifted to the advantage of Asia (driven primarily through the spectacular growth of Chinese economy), the course charted by PRC's foreign policy bore ever greater influence on many crucial problems occupying the international community's agenda. Such knotty issues like for example: a global trade regime, climate change or non-proliferation of nuclear weapons are almost impossible to tackle effectively without Chinese participation. Naturally, China's rise is most acutely felt in its extended neighbourhood. Most of Asia looks to China with a mix of hope, stemming from profitable exchange with its booming economy, and fear, brought by military build-up and assertiveness on the side of the PRC. In recent years those realities have been brought to light by growing tensions in the East- and South-China Seas, as well as on the Korean Peninsula. Ambiguities present in Chinese foreign policy are partly an effect of the nature of the PRC's political regime. Although in the course of more than six decades of its rule, the Communist Party of China has institutionalized its power and made its operation more predictable, the decision-making process is still opaque and pretty much a "black box" for outside observers. In every autocratic regime, the succession of power is probably the most crucial and potentially destabilizing political process. The PRC is no exception. At the turn of 2012 and 2013 we have witnessed a once of a decade transition of power to the next (5th) generation of party-state leadership, lead by Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang.

In our opinion this is a good moment to turn our gaze both backwards to the road China travelled in the last three decades of "reform and opening" and onwards towards possible future directions of the PRC's foreign policy. We accomplish this through a selection of texts, most concerning rarely analyzed aspects of China's international relations. As we have already mentioned in the issue introduction, this journal experiments with different forms of forecasting. Papers presented below reflect different approaches and points of view, adopted by our authors.

The opening article is by the hand of the renowned Polish sinologist, **Krzysztof Gawlikowski**. His article introduces new readers to the subject of the PRC's rise to prominence, while at the same time he sheds a new

light on Deng Xiaoping's reforms, which could be of great interest to those experienced readers. Drawing on his personal experience from more than four decades of field studies in China, the author draws a wide and compelling portrait of reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s. Thus readers can see the scale of transformation that has taken place in this state through the eyes of an expert who witnessed it from up close.

The next three papers deal with different aspects of China's international relations by applying different forms of forecasting. First, **Vladimir Portyakov**, one of Russia's leading experts on China (and Deputy Director of the Institute of Far Eastern Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences), analyses the nature of Russian-Chinese relations and offers some prognoses on their future development. Further, **Maciej Michałek**, a PhD student at the Faculty of Journalism and Political Science, University of Warsaw, explains the origins, use and future prospects of the PRC's soft power, an often neglected instrument of China's foreign policy. Thirdly, **Rafał Wiśniewski**, a PhD student at the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism at Adam Mickiewicz University (UAM) in Poznań (and a member of R/evolutions editorial team), applies the scenario-building method originally developed and proposed by R/evolutions editorial team, to assess the political future of the Korean Peninsula. Although this article does not deal directly with the PRC's foreign policy, Korea's proximity to China and its geopolitical significance for this state warrants its inclusion into our research area.

Finally we present two short interviews and an essay, in which three experts share with us their view on the prospects of the further development of China's external relations. **Maciej Walkowski**, professor at UAM, comments on the conditions of the Chinese economy, the very foundation on which the PRC's power rests. **Paweł Behrendt**, an analyst at the Centrum Studiów Polska-Azja (Poland-Asia Studies Center), offers his insights on the evolution of the Chinese defence policy. Finally, **Maciej Maćkowiak**, an expert on South East Asia and especially Indonesia, shares his insights about Chinese policy towards Indonesia in a short essay.

'Regional Issues' Editors:
Jeroen Van den Bosch
Rafał Wiśniewski



photo by B. Zgliński

Pudong seen from Bund on the opposite shore of Yangtze



photo by B. Zgliński

Pole on the Tiananmen Square



photo by S. Paž

An altar for sacrifices in the Buddhist temple Nanputuo, a huge complex restored to its former glory by the state. The state also pays the monks and on the temple grounds trade is booming.



photo by S. Paž

One of the squares of the island Gulangyu, called the Pianos Island, a major tourist attraction of Xiamen. People find a place to socialize despite the millions of tourists visiting this small island every year.



photo by S. Paz

Street trade on one of the streets in the center of Xiamen, adjacent to the huge shopping street Kaiyuan.

THE **NATURE** AND **DYNAMICS** OF DENG XIAOPING'S REFORMS*

KRZYSZTOF GAWLIKOWSKI

TRANSLATED BY:
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article
abstract

DENG'S REFORMS RESULTED IN A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE TO THE MILLENNARY CHINESE CIVILIZATION: FROM A BACKWARD, PREDOMINATELY AGRARIAN TO A MODERN AND INDUSTRIAL ONE. ON THE OTHER HAND, CHINA ENTERED A PERIOD OF THE MOST DRAMATIC AND MASSIVE WESTERNIZATION IN HER HISTORY, THAT UPROOTED MANY OF HER NATIVE TRADITIONS. THESE PROCESSES ARE RELATED TO UNPRECEDENTED URBANIZATION, A TECHNOLOGICAL JUMP AND ENORMOUS INCREASE OF WELL-BEING COMBINED WITH CONSUMERIST IDEOLOGY, BORROWED FROM THE WEST. CHINA, PREVIOUSLY KNOWN FOR HER ISOLATIONIST POLICY (SYMBOLIZED BY THE GREAT WALL), BECAME A PIONEER OF GLOBALIZATION, WHEREAS HER RISE TO THE RANG OF THE GLOBAL POWER, THE MAIN PART-

* This article is based for a significant part on the observations of the author during countless discussions and conversations with Chinese from various backgrounds and of all ages and supported by various data available to the author. This image has been complemented and enriched by data and concepts contained in scholarly studies by numerous eminent scholars. The author got to know China during the age of Mao until the Cultural Revolution as a student. After years, the author returned to China in 1977 on the eve of the changes, and since the early 1980s he has been visiting China every year if not more often.

NER OF THE US, CHANGED THE ENTIRE WORLD ARCHITECTURE AND RESULTED IN SIGNIFICANT WEAKENING OF THE POLITICAL AND CULTURAL DOMINATION OF THE WEST, LASTING FOR SEVERAL CENTURIES. NOW VARIOUS NON-WESTERN CULTURES DEMAND EQUAL TREATMENT AND RESPECT. THUS THE WORLD ENTERED A NEW PHASE OF ITS HISTORY.

THESE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES WERE COMBINED IN CHINA WITH A PARTICULAR COURSE OF THE POST-COMMUNIST TRANSFORMATION: FROM THE PLANNED ECONOMY, COMMANDED BY THE PARTY-STATE, TO MARKET ECONOMY WITH PRIVATE OWNERSHIP, ALTHOUGH THE STATE STILL PLAYS A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN ECONOMY (AS IN OTHER EAST ASIAN STATES). IN THE POLITICAL SPHERE CHINA JUMPED FROM THE MAOIST "BARRACK COMMUNISM" AND IDEOLOGICAL-MORALISTIC STATE OF THE CONFUCIAN TYPE TO AN ANARCHIC AUTHORITARIAN SYSTEM, WITH AN UNPRECEDENTED INCREASE OF INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS IN EVERYDAY LIFE.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY STILL RULES THE COUNTRY, BUT HER NATURE HAD BEEN ESSENTIALLY CHANGED, THE COMMUNIST-MAOIST IDEOLOGY HAD BEEN SUBSTITUTED BY NATIONALISTIC CONCEPTS OF THE "REJUVENATION OF CHINESE NATION", ELABORATED BY THE GREATEST NATIONALIST LEADER SUN YAT-SEN (1866-1925). CHINA ALSO ADOPTS THE WESTERN CONCEPT AND THE SYSTEM OF THE RULE OF LAW, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS CHALLENGING HER NATIVE TRADITIONS OF THE LAST THREE MILLENNIA, ALTHOUGH SHE CHANGES THESE ADOPTED FOREIGN CONCEPTS AS SHE HAS BEEN DONE BEFORE WITH BUDDHISM AND MARXISM. THE DISSOLUTION OF THE MAOIST PEOPLES' COMMUNES, THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE, HAD BEEN CARRIED OUT BY THE PEASANTS, AGAINST THE INITIAL WILL OF THE LEADERS. OTHER IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL CHANGES HAVE ALSO BEEN MADE UNDER THE TREMENDOUS AND OPEN PRESSURE BY THE PEOPLE, AND CIVIL SOCIETY PLAYS AN INCREASING ROLE THERE; HENCE THE TERM 'DENG XIAOPING'S REFORMS' IS TO A CERTAIN EXTENT MISLEADING.

PRC, DENG XIAOPING, SUN YAT-SEN,
CULTURAL REVOLUTION, DEMOCRACY,
REFORMS, TRANSITION

keywords

The transformations in China which occurred at the end of the 1970s, usually named Deng Xiaoping's reforms, initiated a very fast economic development of the country and led to modernization on an unprecedented scale. Undoubtedly these were the biggest, most fundamental and the most dramatic changes which China has experienced in its four thousand years history and they constituted one of the crucial events in world history of the 20th century. As a result, China, which at the beginning of the last century was as it were a "failed state" trampled by the western imperial armies at will, where the poverty was unimaginable and the people kept starving by the thousands, and at times of natural disasters by the hundreds of thousands, at the end of the twentieth century has become the "world's biggest factory" and its biggest banker, and also the main partner of the US. Constantly growing in power, China will probably become the most influential superpower of the 21th century. Forecasts based on different indicators differ primarily in their calculations when she will outrun the United States, and not if this will happen or not.

THE SPHERES AND RATE OF TRANSFORMATION

When from 1978 the so called "reforms" (*gaige*) and "opening to the world" (*kaifang*) were officially introduced, these transformations in China were much bigger and more radical than the changes in Poland after 1989. In China, they included not only the economic, political and ideological domains, but also many others. In Poland the key issue was to regain full sovereignty after neo-colonial subordination to Moscow. The communist system imposed on Poland and the neighboring countries by the Soviet Union had to maintain the dominance of Moscow. The loss of power by the ruling party¹ and the decline of the communist system - were the simple consequences of restored Poland's independence and joining the Western World. On the other hand, communist China was a fully sovereign country, and its ruling party acquired power in the wake of the civil war and the so-called reforms were an independent decision of its leadership. In particular these reforms were supposed to restore political stability in the country and accelerate its modernization and development. It should also be mentioned that during the leadership of Mao Zedong (1897-1976) China had started to normalize its relations with the US and cooperate closely with the Western World, treating it like an ally in the fierce confrontation with Moscow. As a result of the reforms China did also normalize its relations with the crumbling Soviet

¹ It was called the Polish United Worker's Party, although its nature was communist. (Editor's note - JvdB)

Union of Mikhail Gorbachev. Therefore, the internal and international contexts of the Chinese transformation, like its nature and dynamics, were completely different from the changes taking place in Poland and in Central Europe.



FORECASTS BASED ON DIFFERENT INDICATORS
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The changes, which took place in China, were of an evolutionary kind. The key issue was the gradual transition from a state-controlled economy towards a market economy with private ownership. It was related to the dismantling of the Maoist system and the evolution towards a *soft authoritarian* system, a little anarchistic, increasingly pluralistic, to which the previously unknown rule of law had been introduced step by step. There was likewise enormous ideological transformations: the modernization of the state, urbanization and industrialization, which meant the transfer of a large part of the population from agrarian to industrial civilization. This brought with it a technological and hence civilizational boost and likewise a rise of living standards for most. Nonetheless huge social and regional inequalities appeared in this sphere. In addition, westernization of the country across was widespread including profound cultural changes. Finally, from their self-imposed isolation in the world, China turned to versatile international cooperation and even become a leader of the globalization process. Notwithstanding the evolutionary dynamics of the reforms, the process of "the great opening" was revolutionary in different aspects, including social mentality.

In the course of the three decades, i.e. during the lifespan of one generation, the country has been changed beyond recognition. A whole society had been transformed, and China's position as a backward, peripheral, "revolutionary," Third World country that challenged the international order, had been changed in a bewildering way: she acquired the status of one of the leaders of the modern world. In 2009, David Miliband, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, stated that she has become a force, which strengthens the present world order and even saves the world capitalist system.² In the same year David Shambaugh, an outstanding American sinologist, in his analysis of the US-China relations indicated, that she already had become the main political, economic

² Borger 2009. This statement came up during a speech of Miliband about the G-20 in London.

and strategic partner of the US, and to some extent, even their rival.³

Under such circumstances Zbigniew Brzezinski started to promote the G-2 concept, i.e. “ruling the world by the US in partnership with China,” but Peking kindly rejected this offer.⁴ With China’s sensational entrance into the international arena, the whole world evolved from a unipolar system, where one superpower – the United States – dominated, to what some researchers call “a chaotic multipolar system,” also referred to as the G-Zero system, where no great power is able to obtain leadership on global scale.⁵ This also has some fundamental implications in the civilizational and cultural sphere: for the first time since the Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution and the birth of capitalism in Europe, Western civilization has ceased to dominate the world. Now the West has to learn how to treat the Confucian-Buddhist civilization - native to China - as an equal partner, as well as the Muslim and Hindu civilizations, and even the cultures and traditions of single, non-Western countries. The concept of intercivilizational and intercultural dialogue, announced by the UN in 1998, has gained new meaning since the non-Western powers, countries and religions have grown in strength and have been demanding more firmly to be treated as partners by the Christian civilization of the West.⁶ Thus, it is not only China that has changed; the entire world structure is undergoing transformation.

In order to illustrate the scale of these changes in China, certain facts will be quoted as examples. Today, with a population of nearly 20 million, Beijing resembles Tokyo, although it is even more monumental and better planned than the Japanese capital. Yet, in late 1970s there were only slightly over 1 million inhabitants and it was a completely different city, that still looked almost as it had centuries ago, with mainly one-storey, grey buildings alongside narrow *hutongs*.⁷ Only as late as 1966, at the eve of the Cultural Revolution, the Medieval gates and massive walls surrounding the imperial capital were pulled down, merely two isolated city gates survived. In the Mao era along the gigantic Chang’an Alley cutting across the city from east to west, buildings higher than five storeys were very scarce. Only the most important historic monuments, key public buildings and the layout of main central streets survived until now, whereas some 70 % of the old buildings of the historic capital had

³ Shambaugh 2009.

⁴ Liu Henry 2009.

⁵ Bremer, Roubini 2011a; Bremer, Roubini 2011b: 2-7.

⁶ For a detailed discussion of these cultural changes see: Morris 2010 and Gawlikowski 2004, 2012.

⁷ It is a narrow way in the traditional Chinese towns in the residential quarters mostly for pedestrians and bikes, a rickshaw could also pass there, but a taxi often could block it completely.

been demolished to give space for modern buildings and roads full of cars. When one travels across China today, one could notice that not only big metropolises have been built practically from scratch, but also local towns and even villages, where it is difficult now to find any traditional houses, from the periods preceding Deng’s reforms. Historians are very upset with the fact that the remnants of the old China have been irretrievably disappearing at a fast pace and only with a lot of effort some of them have been rescued. Still, even the saved ones lost their previous look in the modern context. The Lamaist Temple of Peace and Harmony (*Yonghegong*) in Beijing can serve as an example. Erected in the 18th century on a small hill, with its gold roofs it dominated over grey, one-storey houses in the neighbourhood, whereas now it is very difficult to notice its lost and dwarfed silhouette among the gigantic skyscrapers.

It is worth reminding that the basic means of transport in late 1970s were bicycles, and even goods as huge as telegraphic poles were carried by freight rickshaws or arabas⁸ drawn forward by oxen, mules, and donkeys. In the outskirts it was still possible to come across camel caravans transporting goods from Central Asia. Even for the main streets cars were scarce and police officers would stop the streams of bicycles to make way for such an unusual guest. Cars were generally only used by party and state dignitaries, and taxis by the few foreigners of those times. On the roads close to Beijing, now packed full of cars of all types and makes, a lorry would appear once in several hours. At harvest time, peasants would scatter corn on roads to dry, and drivers would just have to slow down if they happened to pass on such a road.

Since 2009, China has become the largest automotive market in the world and city dwellers have to deal with enormous traffic jams and smog. A huge mid-1990s program for the construction of motorways and dual carriageways was completed better than planned and at the end of 2011 the country had a network of 85,000 km, a length (but not yet quality) almost equal to that of the US network of highways that the Chinese roads were devised after. In 2012 China expected to have a highway and dual carriageway system with a total length exceeding that of the USA. All this was achieved in the blink of an eye. Still back in 1988 there were only 147 km⁹ of express roads in the entire country. It is necessary to add that the old China had few roads. Apart from some strategic emperor’s roads, land transport was mainly based on country roads and baulks among fields (this is why the main means of freight and

⁸ Arabas: a heavy, springless wagon drawn by oxen or cows. (Editor’s note – JvdB)

⁹ Xin Dingding 2008a; Cox 2011.

passenger transport back then were wheelbarrows, invented in China, or people carrying litters on their backs), and still in the 1930s about 70 % of transport was carried out by sea, canals and rivers. The lack of roads and possibility to transport heavier goods was a crucial brake on development. This is why Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925), the founder of the Republic and its first president, considered Father of the Nation (Guofu), defined building state-of-the-art transport and communication systems as a priority in his visionary programme for the development of China. This included the construction of a system of modern ports, as well as restoration and expansion of waterways. He enumerated as a secondary target the construction of a railway network, and as the third task – a large system of carriageways that would connect all the capitals of the provinces, and if possible smaller towns as well. Besides, he called for creating railway and automotive industries, although he was well aware of the fact that the roads inevitably would also be used for traditional transport.¹⁰ Thus, the current development of the state network of roads in China is a revolutionary undertaking of historic importance dreamed already by Sun Yat-sen.

The development of the high speed trains, which construction is of the highest priority during the last years, is even more spectacular because it reduces the number of passengers of high-fuel consumption airlines and cars, that is important for the decrease in the CO₂ production (a crucial issue to fight climate change) and China's import dependence of liquid fuels. The work on the first high-speed train network ('bullet train') began in China in 2007 and by the middle of 2011 already 10.000 km was in use. In 2012 the length of the Chinese high-speed rail was expected to surpass the combined length of similar rails in all other countries of the world. In 2015, the total network length is expected to reach 25.000 km. The "harmony express" train runs at an average speed of 313 km/h from Wuhan to Guangzhou (968 km) with a top speed of 380 km/h had been declared "the world's fastest train."



SUN YAT-SEN (1866-1925), THE FOUNDER OF THE REPUBLIC AND ITS FIRST PRESIDENT, CONSIDERED FATHER OF THE NATION (GUOFU), DEFINED BUILDING STATE-OF-THE-ART TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS AS A PRIORITY IN HIS VISIONARY PROGRAMME FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINA

¹⁰ Wang Sheng 1981; Sun Wen 1925: 153-336; Sun Wen 1996: 227-8.

Most spectacular was the opening ceremony of the Beijing-Shanghai line (1.318 km) on June 30 2011, in which participated prime minister Wen Jiabao. Instead of a 10 hour journey the passengers covered the distance within 4 hours 16 min. It's possible to even shorten the travel time by using maximum speed. It can be also added that previously it was the most overcrowded long-distance line in the country and it was travelled by about 100,000 people per day. Along with the construction of the super high-speed rail, the number of passengers doubled and there are 50 trains a day on this line; during the peak hours at 5 minutes intervals. The fact that the new track was built side by side with the old tracks proves the difficulty of this construction. Though, the line has been shortened a little and led through new bridges and viaducts of a total length of more than one thousand kilometers. The world longest bridge is 164 km long and this is the second longest viaduct in the world, of more than 113 km, with 22 tunnels of a total length of more than 16 km.¹¹ Its construction process lasted only 42 months (from April 18, 2008 until June 30, 2011). As it happens with such big ventures, many abuses and embezzlements were discovered by the Chinese National Audit Office, including those made by local authorities.¹² It is worth to point out that in 2004, from Shanghai city center to the airport (40 km), a high-speed magnetic levitation line was activated for the first time in the world. The operational speed of this train is 431 km/h and the journey takes 7 minutes and 20 seconds. The whole construction is based on experimental technology of Siemens.¹³ Another line opened in 2006 and goes from Qinghai Province to Lhasa in Tibet. The length of the railway is 1956 km, and a part of 960 km is located 4.000 m above sea level (the highest point is 5.072 m), about 550 km is laid on permafrost and the wagons have to be hermetically closed, equipped with oxygen masks (like in an airplane) and with doctors on duty. It's the world's highest railway. The construction process has been criticized by ecologists and the Tibetan patriotic circles skeptical about modernization of their country.¹⁴

The tickets' prices for these Chinese super high-speed railway trains are similar to airline tickets, so some passengers still prefer traditional means of transport. During the construction process of these railways, some weaknesses in the security system and opaque financial affairs have come to light. Thus, we could say that this venture has not been a complete streak of success. Because of multiple protests, plans to expand

¹¹ See the web pages: Visitshanghaicity.com 2011; Railway-technology.com 2011a.

¹² Reuters 2012.

¹³ Visitshanghaicity.com 2010.

¹⁴ Railway-technology.com 2011b; Xin Dingding 2008b.

the magnetic lines have been cancelled. The opening of these railways is definitely a huge success for Chinese engineers, even though they relied on the technological achievements of Japan (Kawasaki) and Germany (Siemens).¹⁵ The PRC inherited railways from the past only totaled 27.000 km in length, almost half of which were located in Manchuria. These were not rail networks, like in Europe, but in China there were mostly single-track railway lines from one city to another (like in the 19th century our Warsaw to Vienna railroad). At the end of 2010 railways were expanded to 91.000 km and of course completely transformed. During the 1990s, when their extension started intensively, only just over a thousand kilometers of new lines were built per year.

One should bear in mind that for thousands of years China held on to the ideal of living one's entire life in one's own village, in one's family, taking care of the spirits of the parents and ancestors. It was essential to Confucianism and glorified by Taoism as well. In the classical *Canon of the Way and the Virtue (Daodejing)*, during two thousand years known by the people almost by heart, one could read:

“Let the people appreciate their lives and do not migrate far.
Even if there are boats and carriages, none should ride on them (...)
Let the people relish their food, beautify their clothing, live quietly at their homes,
and enjoy their customs.
Though neighboring communities overlook one another and the crowing of cocks and
barking of dogs can be heard,
Yet the people there should grow old and die without ever visiting the neighbors.”¹⁶

It was the reason why the merchants, who had to travel, had been considered a “low class” for more than two thousand years. Family compounds were closed, villages were often surrounded by walls with gates closed for night. Even within the walled cities “hutong communities” – neighborhoods – had to be locked during the night. The old Peking under the Manchu dynasty (1644-1912), within the city walls, was divided into more than a thousand such communities. Travelling within China required various permissions and passing innumerable check-points. The Chinese society had been divided for millennia by such innumerable physical and mental walls inside, and usually closed to foreign relations.

The Great Wall merely completed this system. Travelling abroad was almost impossible for the Chinese, and foreigners coming to China were usually under a strict control. The Chinese, who migrated abroad, mostly originated only from the three southern coastal provinces, the land of the ancient seafaring Viet people, whereas the people from the core Chinese area avoided migration.¹⁷ Even under the Mao regime, the last heterodox form of the Confucian Empire, mobility of the people was restricted in a way unimaginable in the West. For every travel there were necessary various permissions, even a peasant who wanted to visit his ant in a neighboring village should apply to a party secretary's for permission. All institutions were “closed,” all visitors had to receive a permission to enter. Hence the “transport explosion” in contemporary China essentially changes life and mentality of this ancient nation. The traditional isolationist mentality and system, which predominated in changing forms during two millennia, survives in various respects. The most bewildering is the concept and the legal order of “community citizenship.” The Chinese, unlike the members of the Western nations, could enjoy their rights merely in the community, where their family is registered (usually it is a native community). In other villages, town or cities they are treated as “aliens” and they must apply for residence permission; they cannot send their children to a local school or register their car, notwithstanding how long they live there. This system constitutes the background of the so-called *hukou* administrative system, a subject of many controversies in the last years, whether it should be maintained or abolished.

However, challenging the old isolationist mentality in a more drastic way, China presented the project of the construction of the three international railways and started preliminary negotiations with 17 interested countries in 2010. The project concerned one intercontinental railway linking London and Beijing – the distance covered within 48 hours – and two transcontinental railways: the first one linking Beijing and Singapore via Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia (to be covered in 24 hours) and the second one from Beijing to India and Pakistan. It has been the greatest infrastructural project in the world, and China declared to be ready to provide technology and financial resources. The railway connecting China and Europe is supposed to be constructed in 10 years. Without doubt the realization of these grandiose projects would greatly accelerate globalization processes. Hence Deng's reforms initiated a new “Great Leap to the Future.”

15 Powell 2009; Robinson 2010; Fischer 2011; Moore 2010.

16 *Daodejing*, par. 80: Zhu Qianzhi 1984: 308-310; transl. Chan Wing-Tsit 1963: 238-9.

17 For the detailed description of various Chinese ethno-linguistic groups see: Moser 1985.

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IN THE LATE 1970S A WRISTWATCH, A BICYCLE AND A SIMPLE FAN WERE DESIRED “INDUSTRIAL GOODS”

In the late 1970s a wristwatch, a bicycle and a simple fan were desired “industrial goods.” While a higher standard of living for the minority in the big cities were the rather wretched, usually four-storey blocks of flats with such conveniences (such as a hole in the floor serving as a toilet, a shower, cold water and a gas bottle). The majority of the population inhabited extremely crowded village-like compounds near narrow alleyways called *hutongs*. There, one stinky public toilet and one tap somewhere at the corner of the hutongs providing potable water had to suffice the needs of the whole neighbourhood (still, water used for housing needs was usually taken from wells placed in the yards). Moreover, phones were only available in offices and houses of higher functionaries. So the “officials” of various ranks, called *cadres* (*ganbu*), directed the functioning of all institutions and of society. For example, if someone fainted in the street during summer, a gathering of people waited until a police officer or an “official” came by and sought emergency assistance. In a similar way, if a foreigner entered a city bus, an official usually ordered a passenger to give his seat up and solemnly seated the “foreign friend” (*waiguo pengyou*). It was insignificant whether this “official” was a brigadier of the Beijing No. 2 Machine Tool Plant or a head of the Plantings Department of the Ministry of Agriculture. Formally, all the functionaries of the party or the state administration had been considered “the cadres,” with rank according to their function, but all of them had “to lead the people.” Even clothes distinguished the cadres from other people – a uniform without any patches, four flap pockets on the jacket, a small hole for a pen in the upper right pocket, and traditional navy-blue colour for the civil cadres. Green uniforms were reserved for the armed forces, grey for officials of the highest rank like the Prime Minister, and the exclusive *café au lait* for state leaders, like Mao or Liu Shaoqi.

It is difficult to compare the China of 30 years ago with today’s country where everybody wears whatever he or she likes, the more fashionable the better, do whatever they like and work wherever they want. What is more, if harassed, people will demand compensation before the courts – a girl raped in a dark street will file a complaint against the Municipal Directorate of Community Lighting (a situation of this kind actually happened in the late 1990s) and a passenger with a bruise occurred after a sudden braking of a bus will search for a doctor to give a forensic examination and then sue the transport company. They no

longer remember that once, when society was ruled by the cadres, citizens had to obey and follow the revolutionary directions imposed by the party. Nowadays, hundreds of millions of people in China have moved to blocks of flats and skyscrapers with comfortable, usually tastefully furnished apartments which match Western type and standard. Moreover, the largest community of internet users in the world is in China. In addition to that, the country with the greatest number of mobile phones used worldwide is China and also the largest class of “wealthy and rich people” live there. As a result, the biggest market of luxury goods imported by the most renowned Western companies, such as Dior, Gucci, Chanel or Lamborghini, is established there. China, with an area similar to Europe and a population of about 1.3 billion people often offers “the best.”

Modernization and the Chinese pace of development astonish Western researchers. In three decades, the country made a huge leap forwards from a poor Third World country to a normal state with an average level of development. Whilst at the beginning of the reforms, in 1978, only 18 percent of the population lived in the cities, in 2010 this percentage grew to 47.5 percent. It meant that around 300-400 million people started an urban life, usually by moving to quickly expanding metropolitan areas. According to predictions, in 2015, the majority of the Chinese population will live in cities.¹⁸ There were some calculations, prepared in China, showing that in 2008, 161 million of workers from the countryside lived temporarily in the cities without registration.¹⁹ Therefore, it is accurate to compare the urbanization processes that occurred there during one generation to the urbanization and industrialization processes that were taking place in Europe for 200 years after the Industrial Revolution. One might say that from the beginning of the 1980s, approximately as much “urban substance” has been constructed in China as all contemporary European cities counted together. No country’s GDP has ever before increased by about 9 percent over a period of three decades.²⁰ It is even more meaningful because it affects a country as huge as China.

However, social costs of that development were also enormous. Fast process led to material stratification of entire social groups, differences between regions increased and severe ethnic tensions came to the surface. People lost their sense of life security that had earlier been provided by

18 Xinhua 2011; Steinbock 2010.

19 Hu Yuanyuan 2010.

20 Angus Maddison calculated that real GPD of China in 1978-1995 increased 7.5 percent per year, contrary to 9.9 percent adopted by the authorities of People’s Republic of China. Also, he calculated that in that period of time GPD per capita increased 6 percent per year. (Maddison 1998: 55, 151)

the totalitarian state, taking care of its citizens' lives. Hundreds of millions lost access to medical care and social security. Economic development brought with disastrous environmental damage, and terrible water and air pollution. A simple example is that during disastrous draughts in northern China, one could even ford the Yellow River in its middle reaches, which had never happened before. During his 2-year stay in Beijing in the 1960s, the author experienced only one dust storm, whereas in the 1990s there were about a dozen dust storms in Beijing a year, and their reach went so far that sometimes it was even necessary to close the airports in Seoul and Tokyo.

Still, various shortages are somehow balanced by the incredible growth of the country, which are visible at every turn – “China’s revival” – and by the considerable increase of the living standards of the majority of the population. Comparative studies of the American PEW Research Centre in 2007 showed that as many as 83 % of the Chinese thought well of the state of the country, as many as 89 % were satisfied with the government politics, whereas in Poland at that time only 28 % were satisfied with the politics of the government, which was one of the lowest scores in Europe. Still, in Europe there were few governments that were assessed positively by more than half of their citizens. The differences were even larger when it came to the question on the future of children. As many as 86 % of the Chinese were convinced that the future would be better, whereas as many as 70-80 % citizens of wealthy European countries thought that the future would be worse, and Poland was among the most optimistic countries with 51 % respondents who claimed that the future would be better.²¹

Before the eyes of the Chinese, the dream of Sun Yat-sen, other revolutionaries and reformers from the beginning of the 20th century was coming true. It was the dream of “China’s revival” (*xin Zhongguo*) and restoration of their previous power, as well as gaining a prominent position in the world. The well-being of the people, interpreted as providing them with a sufficient amount of food and clothes, was Sun Yat-sen’s main concern and the leitmotif of his national ideology. As famine had been an endemic phenomenon in China since ancient times, only its scale had been changing. Nowadays the Chinese from inland and abroad are appreciative of Deng’s big achievements – no-one in the country is dying of hunger anymore, and for the first time in history many people are stuffing themselves after all the these hunger years. What is more, China’s potential and power are growing bigger and bigger and she starts to compete against the Western world, something that had seemed a pipe

dream not so long ago. When the first underground line was opened in Guangzhou (on June 28, 1999), a BBC TV reporter asked people on the platform about their opinions. Among others, he talked to an elderly rural woman who apparently arrived especially to admire the underground. Bursting with pride, she answered: “Now we have the Western world right here!” What she implied was understood by thousands of Chinese who for decades used to set off from Guangzhou as coolies to work in the West (or its colonies) in poverty. With such incredible pride she concluded: “Finally we have caught up with the West!”

DIVERGENT PERSPECTIVES ON CHINESE REFORMS

Undoubtedly, the political reforms in China are the most controversial. Quite popular, commonly held stereotypes assume that only market reforms have been introduced in China, although the state still plays a key role in the economy; and that there have been no political changes. By observing Chinese political life superficially, one can indeed claim that the ruling party continues to be the one that calls itself communist. Respect for Mao and communist ideals have been officially maintained, as well as the former communist symbols, former rituals and political institutions of the PRC. Does this mean, however, that the country remains communist? Comparing China with post-communist states of Central Europe, where the power was seized by democratic opposition and communism was condemned, this is the impression that one may have.

As Mark Blecher rightly points out, during the Cold War Western elites got used to viewing communist countries as representing one totalitarian model led by a party, whereas the communist regime in China was considerably different from the Soviet model dominating Europe.²² According to other researchers, in Asia actually every communist country had a different political and economic, and even ideological system, whereas in Europe those systems were almost unified. As a result, transformation processes were different in every Asian country and were unlike those in Europe.²³

Minxin Pei, a renowned researcher at Harvard University, very critical of Deng’s reforms, has no doubt that communism in China was being destroyed as early as the end of the 1980s. Although the changes

21 PEW 2007.

22 Blecher 1997: 1-2.

23 Wincler 1999: 231-2.

started with reforms of the current system, what happened there was in fact a “capitalist revolution” and the demise of communism. According to his assessment, in the case of China the evolution from communism to a different authoritarian system provided much more benefits than achieved by democratic means in Russia. In China, the living standards raised rapidly, civil and economic liberties increased considerably, and as a result of the transformation the state gained an incomparably higher status as a world power. Temporarily, however, this time of great prosperity allowed the survival of an authoritarian rule that gained much time before needing to implement further changes. Yet, he does not want to forecast on which of these ways will prove more beneficial as a result. As the researcher points out, China, like other post-communist countries, also experienced a considerable weakening of the state and strengthening of social subjects, which, however, did not lead to the formation of a civil society which could have been a stable foundation for democracy.²⁴

Lynn T. White, an outstanding researcher on contemporary China at the University of Princeton, formulates even more radical conclusions. With irony, he indicates that the English acronym for the ruling party – CCP (Chinese Communist Party) should be interpreted as Chinese Capitalist Party, because at present, having forgotten about communism; its efforts are focused on building capitalism. According to this researcher, if this party retains power for even longer now, it could switch to a socialist position in the normal, Western meaning, and defend people, their income and natural environment against the excesses of the free market. For now, it operates as an authoritarian structure that protects its power monopoly which is growing weaker and weaker.



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Having compared three ways of transformation – “radical changes” (*cold shower*), gradual, evolutionary transformation and the “mixed approach” – he concluded that the last one was the most beneficial for the economy and society. For the first way, he used the example of Poland

and GDR incorporated to Germany, where a new system was suddenly introduced and caused a doctrinal transition to capitalism in the political and economic areas, which was naïve in many respects. Russia and other newly independent states following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, despite some reservations, could serve as cases of gradual changes; whereas China is an example of the mixed way. According to him, “radical changes” were burdened with huge economic and social costs, actual economic slump, great unemployment and impoverishment of societies for many years (in the case of GDR reduced with financial transfers from the western part of the country), and as a result, the reformers were discredited.

To compare the Soviet Union with China is much more complicated. Moscow started the transformations from the political sphere, including all its levels, whereas in the economy these were missing and as a result it collapsed rapidly, which finally posed a threat to the political stability of the country which in turn curbed the reforms. In China, the dynamics were different: the government introduced changes gradually, in line with Deng’s principle of “crossing a river and feeling with one’s feet where the stones are.” However, they applied above all to the political sphere where reforms were partial and limited in many ways. As for economic reforms, they were ahead of political ones and they were much more radical. They also had a specific dynamics: first, people’s communes were eliminated in the countryside, where 80% of the population lived. Family farms and market mechanisms were reintroduced there (although with some limitations), whereas temporarily unchanged state companies remained in cities. Simultaneously, the new capitalist market was allowed to develop in the industrial and service sector, where their administrators had to face the challenges of the free market. In how far companies were controlled by the central government, which decided on the policy, the new capitalistic companies (with various forms of ownership) remained in the sphere of local power relations whose influence grew bigger and bigger.

In this way, mass unemployment and social disturbances were avoided. Reforms in state companies began only at the next stage of reforms, not until a strong capitalist sector had already developed; only when they needed new employees and to satisfy consumer demands to a larger and larger extent. Then, state companies underwent reforms one by one, each given some time to adapt to the market, they received development support while the formation of strong corporations was stimulated. In this way an economic crisis was avoided and state industry was not given up to foreign capital. As Lynn T. White points out, the key role in healing

24 Pei Minxin 1994: 207-9.

state companies through participating in their privatization, as well as in developing the capitalistic sector, was played by Chinese entrepreneurs and Chinese capital from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and the entire Chinese diaspora (incidentally, they were usually given priority over Western investors and capital).

Indeed, state governors acted this way in fear of workers and riots in cities. However, the actual biggest influence on these reformation dynamics in China was, according to the researcher, came from local power relations that gained much autonomy, and not from the central government like in Europe. It was this complicated set of factors that determined the way of partially gradual and partially radical changes – a way that proved much more beneficial to the society than the two others applied in Europe. And it was this mixed Chinese way that allowed this country to develop so incredibly fast and advance on the global scene.²⁵

To supplement White's analysis, one can add that the radical way of transformations was linked to seizing power by the so-called "democratic opposition," because the communist regimes maintained by Moscow in the satellite states, serving its own interest to a large extent, would not have survived without its support. Thus, it was only natural that the opposition wanted to introduce some spectacular changes and condemn the former system. The choice of the Western model as an example was also determined by the political situation, because in the ongoing confrontation of the "Soviet camp" with the "free world" the domestic opposition identified itself with the latter and could survive only through its support. On the other hand, when power was seized by some "reformers" from the circles of the ruling communist elite, they usually aimed at "repairing the former system," and for them it was difficult to break with it or condemn it. All the more so because these leaders headed some wider networks and interest groups connected to the former system.

In China it was possible to introduce some changes gradually and others – radically, because the situation there was extraordinary. As a result of the Cultural Revolution and a progressive collapse of the Maoist system, a deep political crisis was building up, the state was disorganised, and at the same time the former communist party was broken up by Maoist radicals who had only just started to rebuild it with much difficulty. More and more openly and commonly, society rebelled against the existing system and its revolutionary and proletarian ideology, invoking national ideals and interests. In this context, local centres of power made efforts to

rescue the situation on their own on their territory by initiating various reforms. White is right to view those local initiatives, which started as early as at the beginning of 1970s, as the main engine of change, and not the 13th plenary session of the CPC Central Committee in December 1978 that according to the official ideology was the start of "Deng's reforms." They were not exclusively top-down controlled processes as often presented by Chinese propaganda.

What is also very important, China – unlike Poland – never considered itself part of the West and never identified itself with it. To the contrary, following over one hundred years of exploitation, oppression and national humiliation by Western powers, the attitude of the elites and society towards them was distrustful and suspicious. The organizational systems and ideology of the West would not only be objectively difficult to be fully applied in China due to completely different conditions and traditions, but they were also treated with criticism and distance. The ambivalence towards it was very clear: on the one hand, there was awe of its might and affluence, and on the other hand there was fear and anticipation of its intrigues and potential damage to China. Apart from few pro-Western intellectuals, the elites and society considered it obvious that China could use foreign experience, but it had to seek its own model of development.

Pierre F. Landry draws our attention to the fact that the authoritarian system which replaced the communist system there undergoes constant transformation, above all decentralization and pluralization, usually associated with democracy.²⁶ Also other experts on Chinese reality underline that new actors keep on appearing in the processes of political decision-making and that the autonomy of the existing ones increases. It is local governments and mid-level officials that become more and more important in the Chinese bureaucracy. The influence of the media, mainly supported by advertising, and public opinion grows in importance. The political system undergoes modifications, although it can lead both to its democratization and oligarchization.²⁷

Tony Saich, great specialist of Chinese transformations from Harvard University, identified two key aspects of these changes. Firstly, China is such a huge and diversified country that there are "multiple realities" functioning mutually, not only at the regional, but also at a peculiar stratified level. Moreover, there are contradictory trends appearing coincidentally. Therefore, it is difficult to formulate some general

²⁵ White 1998: 656-662.

²⁶ Landry 2008.

²⁷ Mertha 2011: 69-84; Cabestan 2004: 3.

views concerning China. Secondly, there is an abyss between the official political rhetoric and social practice, real decisions and people's lives. The distance between these two worlds increased significantly during the period of reforms. Thus, there appeared a sphere of declarations and ideological labels like "socialist market economy" and realities of "savage capitalism," child labour and a brutal exploitation of employees which is already forgotten in Europe. A foreign observer may attach too much importance to empty declarations and official ideology rituals. However, Chinese society does not pay attention anymore to these phenomena, prefers to reject the ideological concepts and even mock them, not to mention the fact that it has become much more pluralist in its orientations.²⁸

It is clear that the transformations that occurred in China are being interpreted varyingly. For example, Kate Zhou distinguishes main trends in their presentation and analysis. According to the first trend, China is viewed as a superpower which will have, around the mid-21st century, the most powerful economy in the world, surpassing the United States.²⁹ Many researchers analyzing this trend suppose that with the progress of modernization of the country its liberalization and democratization will also inevitably occur. In other terms, China will gradually imitate the West. Furthermore, what has also been acknowledged is that China's "peaceful rise" declared by Chinese leaders as quite a probable option, which will benefit not only to China but also to the rest of the world. On the other hand, there is also a trend which presents China as a brutal regime, using repression, violating human rights, whose rising power (including her military strength), and aspiration to become world's hegemon significantly endanger the developed countries and democratic order.³⁰ It is usually assumed that China is still a communist regime supporting other dictatorships in the world for ideological reasons. Without any doubt, the first trend dominates in American politics since the time when Bill Clinton came to power and the United States adopted a policy of engaging China in world affairs on a partnership basis. However, the second one is also present

28 Saich 2001: 2, 19

29 Prognoses concerning surpassing the United States vary depending on the system of calculation applied. An independent institute - Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington - instead of counting the Yuan's real purchasing power basing on prices from 11 cities, as it is done by the World Bank, employed different calculations for rural areas where more than half of the population still lives and the prices are significantly lower than in the cities. According to these calculations, China's 2010 GPD was \$14.8 billion and, compared to the GPD of the US set at \$14.6 billion, it was higher. Thus, in their point of view, China surpassed the US in this area already in 2010. See: Peterson institute, 14-01-2011 (<http://nextbigfuture.com/2011/01/peterson-institute-senior-fellow.html>) (Accessed February 5, 2011).

30 Zhou Kate 2009: XXI.

there, promoted for years for example by the Taiwanese government.



CHINA, WHILE NOT RESPECTING OUR "UNIQUELY LEGITIMATE," WESTERN PRINCIPLES, IS SEEN AS A "COLOSSUS ON LEGS OF CLAY" NO LONGER ABLE TO DEVELOP ITSELF AS IT HAS BEEN DOING SO FAR

In addition, traces of the third form of so called "wishful thinking" also occur in the West. It is the question of the catastrophic prediction of China's breakdown plagued by a gigantic crisis, ethnic conflicts, peasant revolts, etc. China, while not respecting our "uniquely legitimate," Western principles, is seen as a "colossus on legs of clay" no longer able to develop itself as it has been doing so far. These speculations have been occurring for 30 years, but their partisans are not anxious about the fact that none of these predictions have ever come true. However, it does not mean that there are no tensions, conflicts or difficulties.

A fourth trend has also grown in importance recently. From this perspective, China is seen as a modernizing country which is not following the Western model of development. What the country has adopted is a specific model of "national capitalism" and an authoritarian form of management. Therefore, its way of development differs from the Western one and also, instead of the liberal "Washington consensus" imposed on the world in recent decades (with moderate success), it offers an alternative "Beijing consensus." Some authors, while defending the values and the supremacy of the West, condemn that authoritarian and managerial option. Others, on the contrary, tend to explain it, understand and even consider it a valuable alternative.³¹ They also add that, unmistakably, the countries of the old Third World have lost interest in the Western model of development and started analyzing the Chinese model with much more attention, which in turn even further endangers the current supremacy of the West.³²

The analyses of the transformations, which have occurred in China, are specifically conditioned by politics, ideology and in defence of different interests. Usually, it has a negative impact on objective and reliable descriptions of Chinese realities to which this paper has given priority and what could be the basis for rational politics of China's foreign partners.

31 Nolan 2004.

32 Compare for instance: Halper 2010.

POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN CHINA DURING THE DENG ERA

There are some different ways of responding to doubts concerning political transformations in China. First of all, in the hardcore Maoist system, which was actually eroding, but still had a total character organizing not only all aspects of social life but also the world view, every transgression had a political character because it disturbed the system. Therefore, the economic changes cannot be analyzed separately. From the Marxist-Maoist point of view, the economic transformations referred to the “base” of the whole system, the foundation of the superstructure constituted by ideology and the political system. In fact, the people’s communes in the rural areas and state-owned enterprises in the cities constituted the understructure of the real Maoism with its political power over people’s minds and their lives at each and every level. Thus, each element of the reforms had, in a certain manner, a political character. Many of them were even contradictory to the Maoist political and ideological system or radically changed its institutional character. Among the radical Deng’s concepts concerning politics the most noteworthy are:

- “Collective eating from one big cauldron must end” – henceforth, everyone must take care of their own bowl of rice.
- “It doesn’t matter whether a cat is white or black as long as it catches mice” – the fidelity to ideology and to its principles has no importance; what is important is efficiency (another variant of this rule was: “practice treated as a criterion of truth”).
- “Let some people get rich first” – the egalitarianism and cult of poverty have come to an end; some people need to enrich first in order for the country to enrich itself.
- “China needs law and democracy, the right and the left hand, both essential to achieve something” – so away with the Maoist lawlessness covered by the slogans of “dictatorship of the proletariat” and “class struggle.”
- “Reforms must be carried out in such a way like one might cross a river, surely touching every stone” – however, it suggests that conducting reforms means getting to the other side of the river, to the other reality.

- “The most damage to China was caused by leftists.”

However, some of Deng’s actions and theses which went against these principles can be easily identified. Above all, the Four Modernizations are of a particular concern. They were announced in March 1979 and exhorted to maintain socialism, dictatorship of the proletariat, the managerial role of Communist Party of China (CPC), Marxism-Leninism and Maoist Thought. They were even included in the statute of CPC and the constitution. However, it should be added that references to democracy (sometimes with the adjective “socialist”) became more vital and popular while the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat was seldom mentioned. Likewise, references to the Marxism-Leninism and Maoist Thought practically vanished from the real political discourse and political practice contradicted these thoughts at every turn. Furthermore, the official evaluation of Mao (June 1981), where 70 percent of his actions represented success and the remaining 30 percent his mistakes, may have a twofold interpretation – either it is a sort of defence against too radical critics or it is Mao’s dethronement from the position of Great Helmsman, excellent and deified leader, fount of all wisdom, who was eventually demoted to great, but ordinary, politician whose mistakes and successes can be critically analyzed.

It should also be remembered that it was in fact Deng who decided to bring the Band of Four and their collaborators to justice. The trial of these Maoist radicals, who had been shaping Chinese politics for 10 years, was even transmitted on the radio and television. Apart from Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu, executed by a firing squad after a judicial masquerade, they were the only communist leaders brought to court and convicted of their crimes (even sentenced to the death penalty, which was replaced afterwards by life-imprisonment). In addition to this, such a communist criminal as Kang Sheng (1898-1975), long-term politburo member, the head of secret services, was even deprived of a place in the avenue of the meritorious at the cemetery. Moreover, millions of harmed, persecuted and tormented people have been rehabilitated for years, starting with the landowners harmed during the Agricultural Reform and so called rightists oppressed in 1950s. Therefore, the rehabilitation concerned not only communist veterans persecuted during the Cultural Revolution. It is also worth mentioning that the Mao Mausoleum has remained Mao’s final resting place. However, the area has also become a commemorative place of other Chinese leaders, more or less oppressed by Mao, including Deng and President Liu Shaoqi (1898-1969) who was tortured to death during the Cultural Revolution. Moreover, countless monuments to Mao

and also large stone plaques inscribed with his quotes were removed. Obviously, these actions were of a symbolic significance to Chinese people.

Deng's reforms were clearly creating fundamentals for future democratic changes in China. However, Deng and many of his collaborators probably did not aim to do so and did not even realize this aspect of their actions. On the contrary, they treated their acts rather as "construction of normal and efficient administration" inspired by Singapore, Taiwan and Japan where the Western idea of the state had been adopted with some authoritarian characteristics. Without a doubt, Chinese political configurations were complex. On the one hand, among elites seeking for reforms were also activists consciously wanting to create democratic structures and their institutional bases. On the other hand, there were also "moderate conservatives" defending the rest of the ancient system and hindering the changes.

The basic elements of Deng's reforms could be summarised as follow:

- Reconstruction of market mechanisms in the economy as well as reestablishment of private initiatives and non-public enterprises. In order to achieve this goal, the first important step was to accept the formal dissolution of the people's communes in the countryside (an evolution which had already been initiated by the peasants themselves) and also to reconstruct family farms. It moved the majority of the population from the communist to the market system and stimulated the development of private entrepreneurship. With regard to the national industry, there were only small changes at the beginning but then, in 1985 and mostly in the 1990s, its reform (commercialization and privatization) began at full speed. Up until then, different free-market sectors functioned next to the national sector, all centrally managed. In addition, special spheres were created for capitalist companies and entrepreneurs (most of all ethnic Chinese) to encourage export and foreign capital investments.
- Opening China to the world – a still self-isolating country – was implemented in all aspects: those concerning economy and culture, but also enabling Chinese citizens to go abroad and foreigners to come to China; sending students and specialists abroad and above all, allowing the inflow of information about the contemporary world, of limit to Chinese people for many decades.
- Eliminating the Maoist ideology and replacing it with "Chinese patriotism" (to which a growing anti-Maoist opposition adhered), consequently radically limited the Communist Party's role, the former ideological guardian, whose institutions used to replace the state. Bit by bit, the state was reconstructed and strengthened, its central administration, as well at the level of provinces, counties, municipalities, villages, national courts systems, state attorney, etc. had to be created anew. Furthermore, as the Party's power waned as did the respected executive of "revolutionist morality," many liberties unknown to Chinese for decades were in fact re-established: the right to settle down, find a job, decide what to wear, where to travel, what to say and think. What should be considered as a milestone in these processes was the signing of various international conventions by different Chinese representatives, including those regarding human rights (eventually, the requirement of respecting human rights was included in the constitution in 2004). Thus, these conventions started to diffuse – even if it was mainly theoretical. Nonetheless, for the first time in 20th century Chinese citizens enjoyed greater freedom even in practice.
- Western institutions like the rule of law were introduced on a huge scale for the first time in three millennia of Chinese history. Its seeds, which had been introduced before, had been eliminated during the Maoist period. So, China had to build a completely new type of state – a secular one. Since its functions needed to be mostly political and administrative, the new state remained opposed to the earlier model of a post-Confucian, ideological-educational-sacral state. Moreover, the constitution gained in veritable importance as the order to which the new state subscribed, became visible. The provincial assemblies and the Chinese Parliament also started their transformation from ideological façade-institutions to real authoritative bodies – above all, their role was to create laws concerning economy, essential as foreign investment was advocated. Logically, conflicts of interests and lobbying occurred, decisions were difficult to make and choices no longer automatic. It was probably the most fundamental political and institutional revolution in the history of China, especially since it was linked with the leap of industrial civilization, widespread prosperity and an unprecedented westernization of the country. Unfortunately, the West seldom sees it that way.

- How did they replace the dictatorship of the proletariat led by the Party's secretaries, Maoist radicals or even military-political commissars (these constellations changed from time to time) by democratic and managerial mechanisms? It would not have been possible without grassroots initiatives, which started as experimental organizations of local elections – a completely new phenomenon in China, thus usually organized in an atmosphere of a great vivacity. Furthermore, the press and access to information changed significantly: national functionaries started to be charged with abuse. Competitions for administrative positions began, and those who already were employed had to reassert themselves through professional exams. The “ideological accuracy” almost disappeared from promotion criteria – education (and connections) started to play a leading role.
- Almost all prohibitions established in the Mao period regarding traditional Chinese culture, including literature and art, ancient cults and mores were lifted, but also the ban on foreign culture and western religions. Confucian traditions were again cultivated and popularized, even openly, while “culture and art of the proletariat” and “Marxist instruction” were rejected almost completely. What is more, universities started running again and the educational system was reconstructed (they even allowed the development of private schools, even for higher education). But what was re-established above all was the traditional respect for science, education, specialists of all domains and intellectuals, which had been systematically discredited by Mao.

Changes regarding mind-set and mores, revolutionary in their character, which occurred largely spontaneously, deserve more attention. The “one child policy” was essential to the growth of prosperity but its results were severely harmful for many families and caused many abuses of power, particularly in the cities. This policy had even more significant consequences. In the traditional set of values, respect or even honor to elderly people in the family and society was a key point. However, according to the new policy, two parents and four grandparents were caring with great emotion for the only allowed child and grandchild. Thus, the Confucian set of values and traditional customs were reversed – children with no siblings were treated as “princes,” they became more individual and egoist. In addition, social mobility and moving to new houses popularized the model of a small family while big families with several generations living together almost disappeared. It is also worth mentioning that the new state model and introduction of laws reduced the authority of political leaders

that had once been very influential. The comparison could be made that the Cultural Revolution had initiated the destruction process of the ancient Confucian heritage, while the reforms during the Deng period executed them in the social sphere. Paradoxically, when the cult of Confucius and his philosophy were officially allowed, these thoughts practically vanished from the social life. Moreover, there were cases, once unprecedented, of marriages without children where the woman preferred a professional career; or of claims for allowance by parents against their child that had abandoned them. The number of divorces increased as well. For the first time in Chinese history, citizens started to bring cases before the court against state functionaries and institutions. Sometimes, they were even successful.



DURING THE DENG ERA, A SEXUAL-MORAL REVOLUTION OCCURRED THAT COULD BE BRANDED AS THE MOST RADICAL IN THE CONFUCIAN WORLD

All Confucian societies were bound by exceptional prudery regulating contact between men and women. Separation was advocated and any sign of intimacy between could not be exposed publically. However, during the Deng era, a sexual-moral revolution occurred that could be branded as the most radical in the Confucian world. Young people started to act publically as their peers seen in Western movies, advertisements of condoms could appear on the street as a huge penis dummy wearing a “rubber sheath” and a young homosexual could walk down the street wearing a T-shirt with an *I'm-looking-for-a-friend* slogan. In addition, the discos and night clubs were constructed fast and prostitution became legalized – a tax for “providing services in the entertainment and recreation sector” was imposed on women working in this domain. Even in Japan, westernized Hong Kong and Americanized Taiwan such revolutionary changes did not occurred for years. The rural population in China still remained traditional but admittedly, Chinese society had changed.

It is worth underlining that political transformations in China had specific dynamics. Many of them, including the key changes, were initiated from below, at grassroots level, even in a rebellious atmosphere. Later, they started to be accepted, allowed and supported by the authorities but sometimes eventual permission was preceded by persecution. The dynamics of Chinese reforms were therefore shaped to a great extent by processes occurring vigorously and spontaneously. The authorities attempted above all to control them but did not always succeed. Only some changes were initiated by the central government itself. Thus, reducing the whole process

of transformations to the term “Deng Xiaoping reforms” coined in China and followed in the West through Chinese propaganda falsifies the image of reality because it suggests that the reforms were planned and centrally conducted exclusively by the “enlightened” authorities.

The nature of the transformations that have occurred in China since late 1970s is complex, partly initiated bottom-up, partly by central authorities and partly by diverse middle-ranking functionaries. They were inspired by the central or local authorities whose ranks and region of origin varied. Together with the changes, civil society grew stronger and became more active. In addition to this, without huge protest movements against Mao’s “rigid communism” and ideology, Deng and his collaborators would not have gained access to executive power. These movements started when Mao was still alive as well as the national modernization processes proposed in 1975 by seriously ill Prime Minister Zhou Enlai (1898-1976). They were supported by Deng and approved by Mao. The vision and essential conceptions of China’s modernization conducted by Deng originated from the concepts elaborated by already mentioned Sun Yat-sen, respected by the Chinese people as a nation. Therefore, it would not be considered an exaggeration to state that these changes which transformed China are the result of the people’s attempts and experiences (also bitter ones). Many generations of Chinese and the nation as a whole finally succeeded in shaping the course of their history by themselves to the advantage of their country.

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RUSSIAN - CHINESE RELATIONS

CURRENT STAGE AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

VLADIMIR PORTYAKOV

article
abstract

THE ARTICLE DESCRIBES PROSPECTS FOR THE RUSSIAN-CHINESE RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES SET BY THE 18TH CONGRESS OF THE CPC AND BY THE FOREIGN POLICY CONCEPT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AS WELL AS IN LIGHT OF THE OUTCOME OF XI JINPING'S VISIT TO MOSCOW ON THE 22-23TH OF MARCH 2013. THE ARTICLE LIKEWISE ANALYZES THE POSSIBLE IMPACT OF LEADING FACTORS LIKE GEOGRAPHIC ADJACENCY, HISTORY OF RELATIONS, GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION, ON FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND CHINA. THREE POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR THE EVOLUTION OF THESE BILATERAL RELATIONS IN NEXT TEN YEARS ARE PRESENTED.

keywords

CHINA, BILATERAL RELATIONS, CURRENT STATUS, FUTURE TRENDS, FACTORS, SCENARIOS

The state visit to Moscow by Xi Jinping, the newly elected Chairman of the PRC on 22-23 March 2013, has caused wide public interest towards present-day Russian-Chinese relations and possible options for their future development. In the article presented below I try to observe briefly the current stage of the bilateral relations between the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, to analyze the stimuli for their further development provided by the 18th Congress of the CPC,¹ as well as by the new Foreign Policy Concept of Russia adopted in February 2013. Moreover the article aims to look at the possible impact of some major factors framing Russian-Chinese relations.

CURRENT STAGE

It is well known that during the historically short 20-year period of contacts between the Russian Federation and China have paved a way from "friendly status" (1992) to a relationship of "comprehensive equal partnership of trust and strategic cooperation" (2012). For more than a decade after the signing the Treaty of Good-Neighborhood, Friendship and Cooperation between Russia and China on July 16, 2011 Moscow and Beijing invariably characterize the state of their bilateral relations as the "best in history," qualifying them as "a relationship of mutual support and joint efforts for common prosperity, friendship, transmitted from generation to generation."² Often further is argued that the positions of the two countries on most international issues are "similar or identical," that the economies of Russia and China complement each other well, and that Moscow and Beijing have no issues now, nor "any problem that cannot be solved," or, at least, that "there exist no conflict of core interests." However, both parties recognize that Russian-Chinese relations occasionally yield divergent interests and a certain friction, especially in the trade and economic sphere, that they need a major expansion of their social base and require a substantial increase in the level of mutual trust. This means that the maintenance of these already achieved sufficiently high levels of bilateral contact and their further development is not guaranteed *a priori* and cannot be implemented automatically. On the contrary, only constant multilevel work from both sides can give the desired result.

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RUSSIA CONSIDERS ITS COOPERATION WITH CHINA
IN FOREIGN POLICY AS ONE OF THE BASIC FACTORS
OF INTERNATIONAL STABILITY

¹ Communist Party of China (Editor's note – JVdB)

² Far Eastern Affairs 2012: 3-7.

RUSSIAN-CHINESE RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF RUSSIA'S AND CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY GOALS

A particularly important part is played by the leaders of Russia and China and by their vision of which place and role of both countries have in the world, and of their expectations from the partner state.

The objectives of China's foreign policy, formulated at the 18th Congress of the CPC, are able to stimulate further development of the relations between China and Russia. In the sphere of practical politics, the Congress proclaimed a policy of "creating a new type of relations between the big powers" and mutually beneficial cooperation with neighboring countries. China's relations with Russia are completely contained in these two strategic vectors of Beijing's international activities. According to the report by Hu Jintao, some additional areas of China's interaction with Moscow may quite well be cooperation in formats like G-20, the SCO and BRICS, while upholding universal values of the UN Charter and cooperation in the UN Security Council, promoting a multi-polar world.³

While the new Foreign Policy Concept of Russia, approved by Vladimir Putin on February 12th, 2013, declares a totally independent and sovereign role for Russia in international affairs, it also confirms the priority to develop relations with Beijing. As noted in the document, Russia will actively develop cooperation with China in all areas, "including responses to new threats and challenges, addressing the most pressing regional and global challenges." It was also stressed that Russia considers its cooperation with China in foreign policy as one of the basic factors of international stability.⁴

XI JINPING'S VISIT TO MOSCOW

A commitment to further deepening the bilateral cooperation in all possible directions was fully demonstrated during the visit of Xi Jinping to Moscow in March 2013. Both sides readily emphasized the symbolic meaning of the fact that Xi Jinping started his foreign trips as a full head of state from Russia. By the number of documents signed - 35 - this visit was one of the most productive in the entire twenty years of exchanges and visits by the heads of the Russian Federation and China.

³ Hu Jintao 2012.

⁴ Nezavisimaya gazeta 12-02-2013.

It is possible that not all these agreements will be implemented. So, despite the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between "Gazprom" and the China National Petroleum Corporation for cooperation on a project to deliver Russian natural gas to China by pipeline (the so-called "eastern route"), a number of Russian analysts remain skeptical if a real agreement with Beijing on the price of gas can be achieved soon.⁵

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AMONG RUSSIAN EXPERTS NOWADAYS THERE ARE QUITE WIDE-RANGING VIEWS ON THE PROSPECTS OF RUSSIA'S RELATIONS WITH CHINA.

However, it is necessary to stress the obvious importance of cooperation agreements in various segments like agriculture, which open up the possibility to export Russian grain to the Chinese market. It must be noted in light of the agreements reached during the visit of Xi Jinping, that forecasts predicted an increase of Russian oil supplies to China from the current 15-16 million tons to 50 million in the foreseeable future.⁶ In addition, the Chinese partners were invited to participate in the development of an oil and gas project named "Sakhalin-3."⁷

It seems that Russia and China are seeking to fulfill as soon as possible the task of converting the achieved level of political relations into results of practical cooperation in economic, humanitarian and other fields, set out in the Joint Statement of the 22nd of March 2013. The international part of the Joint Declaration also sounded weighty. It called out for all states to "respect the diversity of the world civilizations and multiple ways of social development," and to "promote the establishment of a new concept of universal, equal and indivisible security based on mutual trust."⁸ Following the visit of Xi Jinping to Russia, both countries announced their intention to elevate bilateral relations to "a new phase of comprehensive equal partnership based on trust and strategic cooperation, mutual support, common prosperity and friendship."⁹

⁵ Kulikov 2013.

⁶ Skosyrev 2013.

⁷ Latukhina 2013.

⁸ Joint Declaration 22-03-2013.

⁹ Joint Declaration 22-03-2013.

RUSSIAN-CHINESE RELATIONS IN THE EYES OF EXPERTS

Commenting the results of the Chinese leader's visit to Moscow, some Russian experts expressed confidence in the progressive development of Russian-Chinese relations. According to Dmitry Mosyakov from the Institute of Oriental Studies, China is increasingly becoming for Russia an economic and political alternative to the West.¹⁰ This approach may prevail in Russia, if not absolutely, then at least relatively. However, it is not the only one. Among Russian experts nowadays there are quite wide-ranging views on the prospects of Russia's relations with China.

As in the 1990s, Professor Alexei Voskresenski continues to consistently advocate the middle, balanced position of Russia between China and the West. In his opinion, "due to carrying the burden of great power status, Russia can probably never get on the USA/Western bandwagon just as it had opted not to get on the Chinese bandwagon in the Beijing consensus game during Medvedev's presidency."¹¹

Academician Alexander Dynkin spoke in favor of closer cooperation between Russia and the EU "in the rapid growth of the two giants - the U.S. and China."¹² In the articles by Vladislav Inozemtsev the discontent on the current "excessive rapprochement" between Russia and China is articulated openly. As an alternative, he suggests a multi-vector approach to the rise of the eastern regions of Russia with broad involvement of the USA, Japan, and Republic of Korea.¹³

In China also there are diverging view point from the official mainstream. So, Yan Xuetong from Tsinghua University believes that the world is not moving towards the formation of a multi-polar, but towards bipolar system with the U.S. and China as the poles. In order to achieve the status of one of the two poles, China needs to design an alliance with Russia.¹⁴ This union, says Yan Xuetong, corresponds to the interests of strategic security of both countries or, at least, does not cause any harm to any of them. Russia also needs this: as a "return of Vladimir Putin to the presidency means that Western pressure on Russia will not decrease, but only increase."¹⁵

¹⁰ Euronews 2013.

¹¹ Voskresenski 2012.

¹² Dynkin, Pantin 2012.

¹³ Inozemtsev 2012: 18-19.

¹⁴ Yan Xuetong 2012a: 112-117.

¹⁵ Yan Xuetong 2012b: 52-54.

Objections to the establishment of Russian-Chinese alliance in any form are distributed both in Beijing and Moscow. According to the director of the Moscow Carnegie Center, Dmitri Trenin, "only a blind and bellicose policy by Washington can, in theory, prompt China and Russia to form an anti-US alliance. Today, such a scenario appears highly unlikely."¹⁶

MAJOR FACTORS WHICH MAY INFLUENCE FUTURE PROSPECTS OF RUSSIAN-CHINESE RELATIONS

The so-called "scenario approach" by analyzing the major factors these bilateral relations, may help to arrive at more reasonable and reliable conclusions about the future nature of Russian-Chinese relations. The most fundamental of these factors include geographical proximity, the history of relations between the two countries (in terms of its projections for the future) and the evolution of the geopolitical position of Russia and China. Also very important are such factors as economic cooperation, the ratio and the absolute scale of the economic potential of both countries, and their mutual perception.

Diverging perceptions - Russia and China have notably different interpretation of the history of their bilateral relations in various periods. According to the Chinese version, in the 1850s-1860s Imperial Russia forced Qing China to sign several unequal treaties, by which Russia "illegally received 1.5 million square km of Chinese territory." According to a number of prominent Russian sinologists, really unequal was the first treaty concerning the two countries' territorial demarcation - the Nerchinsk treaty of 1689, imposed on Russia by force of arms. So, in the middle of the 19th century, when Russia had the chance, this historical justice was restored.

We cannot exclude further unwinding of "unequal treaties" theme in China, especially in the context of Xi Jinping's statements on the "Chinese Dream," which means the revival of China and the Chinese nation. Growth of nationalism and irredentist sentiment in China may have a deterrent effect on the Russian-Chinese relations.

As for the relations of the Soviet period, the stumbling blocks are, firstly, the various estimates of the Treaty on Friendship, Alliance and

¹⁶ Trenin 2013: 10.

Mutual Assistance signed in 1950 (Chinese qualify this treaty as unequal) and different interpretations of the clashes on the Soviet-Chinese border in 1969 still exist. In my opinion, the consistent implementation of the bilateral relationship of Deng Xiaoping's idea "to close the past and open the future" can gradually reverse the negative effects of these historical factors on the relationship between Russia and China.



US PRESSURE ON CHINA AND RUSSIA IN THE LATE 1990S HELPED TO BRING THE TWO COUNTRIES TOGETHER. IN PART, WE CAN OBSERVE THE SAME SITUATION TODAY

Geographical factors- Geographical proximity can operate "in the black" and "in the red" as it did with the Soviet Union and China in the 1960's - 1970's, when Moscow and Beijing spent huge amounts of money to protect one from another. Strong Chinese economic influence in a number of border regions of the Russian Federation benefits some citizens of Russia and worries others. Frequent interpersonal contacts, tourism development and cooperation in the humanitarian sphere can partly alleviate concerns among the Russians of a "Chinese coming". However, the huge difference in the number of inhabitants of the border areas of the two countries will remain for Russia in its relations with China the factor with a "minus" for the foreseeable future.

Geopolitics- Among geopolitical factors, the most significant impact on the Russian-Chinese relations may come from two sides: the US and Central Asia. Simultaneous US pressure on China and Russia in the late 1990s helped to bring the two countries together. In part, we can observe the same situation today. However, the triangle formed by Russia, the US and China, does not abide by the primitive law of communicating vessels, but through complex realities of the world economy and politics in action. In a sense, we can speak about the opposition of the "economy" (the Sino-US relations) to "politics" (Russia-US talks on the reduction of strategic offensive weapons), but there is also a lot of policy in Chinese-American relations, especially after the declaration of Washington in 2009 on "the return of the US to Asia." To the satisfaction of Beijing, Russia has declared its non-participation in any schemes affecting China in 2012. However, relations with the US, which are often categorized as one of the "major bilateral interstate relations in the modern world," remain more important for China than its relationship with Russia: twelve issues of the magazine «Zhongguo waijiao» (China's Diplomacy) in 2012 together published 24 articles devoted to China's relations with the United States, while to China's relations with Russia - only 4. However, the self-sufficiency of the Russian-Chinese relations

makes them largely independent from the relations between China and the US.

In Central Asia, Russia and China for the foreseeable future will have the common interests, such as ensuring stability in the region, their fight against drug trafficking, and neutralization of excessive presence of extra-regional forces, activation of the SCO. The "confrontation" between the two powers in the region, predicted sometimes, is unlikely. Among other geopolitical factors, relations of Russia and China with India, Vietnam, Japan and Mongolia should be mentioned. From time to time both Moscow and Beijing demonstrate displeasure over some aspects of their strategic partner's ties with this or that country. But such displeasure may create only temporary friction at most, but will lead to a serious deterioration of Russian-Chinese relations.

Economic discrepancy- The growing gap in the economic power of Russia and China is a factor in some way hindering a closer union of the two countries. Russia's GDP in 2012 was 62.35 trillion Rubles or 13 trillion RMB - just a quarter of the GDP of China. The ratio of foreign trade of the two countries in 2012 was 4.6:1 on overall turnover (US\$ 3,866.76 billion in China and US\$ 837.3 billion in Russia), including 3.9:1 in exports (2048.93 billion in China and 524.7 billion for Russia) and 5.8:1 for imports (1817.82 billion in China and 312.6 billion in Russia). Some citizens in Russia, which was ahead of China in most economic data only two decades ago, see such a situation as a real danger of turning the country into an appendage of China, or at least getting into a multifaceted dependence on it, including its dependence on the export of energy resources and on its import of the widest range of consumer and investment goods.

The current structure of their bilateral trade reflects the role of the two countries in the international division of labor. In 2012, the share of oil and oil products in Russia's exports to China amounted to 66.8%, while the share of machinery and equipment was only 0.7% (\$ 315 million). The share of machinery and equipment in Russian imports from China accounted for 42.4% and the absolute amount of their entry into the Russian Federation - \$ 18.7 billion is quite impressive.¹⁷¹⁵ However, if such a situation can be corrected, it would be only very gradually, following the re-industrialization of Russia and the creation of a large scale and structurally differentiated processing industry. In the short term, the current trade pattern will change only slightly. It seems that to be in the interests of powerful pressure groups in both countries.

17 Calculation of the author based on the data of China's customs statistics.

FUTURE PROSPECTS OF RUSSIAN-CHINESE RELATIONS

In summary, we can conclude that three scenarios for the development of Russian-Chinese relations in a decade-long term are possible. This normative approach is based on the ordinary logic, that every process in human society, including interstate relations, has only four possible options of future development: improvement (elevation to higher stage), maintaining the same quality, deterioration, and, finally, disappearance (when the process ceases to exist). I suppose that in ten years perspective both China and Russia will remain on the world map, and that their bilateral relations will have prolongation. So, actually we have three possibilities.

Firstly, the “status quo” scenario: it will be characterized by prolongation of current trends in the key areas of cooperation. This scenario most likely will mean further change in the PRC favor in ratio of economic parameters of the two countries and the gradual expansion of China’s presence in the Russian market. But both countries will despite some small frictions, nevertheless rather effectively support each other in the international arena and the volume of their bilateral trade and economic ties will demonstrate more or less sustainable growth. This scenario is the basic one.

Next - a scenario of significant deterioration of Chinese-Russian relations due to a change in the geopolitical situation and/or because of the growing tensions on certain issues. The script is disadvantageous either for Russia or for China. Despite its high improbability, it should be mentioned according to the principle: “never say never.”

The third scenario - a significant deepening of the comprehensive partnership and principal increase of mutual trust between the leadership and people of both countries; consistent interaction on most international issues; growing scale and diversification of trade and economic cooperation between Russia and China. It is unlikely that this scenario would be implemented in full before 2020-2022 (at least for technical reasons), but a movement in that direction would be valuable in itself.

In order to realize this scenario, Russia and China should achieve an agreement with a formal alliance of some kind. Up to now, it seems like neither Moscow nor Beijing is ready to make such a step. So, probability of these three scenarios (from 100% in total) is, in my rough estimate, is 70%, 5% and 25%.

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THE HARD TRUTH ABOUT SOFT POWER

THE CASE OF THE PRC UNDER NEW LEADERSHIP

MACIEJ MICHAŁEK

article abstract

THIS PAPER PRESENTS THE SOURCES, CHARACTERISTICS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE PRC'S SOFT POWER. IT ALSO TRIES TO ANSWER THE QUESTION WHAT WILL BE THE FUTURE ROLE OF SOFT POWER IN THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE FIFTH GENERATION OF CHINESE LEADERS. THE PAPER PUTS THE EMPHASIS ON THE FACT THAT SOFT POWER IN THE PRC IS LINKED WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS. THIS MEANS THAT THE RICH CHINESE CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE MOTIVATIONS AND OBJECTIVES OF BEIJING'S POLICIES.

THE PRC PROMOTES TERMS SUCH AS "HARMONIOUS WORLD" AND "PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT" AS CORE PARTS OF ITS FOREIGN RELATIONS AND TRIES TO AVOID "ZERO-SUM GAME" WITH WESTERN POWERS. IN THE PAPER IT IS ALSO UNDERLINED THAT CHINESE SOFT

POWER DEPENDS ON THE INTERNAL CONDITION OF CHINA, AND NOT ITS INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. NEXT, THE PAPER BRIEFLY DISCUSSES THE PRC'S ENGAGEMENT IN AFRICA, SOUTH ASIA AND LATIN AMERICA. IT IS STRESSED THAT MOST OF THESE COUNTRIES ARE INTERDEPENDENT AND COUPLED WITH CHINESE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. AT THE END, DESPITE THE EXISTING LIMITATIONS OF CHINESE SOFT POWER, THE AUTHOR CONSIDERS THE PRC'S SOFT POWER AS OF GREAT POTENTIAL DUE TO THE FACT THAT IT PERFECTLY MATCHES CHINA'S NEEDS.

PRC, CHINA, SOFT POWER,
PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT,
NORM DIFFUSION.

keywords

Decision-makers and opinion leaders in China have given an enormous amount of attention to their nation's soft power. Even closer attention has been paid by analysts and journalists around the world in the last few years. Soft power has started to serve as an all-purpose concept to explain various aspects of Chinese behavior in international relations. Furthermore, due to the word "power" in the term, a lot of anxiety arose among foreigners, which is why a proper understanding of the concept soft power is essential. The upcoming years will be a time of hard learning for the new leaders of the People's Republic of China and, most probably, a final compromise with the spirit of Mao Zedong in strategic thinking. This paper aims to present the sources and limitations of PRC's soft power. It also tries to answer the question what future role is put away for soft power within PRC's foreign policy with the fifth generation of Chinese leaders at the wheel.

WHAT SOFT POWER IS AND A PINCH OF CHINESE SPICES

The term soft power is usually confronted with hard power. In this comparison, the former means mainly culture, while the latter encompasses

the army, economy, diplomacy, etc. According to the fundamental works of Joseph Nye, the distinction between both lies in their mode of action. Soft power is demonstrated in attraction, persuasion, appeal, and co-optation, whereas hard power is evident in practices of threat, coercion, sanction, payment, and inducement.¹ But the point is not to treat soft power as a resource, as is often the case with hard power. Soft power is constituted by the way of using available resources of every kind (soft use of power), which can never be quantified. For example, the army is a core source of hard power, but the use of US aircraft carrier strike force to aid the victims of tsunami in East Asia in 2004 was very positively perceived among Asian nations and cannot be seen as a use of hard power. On the contrary, the aggressive cultural offensive during the Mao Zedong regime in the 1950s and early 60s in South and South-East Asia surely cannot be called soft power as it put a strain on the existing international relations. In the words of Joseph Nye, soft power is “the ability to win the hearts and minds of others.”

Another issue that needs a strong emphasis is the social context that either engenders or hampers the growth of soft power. Many argue that the “Chinese model,” its multilateralism, economic diplomacy, and a “good neighbor” policy² have been so successful because their appeal to many developing countries, while at the same time it has had a negative effect on relations with most Western powers due to its, among others, undemocratic rule and lack of respect for human rights.³ This observation should remind us that every use of soft power has to be considered in a proper context and, in almost every case, is directed at a specific region or group of people.

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WHILE ANALYZING SOFT POWER IN THE PRC, THE FIRST OBSERVATION IS THAT CHINA IS AT THE BEGINNING OF A YEARS-LONG PERIOD OF GROWTH. BEIJING HAS JUST STARTED TO REMIND ITSELF HOW TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SOFT POWER AFTER MANY YEARS OF LIMITED RESOURCES AND FOCUSING ON HARD POWER

While analyzing soft power in the PRC, the first observation is that China is at the beginning of a years-long period of growth. Beijing has just

1 Nye 2004: 8.

2 Li Mingjiang 2009: 6.

3 Li Mingjiang 2009: 6.

started to remind itself how to take advantage of soft power after many years of limited resources and focusing on hard power. The core resources of China, i.e. a strong economy, army and an attractive modern culture, are still developing and it has to take time to learn how to use them in a more sophisticated way, as soft power is handled. It is apparent that the PRC's influences in East Asia are based on well-educated elites and entrepreneurs. This situation occurs due to the historic model in East Asia, in which the Chinese nation controls the regional trade and shipping, and, according to many, was responsible for today's unprecedented economic successes of the so-called four Asian Tigers.⁴ From Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand⁵ to the Chinese states of Singapore and Taiwan, the data prove that regional business is still to a large extent controlled by Chinese. Although Beijing also benefits from this situation through mutual trade, etc., their entrepreneurship adds to China's global image despite the lack of direct control on overseas Chinese by the PRC.

The strongest sources of soft power, which are an attractive lifestyle, mass-culture and original consumer goods, are still to be created. All of them always follow the rise of a large middle class in the society, which has already taken place in China. Supposedly, we are on the brink of recognizing Chinese mass culture, lifestyle and original consumer goods worldwide.

INTELLIGENCE IS ENDOWED, BUT WISDOM IS LEARNED

Foreign Policy of the PRC's leaders is strongly embedded in the historic, ancient basis that has been evolving for thousands of years. Firstly, it refers to the historic *pax sinica*, which is known as a thousand-years-long time of peace in East Asia maintained by Chinese hegemony and civilizational superiority over the region. Indeed, to become the greatest Asian power, which would eventually lead to achieving the status of a global power is a fundamental and constant goal of Beijing. As the first and most important aim is to dominate the eastern Asian region, another ancient Chinese idea has been adopted: the *three concentric circles*.⁶

4 Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan. For more about the role of Chinese diasporas in East Asia I recommend Wang Gungwu 2003.

5 It is worth noting that the incumbent and former prime ministers of Thailand, Yingluck Shinawatra and Abhisit Vejjajiva, are also the representatives of Sino-Thai diaspora. More about the Chinese share in regional business: Gacek 2011: 449.

6 Rowiński 2011: 432.

This idea, which stands for one of the pillars of foreign policy of Empire of China, assumes that the first and internal circle is China itself (the Celestial Empire, 天朝); the second circle is the historic land of barbarians, who were far less civilized, but very often maintained some form of tributary relationship or were directly ruled by the Chinese Emperor (this circle included, among others, today's Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan or Myanmar). This circle encompasses a zone of friendly or neutral states vis-à-vis the Emperor and insulated China from external threats. The last circle constitutes the other so-called barbarians' lands and indicates the global aspirations of the Empire,⁷ which finds its confirmation in today's PRC's policy towards Africa or South America.

The current doctrine of PRC's foreign policy since the beginning of the 21st century, has been called *China's Peaceful Development* (中国和平发展) or *China's Peaceful Rise* (中国和平崛起). This doctrine underlines that what is most important for China is economic development and improvement of life standards, while confrontation with other powers might be harmful for this aim and should be avoided. In effect, China has to focus on the development of its soft power rather than hard power, which most probably would lead to the confrontation. In that context, a particular emphasis has been put on ancient Chinese culture, i.e. the thought of Sun Tzu. As Joseph Nye pointed out, Sun Tzu concluded that the highest excellence never has to fight, and a battle signifies political failure.⁸ The same idea might be the source of Hu Jintao's statement in 2007: "We must enhance culture as a part of the soft power of our country (...) Culture has become a more and more important source of national cohesion and creativity and a factor of growing significance in the competition for overall national strength."⁹ It is also the Confucian Doctrine of the Mean (中庸), which numerous experts indicate as an important value which should defuse the anxieties felt by many. The guiding principle is that one should never act in excess, but to be restraint, calm and harmonious. If China bases its international strategies on that idea, as Beijing is currently doing, it will be able to maintain rather than revise the international status quo.¹⁰

The second term is the *harmonious society* that has been promoted since 2004, firstly by President Hu Jintao.¹¹ The initial aim of it was to smooth internal economic, class, and regional disparities that arise due to the booming economic growth. These disparities are indicated as one of

the main threats to China's internal stability and, in effect, for the political system. Later, the term *harmonious society* started to merge with the philosophy of Confucius, as well as the ideas of *harmonious international relations* or *harmony between the human and nature* appeared.¹² The idea of *harmony* and Confucian traditions are respected and widespread in other Asian countries, which makes them attractive and clearly understandable.

The terms *harmony* and *Peaceful Development* were both used in the Chinese *White Book* published in 2011, where the doctrine to lead the PRC in international relations of the 21st century was presented.¹³ A few issues in this doctrine, essential for the Chinese soft power, should be highlighted here. Primarily, it explains China's role in international relations. According to the *White Book*, the *Peaceful Development* is to be understood as a sustaining development of the PRC in the peaceful world, and by this development, China is to make a growing contribution to maintain world peace. It has to stay open for beneficial solutions and ideas from other countries, and puts emphasis on win-win relations as conditions for economic globalization. This attitude is regularly presented in contacts with other countries, especially developing ones, as recently by Xi Jinping during his trip to Africa in March 2013.¹⁴



CHINA IS CONSIDERED THE ONE WHO KNOWS
HOW TO RECOVER ITS ECONOMY QUICKLY AND
HOW TO IMPLEMENT REFORMS THAT WILL
PUSH IT FORWARD

Secondly, there is Chinese solicitude for a peaceful image and a good reputation, which effects are enforced by the propaganda of success, the so-called *charm offensive*. It is based mainly on the success of the Chinese developmental model, which in 30 years placed the PRC as the second biggest economy in the world. China is considered the one who knows how to recover its economy quickly and how to implement reforms that will push it forward. For China, this is a great asset in contacts with developing countries in Asia and Africa, often merged with partly undemocratic political models, which easily conduct the deep, economic reorganization. China's emergence as a part of the modern world gives hope to many people in other developing and newly-industrializing countries.¹⁵

7 Rowiński 2011: 433.

8 Nye 2008: 11.

9 Xinhua 2013.

10 Chen Jianfeng 2009: 84.

11 Literally the name of the office is state chairman, 主席.

12 Dziak, Gawlikowski, Ławacz 2012: 336.

13 China's Peaceful Development 2011.

14 Xinhua 2013.

15 Pang Zhongying 2009: 125.

Another part of the propaganda focuses straight on building a positive, favorable image of China in the world. An example of that is the quickly expanding number of Confucius Institutes around the globe. Such Institutes, similarly to German *Goethe Institutes* or Spanish *Cervantes Institutes*, are non-profit public institutions aligned with the Chinese government, which aim to promote Chinese language and culture and facilitate the exchange of people. By the end of 2010, just 6 years from launching this program, there were 322 Confucius Institutes and 369 Confucius Classrooms established in 96 countries. In addition, some 250 institutions from over 50 countries expressed their will to establish new Confucius Institutes/Classrooms.¹⁶ Simultaneously, the ambitious *China's Bridge Programme* has been activated, under which umbrella 162 thousand foreign students were allowed to the PRC in 2006. The main beneficiaries (74,3 %) are from Asian neighboring countries.¹⁷ Furthermore, the Chinese *charm offensive* could be observed on various occasions, such as organizing Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008 or the Asian Games in Guangzhou and Expo Exhibition in Shanghai in 2010. These and many other events are used as a confirmation of Chinese peaceful rise and intentions. The Chinese intentionally follow the thought of Joseph Nye: that success depends not only on whose army wins, but also on whose story wins.¹⁸



ANOTHER PART OF THE PROPAGANDA FOCUSES
STRAIGHT ON BUILDING A POSITIVE, FAVORABLE
IMAGE OF CHINA IN THE WORLD

Last but not least, another two more significant issues from Chinese *White Book* ought to be underlined. The first term is *scientific development*. It literally means “following the laws governing the development of economy, society and nature and focusing on developing the productive forces.” But in fact, it unavoidably leads to a match with the boosting development of Chinese science. In 2012, more than half a million people in China started PhD studies, and every year there are approximately 400 thousand graduates of technical and medical faculties.¹⁹ Although the quality of Chinese universities varies and only few of them attain global top levels, a far more visible progress has been made regarding the Research and Development sector (R&D). China wants to move from the “Made in

16 Hanban 2013.

17 Rowiński 2011: 444.

18 Nye 2005.

19 Sarek 2013: 71.

China” stage to “Designed in China.” This process is starting as the Chinese company ZTE was ranked first in 2012 regarding international patent applications for the second consecutive year, followed by Huawei on the fourth.²⁰

The second issue mentioned is the emphasis on growing international activity, also on the forum of multilateral organizations, by which the PRC wants to promote a peaceful and plural international environment, starting with Asia. Beijing's attitude towards the Asian financial crisis in 1997/1998, when it decided to help, among others, Indonesia, South Korea and Thailand, could be seen as an opening of this policy. After that came such decisions as participation in the peace process in Cambodia, mediations with North Korea or conciliation in solving several border disputes with its neighbors. What is also easy to observe, is growing involvement in international institutions. It is not only the matter of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRIC/BRICS summits, but also, just to mention a few, ASEAN + 3 forum, FOCAC, its observatory status in OAS and SAARC,²¹ and a growing number of signed Free Trade Agreements around the world. As stated at the end of the *White Book*, the ultimate assumption and goal is that a “prosperous and developing China, a democratic, harmonious and stable country under the rule of law, will make a better contribution to the world.”²² Thus, soft power could even be seen as an integral part of Chinese strategy, as it has been mentioned since the times of Sun Tzu.

KEEP A COOL HEAD AND MAINTAIN A LOW PROFILE²³

Every new generation of Chinese leaders brought a new scope of international relations and started new trends in foreign policy. Regarding that, the current fifth generation, with Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang at the top, will not be exceptional. But the foreign policy, probably the first global policy of the PRC, adopted by them, could be treated as exceptional. Undoubtedly, this policy will be peaceful and based on the soft, not hard, power. The sources of this assumption lie not only in analysis of the official doctrine and rhetoric used by Chinese representatives, but primarily in

20 WIPO 2013: 26-03-2013.

21 FOCAC – Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, OAS – Organization of American States, SAARC – South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

22 China's Peaceful Development 2011.

23 Deng Xiaoping's quote.

their needs. The foundations of this global policy had been already created by Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao.

The main areas where soft power of the PRC focuses today are East and South Asia, Africa and Latin America. Xi Jinping has already shown that he has no intentions of changing that, when he chose Africa and the BRICS summit as parts of his first foreign tour in March 2013.²⁴ Each possible engagement in East Asia has already been explained as natural for Beijing and sustained from the very beginning by the Chinese Empire. The engagement in Africa, Latin America and, partly, South Asia has slightly different reasons. Most of them are interdependent and coupled with Chinese economic development. Firstly, there is Chinese greed for natural resources, especially minerals, hydrocarbons and metals. This is often supposed to be the main reason of close ties with countries like Chile (copper exporter), Peru (copper, gold, iron ore) or Brazil (iron ore, agricultural products) in Latin America, Angola (oil), Nigeria (oil, natural gas), Burkina Faso and Mali (cotton) in Africa, and Pakistan (cotton) and Burma (gas) in South Asia. Due to growing import of natural resources by China and boosting export of Chinese machinery and consumer goods, the trade with partners from these regions has become significant. The PRC is already the biggest trading partner for Africa with a volume of nearly 200 bln USD in 2012²⁵ and the second biggest, after the European Union, trading partner for South Asia with 93 bln USD in 2011.²⁶

What is more, growing labor costs in the PRC and a shift from basic production to high-tech goods have pushed Beijing to seek cheaper laborers abroad. Such case is clearly visible in South Asia, where Chinese manufacturers are moving their production to. South Asian countries have an attractive location, close to the maritime trading routes, their enormous manpower is cheap and used for hard work in hierarchical structures. For example, China invests in Bangladesh in ready-made garments business, while in Sri Lanka China is interested in such export manufacturing sectors as agriculture, fishing, car production, and even special economic zones intended only for Chinese companies.²⁷ These new ties with developing countries are being strengthened by mass investments in infrastructure, which is supposed to enhance the competitiveness of these beneficiaries in the near future, but at the beginning it mainly provides work to Chinese companies and creates debts of gratitude to the PRC.

24 The first foreign visit of Xi Jinping as president was to Russia.

25 ChinaDaily 2013.

26 SAARC-EU 2013.

27 Colombo Telegraph 2012.

Last but not least, taking care of close friendly relations with numerous developing countries increases visibly their support for policies conducted by China in international relations. This is particularly the case of the *One China policy* and a campaign to delegitimize Taiwan. While in 1994 as many as 13 African countries recognized Taipei, today there are only four. Lastly, it is Malawi who broke diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 2008 and agreed for Beijing's offer of 6 bln USD in aid.²⁸ The support for Chinese positions on human rights in the United Nations jumped from 50 % in 2000 to 74 % in 2008, and Beijing has already put together an African-Latin American coalition which is large enough to torpedo the very specific rules it opposes.²⁹ China is also engaged in creating smaller international organizations that exclude the US and the EU, like the East Asia Summit, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. If (developing) countries do not toe the PRC line or do not abstain when asked, their economic projects are at risk.

In this context, it is worth noticing that China's intentions go far beyond simply becoming an economic superpower and wanting to counter the US overall, including cultural domination. According to Zhao Qizheng, former Director of the State Council Information Office, only "when China has cultural security (...) we discuss the security of our value orientation and the security of our ideology."³⁰ Accusations towards Beijing for violating human rights, intellectual property rights and trade rules, reflect, in opinion of the majority of Chinese, the domination of Western culture and their policy of containment towards the PRC in global power aspirations. Furthermore, they notice a lack of understanding for the Chinese achievements and cultural heritage among foreigners. That mindset influences the policy conducted towards Africa and Latin America. In case of the former, as Deng and Zhang stated, limited economic resources of African countries determine which cultural products they can get from China. Due to it, China's efforts today focus on two major areas: training future generations of African leaders and cross-cultural promotion.³¹ Beijing tries to achieve that by a huge students exchanges and by organizing numerous events that ought to promote Chinese culture, not only through Confucius Institutes, but e.g. by sending Chinese performing art troupes to Africa. Xi Jinping made an official visit to Latin America as far back as in 2009, as the vice-president. China's attractiveness for these regions lies in its developmental model, characterized by a tightly held

28 New York Times 2008.

29 Halper 2010.

30 Deng Xiaogang, Zheng Lening 2009: 145.

31 Deng Xiaogang, Zheng Lening 2009: 154.

state intervention in the economy, preoccupation with political stability instead of individual freedom, massive media control, and a greater reliance on a strong government to guide the developmental process.³² These principles come upon a breeding ground in Latin America, where the disappointment caused by enforcing the Washington Consensus is visible and leftist sympathies are strong. In effect, despite the great distance and all the disparities between both regions, Beijing often serves as a model, and Chinese Confucius Institutes are increasingly popular.

SOFT POWER OR SOFT CHINA? THE LIMITS OF THE CHINESE "CHARM OFFENSIVE"

China has taken up the concept of soft power not only because it is compatible with many aspects of Chinese traditional and strategic thinking, but, more importantly, because it offers a ready solution to ease the anxieties around the world towards China's rise. The sensitivity of the West towards the PRC is reflected in their fears which arise even as a result of China's soft power, which shall grow partly at the expense of Western influences. But Chinese soft power should not be overestimated. It suffers from many structural problems, which are not easily overcome.

Undoubtedly, nowadays Chinese soft power is limited primarily to developing countries, which can be explained by its source of power. These sources ought to be found in Chinese successful economy development, accompanied by huge poverty reduction. Furthermore, China has been successful in its effort to develop its economy by separating free market economics and democracy.³³ To some extent, it attracts so many developing countries, because the West stubbornly wants them to simultaneously reform their economies and political systems. But this is not easy and political regimes in developing countries usually do not want to take the risk of political instability for the sake of democratic values, not always simply applicable in countries of different cultural background. In addition, China's view on the world order consists either of the old Sinocentric hierarchy or of the realist tradition with emphasis on absolute national sovereignty. It is hardly compatible with evolving transnational norms and attracts mainly authoritarian states. For the rest, China has few political values to offer and is still undergoing a fundamental political, social and economic transition. The PRC's soft power suffers also due to lack of

popular mass-culture, which could be purchased abroad. In Europe, the best-known Chinese artists are dissidents, like Ai Weiwei or Liu Xiaobo, with the first exception in 2012 when the Nobel Prize was granted to Mo Yan. Moreover, Chinese censorship, internet cuts, its undemocratic system and disparities in understanding of human rights are strongly discouraging for many countries. All these issues are most probably transitional, but nobody knows how much time Beijing needs to solve them.

The second significant limitation is the distrust towards the PRC among many countries. Above all, this problem occurs in the Asian neighborhood of China, where countries like Japan, Korea, Vietnam, India or Nepal have a strong, historically determined prejudice against Beijing and its aims. Surprisingly, the distrust appeared and took significant position in the relations with e.g. African countries. Although many of them are benefiting from the Chinese soft power and seek to emulate China's model of development, the growing PRC's presence in Africa in the last decade caused grave concerns among civil society, trade unions, and some political leaders in Africa. These concerns increase along with Beijing sustaining the relations with oppressive regimes in Sudan and Zimbabwe, and the fact that Chinese companies take up a substantial stake in resource extraction from Africa.³⁴ China still has a very positive image in Africa, but in time cannot avoid comparisons to European colonial empires or accusations of exploitation and exacerbation of corruption. A similar scenario evolves in Latin America.

The third limitation, and one of the major domestic issues of the PRC, is the growing, aggressive nationalism among the people. This attitude arose after three decades of booming economy and is caused by several factors, which are among others, increasing income inequality; migration and related social problems; and a changing perception of the national power. Although nationalism as such is nothing bad and the government has taken advantage of it many times, its offensive, xenophobic sort is damaging to the international image of the PRC, especially the one that is directed against specified "enemies," e.g. anti-Japan demonstrations in 2012 or long-lasting disputes over Senkaku/Diaoyu, Spratly and Paracel Islands. These unresolved disputes feed suspicions towards China's peaceful intentions and indicate that even within the Chinese government disparities and different ideas on the future exist. The outbreak of offensive nationalism in China would be destructive for both domestic and foreign policies and as such has to be deterred by the new leadership under Xi and Li. This is one of the most significant consequences of the changes

32 Li He 2007: 833-862.

33 Wibowo Ignatius 2009: 208.

34 Manji, Marks 2007: 50.

that have taken place in the PRC since the times of Deng Xiaoping, and need proper attention to be addressed in order to prolong Chinese rise and development.

Lastly, it has to be underlined that the transition of generations of Chinese will bring even a bigger change than a change of leadership. The main problem that the 5th generation of political leaders is facing is the huge generation gap, which is responsible for the majority of challenges in the domestic situation. The gap between today's 20-30-year-old Chinese and their parents, who remember the times of Mao Zedong, is striking, and the way of coping with this will decide about China's next decades.

CONCLUSION

The People's Republic of China is a country of stable, long-term policies, pragmatism and unprecedented growth, which brings rapid changes in almost every part of human everyday life. The new leadership under president Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Li Keqiang, in all likelihood will not change this image, not because of the way of succession, but because of state interests. But due to the changing potential, opportunities and needs, their foreign policy is probably the first one with fully global ambitions. Behind this term we should see the shift from a developing but backward biggest global manufacturer to a great power, which is able to manage international problems, invent new technologies, and appeal to others by its modern and future-oriented character.

The question of foreign policy adopted by Beijing remains open, which decides about the directions and extent of use of the soft power. Pu Xiaoyu indicates three key issues that determine the answer: would the PRC like to maintain the international status quo or strive to revive it? How will this socialist country join the global system? What opinion regarding this problem is widespread among Chinese scientists and policy-makers?³⁵ Interestingly, all of them could be examined on the example of Chinese relations with the United States. Usually, experts mention three ideal models: *Chinese New Order*, *Liberal model* and *Consultative model*.³⁶ The first one is based on the idea that Chinese values are far better than any other, that the PRC should promote them and, by doing so, struggle to reorganize the world. The US has no right to maintain its global domination.

The *Liberal Model* is quite the opposite. It assumes that democracy and free-market economy have to be fully implemented by Beijing, and by doing so China will gain international respect and adjust to sustaining American hegemony. The *Consultative model* could be seen as a kind of compromise, in which China has to adjust to and use the existing system, promote a multilateral world and accept democracy and free market only to a preferred extent. Although the former seems to be the most probable nowadays, Chinese soft power will eventually be the main tool of Beijing anyway. The use of hard power is not an option, as in the next decade the PRC will still depend on international links. Due to the same reason the rapid turn into self-sufficiency and isolation will not be an option, as before. A significant difference between hard and soft power is that while the US has both of them, but much stronger, the use of soft power does not create real threats to Beijing. On the one hand China's soft power is so attractive, but as it is inextricably bound to domestic issues like rise of the economy and societal harmony the PRC will still need stable international relations and a harmonious domestic context, even if some provocative events, such as the demonstrations of the power of their navy, suggested something different.

The growth of China's soft power can hardly be explained by the existing theoretical framework: the global profile of China's culture, ideology, values, and ability to shape international institutions has simply not increased enough.³⁷ But China's need of harmony and a stable neighborhood, its aspirations to become a global power and cultivated philosophy of neo-Confucianism assure that soft power will be the most desirable way of making foreign policy. An alternative policy could be based on strong nationalism, projection of power and emotions, which will probably dismantle the majority of Deng Xiaoping achievements; this kind of turns in Chinese policy do not happen, and even if they do, they are unpredictable.

To sum up, the question if soft power of the PRC is likely to grow in the nearest future should be answered "yes." Undoubtedly, it perfectly matches China's needs and has a great potential. China sought to demonstrate its good intentions in international relations to sustain the state's growth and proper conditions for the development. As stressed by Dominik Mierzejewski, this is why Beijing promotes the terms of "harmonious world" and "peaceful development" as the core parts of its soft power in international relations.³⁸ In other words, soft power is a way

35 Dziak, Gawlikowski, Ławacz 2012: 69.

36 Dziak, Gawlikowski, Ławacz 2012: 71.

37 Li Mingjiang: 9.

38 Mierzejewski 2012: 77.

of achieving all major Chinese goals and further pursue to the status of a global power in a way that avoids zero-sum games with Western powers. The current Chinese model, or the so-called Beijing Consensus, is in its initial, transitional phase, and will be examined in the upcoming years. But, as Singapore state leader Lee Kuan Yew wrote, “Although the Chinese did not coin the phrase soft power, they have exercised it with consummate skill!”

Concluding this article on the PRC’s soft power, I would like to emphasize that it will bear Chinese characteristics. China’s soft power is still restrained by a number of limitations, all of which have deep, domestic determinants. There are doubts regarding the effectiveness of Chinese soft power too, which constitute the main challenge nowadays. But what is interesting in this case of soft power, is that usually it is much more effective when not intentional, but arises as a kind of “side-effect” of internal success. The main sources of Chinese or American soft power are not planned, targeted policies. Soft power lies rather in their economic unprecedented success, which has led them to become a role model in many fields. In effect, in order to evaluate soft power of the PRC in the several upcoming years, it is necessary not to focus on the foreign policy conducted for purposes of taking advantage of the currently existing soft power, like the growing number of Confucius Institutes. That is the easiest option, but in general it turns the things upside down. Beijing benefits from Confucius Institutes, but this program came to reality thanks to previous internal achievements, which seemed to be attractive abroad. So what Chinese soft power depends on, are the internal conditions of China and the way of solving its contemporary challenges. Above all, when considering Chinese soft power, the Doctrine of the Mean seems to be the best option. To recall the words of Deng Xiaoping, the cat that catches mice for Beijing, is usually grey.

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POLITICAL FUTURE OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA: AN ATTEMPT AT FORECASTING*

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article abstract

IN THE ARTICLE A SCENARIO-BUILDING METHOD DEVELOPED BY R/EVOLUTIONS IS BEING EMPLOYED FOR THE ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA. KEY FACTORS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF BOTH KOREAN STATES ARE IDENTIFIED AND ANALYZED. SELECTED VARIABLES HAVE BEEN RANKED ACCORDING TO THEIR IMPORTANCE AND PROBABILITY. ON THIS BASIS SEVERAL SCENARIOS CONCERNING THE FUTURE STATE OF INTER-KOREAN RELATIONS HAVE BEEN CREATED. THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER IS TO IDENTIFY AND EXPLAIN THE OPERATION OF KEY VARIABLES SHAPING EVENTS IN ONE

* This article develops and supplements a previous article by the author entitled: "Scenariusze dla Korei- integracja, konfrontacja czy chaos?" in „Stosunki Międzynarodowe we współczesnym świecie: regiony i problemy,” M. Grabowski (ed.), Cracow, 2011.

OF KEY HOTSPOTS OF CONTEMPORARY ASIA. THE AUTHOR CHOSE NOT TO FOCUS STRICTLY ON CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY, AS MANY DIFFERENT ACTORS CAN INFLUENCE THE FUTURE OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA. HOWEVER THIS DIMENSION IS BROUGHT UNDER ATTENTION AND HAS A PROMINENT PLACE AMONG THOSE VARIABLE INFLUENCING THE POLITICAL PROCESSES IN THIS REGION.

KOREA, SCENARIO-BUILDING,
DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA,
INTER-KOREAN RELATIONS, NORTH-EAST ASIAN
SECURITY, GREAT POWER RELATIONS
IN NORTH-EAST ASIA

keywords

For about sixty years now, the Korean peninsula has been one of key hotspots in Asia. Since Korea was divided by the USA and USSR in 1945, permanent instability has been the main characteristic of the region. Periods of relative stability have regularly alternated with more or less serious crises. In the last decade the events taking place in that key geopolitical region of Northeast Asia drew the attention of the international community and global public opinion. Korea's role and importance in international relations (both on the regional and global scale) originates from various factors, the most important ones being: the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the geopolitical importance of the peninsula and the role of a wider Asian region in the contemporary global order.

Nuclear tests in 2006, 2009 and 2013 confirmed beyond all doubt the status of North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea – DPRK) as a nuclear power. The state also possesses an extensive arsenal of ballistic missiles that are effective as means of delivery for Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). It is important to remember that nuclear and missile technologies are one of the few attractive export products made in DPRK, which creates favourable conditions for other states to obtain them. As a result, it is not strange that North Korea is the main target of the international (especially American) non-proliferation policy.

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ONE COULD RISK CLAIMING THAT FROM THE POINT OF REGIONAL SECURITY THE DIVISION OF KOREA INTO TWO STATES BENEFITS THE STABILIZATION OF THE ENTIRE REGIONAL SECURITY ORDER

Established within the Cold War structure of regional relations, the division of Korea into two hostile states was actually another stage of rivalry among the neighbouring powers to control the peninsula as a territory where spheres of influence meet. The American scholar Nicholas Eberstadt described Korea as the “cockpit of East Asia,” seeking analogy with the position of Belgium as the “cockpit” of Europe until the middle of the 20th century.¹ The clue of this concept is to understand a “cockpit” as a border territory that separates spheres of influence of external powers and serves as a battlefield in their conflicts. Korea played that role already at the end of the 16th century when the Japanese leader Hideyoshi started his unsuccessful campaign of continental conquest on the peninsula.² Towards the end of the 19th century Japanese leaders drafted plans of building a new Asian empire and decided that taking control of Korea (called “the dagger pointed at the heart of Japan”³ by a Prussian adviser to the Japanese army) by a foreign power would be one of the most serious threats to the security of the Empire. Yet, China still remembers well that the Japanese continental expansion (which climax was an attempt at gaining control over all of China) started with subduing (and finally annexing) Korea. The same pattern affected the course of the Korean War (1950-53). The US decision about military intervention resulted to a large extent from the will to protect Japan from the communist threat. On the other hand, the People’s Republic of China got directly involved in the conflict when the danger became real as the “imperialist forces” started reaching the border on the Yalu River. One could risk claiming that from the point of regional security the division of Korea into two states benefits the stabilization of the entire regional security order. That is because in this situation two traditional antagonists, China and Japan, are neighbours of the Korean state that is either an ally (between PRC and DPRK) or at least does not pose a threat (Japan – Republic of Korea). As a result, it can be assumed that the future status of Korea is crucial for the international order in the Asian region. On the other hand, the region is becoming more and more clearly one of the key global power centres. Above all, this is a result of its economic dynamics. The world’s second and third economies (China and

1 Eberstadt 2001:129.

2 Deng Yong 2008: 40

3 Pyle 2007: 91.

Japan respectively) with respect to the nominal GDP value are situated in Asia.⁴ The region’s economic importance also influences its political and military position in the global order, and for this reason the way events on the Korean peninsula develop is not only crucial for Asia, but also on the global scale.

In the studies of international relations (and social sciences from a wider perspective), forecasting is a risky undertaking due to the complex and highly dynamic character of the research subject, and the number of factors that influence it. For the purpose of this article, the scenario-building method designed by the team of R/evolutions journal will be applied. With the method, there are 6 stages in the forecast creation:

1. Defining the research subject.
2. Identifying the main variables that influence the direction of further evolution of the process under analysis.
3. Defining and analyzing microvariables that shape each of the main variables.
4. Ordering variables (main and micro) according to their importance to the processes under analysis.
5. Building scenarios by combining different variable evolution variants.
6. Defining “black swans”⁵ that can considerably change the character of the process under analysis.

It has to be underlined that the fundamental scientific “product” created by applying this method are not the final scenarios, but a list of key variables that influence the process being analyzed. The compilation and analysis of this list makes it possible to understand the process better, as well as interpret its evolutionary potential correctly.

1. DEFINING THE RESEARCH SUBJECT

The basic structure of the political order on the Korean peninsula was established in 1945 when the two superpowers that won the World War

4 The Economist 2010a.

5 „Black Swan” – a concept introduced by Nicholas Taleb in his book *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*; it concerns events and phenomena which are so untypical that are practically unforeseeable on the basis of common experience and that have far-reaching social, political and economic consequences, at the same time they are relatively easy to explain and rationalize once they have occurred.

II – the USA and USSR – decided to temporarily (as was assumed at that time) divide Korea into two control zones, which was meant to order the process of accepting the capitulation of Japanese troops. In time, separate centres of political power developed on both sides of the 38th parallel and, supported by their ally powers, claimed their right to control all of Korea.⁶ The war in the years 1950-1953 did not yield any solution. It is worth remembering that the agreement signed on July 27th, 1953 in Panmunjom was not a peace treaty ending a war, but just an armistice. According to the governments and societies of both the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea, there is one Korean nation that was temporarily (although this situation has endured since 1945) divided into two opposing political entities. However, neither side considers this situation as permanent and undertakes unification as their long-term objective, at least according to their declarations. Simultaneously, due to the geopolitical and historical conditions mentioned above, Korea remains an object of interest and considerable influence of external powers. The PRC, Japan, Russia and the USA all have their crucial political, military and economic interests in this region. As a consequence, the political future of Korea cannot be considered without taking into account the interests and policies of these states.

It is possible to indicate six fundamental actors that will be present in the political order that defines the future of the Korean peninsula – two Korean states and four external powers (which are reflected in the structure of the so-called six-party talks on the denuclearization of the peninsula). The Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea aim at achieving their basic interests – security, development and legitimacy (in this case – exercising power over the entire peninsula).⁷ External powers likewise act within the same categories of interests in Korea, although to a different extent. Due to the geopolitical and historical factors described

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THE IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE NORTH
KOREAN REGIME INCLUDE ELEMENTS OF
MARXIST-LENINIST THOUGHT, KOREAN
NATIONALISM OF A STRONG CHAUVINIST TINGE,
TRADITIONAL VIEWS ON SOCIAL LIFE ACCORDING TO
CONFUCIAN IDEALS, A PERSONALITY
CULT AND MILITARISM

⁶ Ostaszewski 2006: 305-306.

⁷ Kim Samuel S. 2007: 114.

above, the future power arrangement in this region is of primary importance for China's and Japan's security. For the United States, peace on the Korean peninsula is one of the elementary indicators of stability for the entire Asia Pacific region. The external powers' interests of development regarding this area stem from the fact that a potential escalation of the conflict would involve very negative consequences for the economic development of the entire region due to the interruption of commerce and foreign investment streams, so important for Asian export-oriented economies. The interests concerning legitimacy are not so much involved here when it comes to third-party states; yet at this point it is important to make a remark on the position of the USA. Namely, the threat posed by North Korea legitimizes the presence of American troops on the peninsula (and their wider presence in the entire region). A peaceful resolution to the conflict would question the sense of a continued US military presence in Korea, and as a result also in Japan, which would have significant consequences for the entire US regional policy where this military factor plays a crucial role.

2. MAIN VARIABLES AND MICROVARIABLES

Taking into account the structure of the political order currently present on the Korean peninsula, it is possible to assume that the most important variables that can define its political future are the following:

1. The ability of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's regime to survive
2. National unity policy pursued by Republic of Korea
3. Policy of external powers

2.1. ABILITY OF THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA'S REGIME TO SURVIVE

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea fits the classic model of totalitarianism created by Zbigniew Brzezinski and Carl Friedrich⁸ perfectly. North Korea has all the six characteristics of totalitarianism listed by these authors, i.e.:

- Power in the hands of a dictator/mass party
- Official ideology

⁸ For more information, see: Scobell 2006: 3-38.

- All-pervasive terror
- State monopoly over the use of force
- Centrally planned economy
- State monopoly on provision of information

The political system of North Korea is extremely centralized. The key point of the entire structure of power is the present Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un. His position combines the highest office of the state (First Chairman of the National Defence Commission), of the party (First Secretary of the Korean Workers' Party) and highest military rank (Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army). The preamble of the DPRK constitution clearly defines that the state follows the assumptions of the "juche" ideology formed by Kim Il-sung. Despite its shy attempts at reforms, North Korea still possesses one of the last truly centralized command economies in the world. Although not fully effective, control over access to information still remains one of the most important instruments to exercise power. Thus, it is possible to assume that, despite some changes in comparison with the rule of Kim Il-sung, the DPRK continues to be a classic totalitarian state with an exceptionally high level of state control over the lives of its citizens and little perspective of internal reforms.

The ideological foundations of the North Korean regime include elements of Marxist-Leninist thought, Korean nationalism of a strong chauvinist tinge, traditional views on social life according to Confucian ideals, a personality cult and militarism.⁹ The *juche* concept plays the role of official state ideology in this case. The exact meaning of the *juche* term, as well as the content of the idea are a subject of various interpretations by researchers. Most often, the concept is translated as "self-sufficiency." According to this concept, the external world is a source of continuous and lethal threat to the independence and success of the Korean nation. In order to defend themselves effectively, the Koreans have to devote themselves to work for the state and against all odds pursue self-sufficiency that will allow them to eliminate dependence on any external force. These ideas include

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IN THE CASE OF NORTH KOREA THE SIZE OF THE SELECTORATE IS ESTIMATED AT BETWEEN 500 AND 2,000 PEOPLE HOLDING KEY POSITIONS IN THE PARTY, MILITARY AND STATE INSTITUTIONS.

a strong chauvinist, or even racist, element; the Koreans are depicted as people who are good and sensitive by nature, and are incessantly oppressed by bad and ruthless foreigners. The "suryong" concept of the supreme leader plays a crucial role here, justifying the dictatorship by subsequent members of the Kim family. As the Koreans are like children by nature, helplessly facing the dangerous external world, they need a father who will provide them security and show them the way of development. References to the traditional Korean understanding of family are clearly visible here. The official ideology strongly underlines the fact that subsequent representatives of the Kim family are entitled to exercise power in the state through their revolutionary heritage and merits of the clan. This leads to a conclusion that it is the supreme leader that guarantees the existence and effective operation of the state, and the supreme leader's title is assigned to the Kim family by tradition. An innovation introduced by Kim Jong-Il is a concept of *songun* ("military first"). It is a logical consequence of the previous assumptions. If North Korea is incessantly threatened by powerful external forces, the most important state institutions are the armed forces. This idea justifies Kim Jong-Il's political decision about basing his power on the military to a greater degree and justifies assigning this institution a privileged status and a considerable part of limited state resources.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is called a party-military state.¹⁰ It reflects the fact that the Supreme Leader's power is based above all on two institutions, i.e. the Korean Workers' Party and the Korean People's Army. Kim Jong-Il assigned the leading role to the armed forces, which was reflected in the above-mentioned idea of *songun*. The motivation behind such policy remains an object of speculation. It is possible that, according to the dictator, the armed forces are an institution that is better organized, loyal and generally more effective than the party and government bureaucracy. Another reason could be the will to ensure oneself the loyalty of the main armed force in the state. It is worth remembering that as an ex-guerrilla, Kim Il-Sung had unquestionable standing among military men, whereas both his son and grandson had no practical military experience.

On the basis of the analysis presented above it is possible to enumerate the most important factors that influence the ability of DPRK's regime to survive:

- **Succession of power.** Leadership change is the most difficult and potentially most dangerous political process in each non-

9 Based on: Scobell 2006: 25-30; Byman, Lind 2010: 51-54.

10 Scobell 2006: 4.

democratic system. The totalitarian features of the North Korean system exacerbate this problem even further. Taking into account the assumptions of the *suryong* concept and the widespread cult of personality involving subsequent members of the “dynasty,” the issue of whether North Korea can function as a state without the leadership of one of the Kim family members remains open. Admittedly, two successful successions of power have already taken place within the regime, yet it is still unknown whether this tradition can be effectively continued. In this context, it is interesting to know the stories of refugees from the DPRK about the continued worship and respect towards Kim Il-sung and a yet more distanced attitude towards his successor.¹¹

- **Unity of the ruling elite.** In the past, the alleged factional divisions within North Korean ruling elite were an object of intensive speculations. However, unambiguous evidence for the presence of independent and competing factions in the DPRK’s political system have not been gathered.¹² Although particular institutional players beyond doubt have their own interests and preferences in the area of formulation and execution of state policy, the central position of the Supreme Leader seems to rule out deeper divisions. The issue of maintaining this state of affairs remains open. At the same time, the unity of the ruling elite is one of the pillars of the DPRK regime’s stability.
- **Ability to gain financial resources to maintain the “selectorate.”** While leaders of democratic states are ultimately politically accountable to the electorate, leaders of undemocratic states base their power on a much narrower “selectorate” (a group of the most important state and party officials, military leaders etc.) that controls the structures of power.¹³ In the case of North Korea the size of the selectorate is estimated at between 500 and 2,000 people holding key positions in the party, military and state institutions. Subsequent leaders from the Kim family ensured themselves their loyalty by assigning them a privileged status and guaranteeing them access to luxury goods that are inaccessible for average citizens. Given the disastrous state of the economy, illegal operations by secret services and foreign aid, often extorted by blackmail, are considerable sources of revenue for continuation of this policy.

11 Scobell 2006: 15.

12 Scobell 2006: 22.

13 Byman, Lind 2010: 58-59.

As long as the leader owns resources for maintaining the special status of the elite, its loyalty towards him is highly probable.¹⁴

- **Maintaining state monopoly on access to information.** An important factor that influences the stability of the regime and its ability to survive is a high level of political indoctrination of the society and its isolation from the external world. Information is not controlled as tightly as it was during Kim Il-sung’s rule, which is due to technological progress and increasing corruption among state officials. Nevertheless, the level of control in the area of ideas by the authorities is extraordinarily high. Maintaining this level will be an important determinant from the perspective of the regime’s survival.

2.2. NATIONAL UNITY POLICY PURSUED BY REPUBLIC OF KOREA

In a simplified approach, the history of the South Korean policy towards its neighbour can be divided into three fundamental stages. The period between 1945 and 1998 was generally characterized by mutual hostility and a confrontational approach towards North Korea. The turning point came when Kim Dae-jung was elected president and his administration formulated a new concept of the policy towards the antagonistic regime. The so-called “sunshine policy” was based on the pursuit of dismantling the Cold-War structure of relations on the peninsula and improving the relations with DPRK by means of economic cooperation. This line was continued by President Roh Moo-hyun as the “policy of peace and prosperity.” In total, in the years 1998-2007 South Korea provided North Korea with economic aid of about 3.5 billion dollars. This policy was founded on the assumption that with time extensive economic cooperation and cultural exchange would lead to less hostility between the two Korean states, as well as to reforms and an opening in the DPRK. In spite of many symbolic gestures, above all two summits of the leaders of both states, these aims have not been achieved.¹⁵

In 2007, it was Lee Myung-bak, the candidate of the conservative Great National Party, who won the presidential elections in the Republic of Korea. He proposed a new vision of the relations between the Koreans. It could be described as a policy of conditional cooperation. Its main objective

14 Byman, Lind 2010: 60-64.

15 Kim Hong Nack 2008: 3-4.

was to denuclearize the peninsula. In order to achieve this, he decided that cooperation with the USA and Japan had to be closer. The desired final effect was to arrive at a united Korea, based on democratic and free market rules. Any humanitarian and economic aid would depend on verifiable progress on the way to denuclearization and other positive gestures by the DPRK.¹⁶ The politics of Park Guen-hye, the subsequent president of South Korea elected in December 2012, coming from the Saenuri party, previously known as the Great National Party, is still under development. However, it is possible to assume that it will be a continuation of the fundamental strategic directions of her predecessor.

The most important variables which need to be monitored regarding South Korea's policy are:

- **The state of the economies of both Korean states.** Despite the role of reunification on the peninsula in the officially proclaimed South Korean policy, there is no doubt that estimated costs of this process are an issue of concern not only for the government but also for society as a whole. In the report prepared in the end of 2007 for the budget committee of the National Assembly, the costs of reunification were estimated at 0,8 – 1,3 trillion USD.¹⁷ In aim to realize the range of difficulties concerning politics, economy, society and even culture which could be driven by reintegration of both societies, it is worth comparing it with the reunification of Germany, an example often mentioned in this context. According to the calculations of the Bank of Korea the differences in GDP per capita between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic shortly before the reunification were at 2:1, in the case of South and North Korea it is 17:1.¹⁸ Therefore, South Korea's leaders could arrive to a conclusion that the reunification will be a case of their national interest only if the North Korean economy becomes a subject of certain reforms and the economic discrepancy between both states becomes smaller. It also means that a decline of the economic situation in the South would not support an atmosphere of reunification.
- **State of social attitudes and the configuration of political forces.** Contrary to North Korea, South Korea has a democratic political system which means that a strong impact on foreign policy is given

16 Kim Hong Nack 2008: 5-6.

17 Foster-Carter 2008: 14.

18 Lankov 2008.

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HAVING AN ALLY ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA BRINGS SIGNIFICANT STRATEGIC BENEFITS TO CHINA SUCH AS A BUFFER ZONE SEPARATING THE NORTH OF CHINA FROM THE SOUTH OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA AND JAPAN WHERE AMERICAN MILITARY FORCES ARE STATIONED

by the main political parties and public opinion. Currently, South Korea's political scene is dominated by two parties: centre-right Saenuri Party and centre-left Democratic United Party. In relation to the policy of national unity, the two parties declare seeking the same goal – peaceful reunification – but differ in approaches to achieve it. The right-wing party, generally speaking, supports the policy of conditional cooperation led by President Lee while the left-wing one refers to achievements of the policies led by both President Kim and President Roh. During so called *sunshine policy*, insecurity of public opinion in the South towards their neighbours in the North went down significantly.¹⁹ However, it is worth mentioning that recent military attacks conducted by North Korea have influenced South Korean politicians and society. Especially after the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island on November 23, 2010, even the Democratic United Party criticized the government for its rather indecisive reaction.²⁰

- **Foreign policy strategy of ROK.** Regarding the context in which the policy of national unity is formulated and executed, an international orientation adopted by the South Korean government has a significant importance. During the Cold War, ROK's place in the US Asiatic alliance system determined a confrontational character of relations with DPRK and PRC. During Kim Dae-jung's and Roh Moo-hyun's governments, allied relations weakened and a switch to the policy of "strategic independence" became real; according to this policy Seoul should have occupied a neutral position with an equal distance to all regional partners.²¹ As a result, relations with China improved considerably what disturbed the United States and Japan. Then, President Lee Myung-bak led a policy of strengthening relations with the United States. The realization of one of the two most often postulated strategies – the

19 Lankov 2008

20 The Economist 2010b.

21 Cha Victor D. 2003: 110-112.

continued participation in the American system of alliances or the “strategic drift” among regional powers – has a vital impact on external powers’ approach concerning perspectives of reunification of Korea. Japan and the United States would like to see Korea as a friendly ally while China would rather prefer a “neutral” state.

2.3. EXTERNAL POWERS’ POLICY

For the future of Korea, interests of three external powers – the People’s Republic of China, Japan and the United States – are especially important. Also, the Russian Federation plays a significant role here (which is proved by its participation in the six-party talks). Nevertheless, Korea generally occupies a relatively low position in the Russian foreign policy not to mention that the Russian influence on the Korean peninsula is significantly smaller comparing to the other three powers.²²

Firstly, the People’s Republic of China formally remains the only ally of North Korea. Currently, a lively discussion is taking place in China regarding the right direction of further policy towards North Korea.²³ At the same time, China supports the regime of Kim Jong Un through provision of economic aid. Having an ally on the Korean peninsula brings significant strategic benefits to China such as a buffer zone separating the north of China from the south of the Korean peninsula and Japan where American military forces are stationed. Moreover, threat posed by North Korea constitutes a valuable asset in conflict concerning Taiwan’s status. If there was a military confrontation, the possibility of establishing a “second front” on the Korean peninsula would influence decisions of the United States about military intervention.²⁴ Furthermore, Chinese leaders worry about instability which would be a result of North Korea’s collapse. Some might think that in a situation of crisis, the Chinese People’s Liberation Army could enter the territory of its neighbour in aim to stop a wave of refugees and secure weapons of mass destruction.²⁵ Not only China but also the other mentioned actors view the perspective of reunification of Korea as extremely uncertain. Anxiety is revealed above all by continuing presence of American forces in the region as well as disagreements of historical nature with South Korea concerning the interpretation of Goryeo’s history. It was a kingdom which extended over the territory of

contemporary North Korea and a part of Chinese Manchuria. Both China and South Korea suppose that attempts at appropriating kingdom’s heritage for needs of modern nationalism may constitute a prelude to territorial claims.²⁶

Secondly, the functioning of a friendly government (or at least not hostile) on the Korean peninsula is a matter of significant importance for the national security of Japan. Additionally, North Korea is currently seen as a real and the most serious external threat. The identity of the North Korean regime was mostly established in opposition to the Japanese occupation. Moreover, Pyongyang’s policy in recent years (missile tests, acknowledgement of abduction of Japanese citizens and many threats towards Japan) is proof for Japanese leaders and society that this threat remains real. It is also worth remembering that the relations between Japan and South Korea are not perfect either, which is above all a result of the difficult history of these countries and also relates to a territorial dispute concerning the Dokdo/Takeshima islands. Japanese policy towards Korea should be also analyzed in view of tensions and rising competition between China and Japan.

Thirdly, the United States perceives North Korea as the second most serious threat (after Iran) to its policy of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery. Even with the preferred regime change in the North and the reunification of Korea (the more peaceful the better), these issues remain a concern for the United States – as for other actors. It is incredibly difficult to predict results of unification for US interests. For instance, what will be the future international orientation of a reunited Korea? It is not clear that the Republic of Korea would remain an ally of the United States after its reunification.

Thus, the most important variables on which the direction of external powers’ policy depends are:

- **General state of relations among regional powers.** If regional relations are characterised by tendencies towards cooperation and the main actors support friendly relations among themselves, it will be more probable to create a common and compromising attitude towards the future of Korea. On the other hand, if tensions and insecurity concerning the above-mentioned security interests grow, it seems that the preservation of status quo or, in the most extreme case, a military confrontation will be more probable.

22 Weitz 2010.

23 Glaser, Snyder, Park John S. 2010.

24 Dingli Shen 2006: 19-20.

25 Glaser, Snyder, Park John S. 2010: 19-20.

26 Savage 2008: 54-55.

- **Chinese policy towards Korea.** Results of the afore-mentioned discussion led in China concerning the preservation of alliance with North Korea remain crucial. There are some concerns that without Chinese aid the regime of the Kim dynasty could no longer exist. Moreover, for the perspective of reunification, the state of relations between China and South Korea is still important.
- **Level of Japan's integration with the region.** Japan vastly integrated with its neighbours (above all China and South Korea) would be less likely to oppose the reunification of Korea, even if it led to the withdrawal of American forces from the region. Equally important is how Japan is perceived in the region. Opinions that Japanese leaders used the threats posed by North Korea as a pretext to initiate remilitarization are frequent.
- **Regional policy of the United States.** There is no doubt that the future of Korea will be influenced by the state of relations between the United States and China as well as the level of the United States' involvement in the alliances with Japan and South Korea.

3. RANKING OF VARIABLES

In the author's opinion, the hierarchy of the main variables shaping the political future of the Korean peninsula according to their importance could be presented as follows:

1. Ability of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's regime to survive.
2. Policy of external powers
3. National unity policy pursued by Republic of Korea

Such a hierarchy is a result of the fact that all actors are actually interested in preserving the status quo on the peninsula. Despite that the current situation is not optimal for South Korea's or the external powers' interests, risk and uncertainty related to the possibility of changes are more important than potential benefits which could be brought by this kind of process. Thus, North Korea has the biggest political and diplomatic "freedom of manoeuvre" among all actors. Others react to DPRK's actions rather than trying to press their own preferences. As a result, the most important variable influencing further development of events on the

peninsula is in fact the future of DPRK regime. This issue is followed by the external powers' policy as the latter factor is characterized by the greatest dynamics and potential variability. The third position is occupied by the policy of national unity pursued by ROK, as it seems to be the most stabilized and relatively predictable phenomenon.

Every main variable is shaped by some micro variables which can be ranked as follows:

Ability of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's regime to survive
1. Unity of the ruling elite
2. Ability to gain financial resources to pay the "selectorate"
3. Maintaining state monopoly on access to information
4. Succession of power

The most important factor – the unity of the ruling elite – is considerably determined by the capacity to secure funds to pay the *selectorate*. Therefore it is safe to assume that this factor is of key importance and also the most susceptible to change. It is also worth indicating that funding the *selectorate* as well as the national monopoly of information are the only factors that may be influenced (at the certain level, though) by external actors. As the second succession of power (at the turn of the year 2011) was successful, this micro variable may be currently seen as the least important. However, there is no doubt that this issue will appear once again and will significantly grow in importance. Therefore, among all variables, the succession of power remains the most unpredictable.

External powers' policy
General state of relations among regional powers
1. China's policy towards Korea
2. The United States' regional policy
3. Japan's level of integration with the region

In general, relations among concerned regional powers depend on their policy. In the foreground, there is China's position while having potentially the greatest influence on North Korea. It is also worth mentioning

that the regional policies of the United States and Japan are more often described as a reaction to China's moves. In fact, regional relations in North-East Asia are gradually more influenced by interactions between regional policies of China and the United States. Among the three external actors analyzed in this article, Japan has the fewest means of influence on processes taking place on the Korean peninsula.

National unity policy pursued by Republic of Korea

1. State of social attitudes and the configuration of political forces
2. State of economies of both Korean states
3. Foreign policy strategy of ROK

As South Korea is a democratic state, social attitudes and their derivative – the configuration of political forces – are considered as the most important variable shaping the South Korean policy of national unity. This factor is also potentially the most susceptible to changes. In addition, the character of relations between the two first variables mentioned above is ambiguous. There is no doubt that the perception of reunification costs is an important issue taken into consideration by the South Korean elites and society. However, it is difficult to perceive a direct relation between the state of South Korea's economy and the attitude towards the neighbour in the north. What is equally important is the way of perceiving the violations of human rights in North Korea as well as a potential danger of North Korea towards its neighbour in the South. Finally, the international orientation of South Korea seems to be the least subjective to change for now because of the growing consensus on the maintenance of the alliance with the United States.

4. SCENARIOS

Regarding the analysis of the microvariables presented in this article, it is now possible to present the following sectoral scenarios related to the development of each main variable.

North Korea's regime	Relations among external powers	South Korea's policy
Maintenance of stability	Uncertain stability (much mutual mistrust)	Stability and continuity
Gradual weakening	Agreement	Isolation from North Korea
Sudden collapse	Intensive competition/open hostility	Attempt at harmonic reunification (through a peaceful agreement)
Efficient adaptation to economic conditions		Attempt at aggressive reunification (through regime change in the North)

Scenarios concerning the macro level – the processes of the political situation's development on the Korean peninsula treated as a whole – constitute various combinations of sectoral scenarios as presented above. Despite the fact that they are many, in the author's opinion they may be limited to five essential scenarios, listed beneath according to the degree of their probability.

- I. **Maintenance of the status quo** – in other words, stability and consolidation of the current relations on the Korean peninsula. As it was mentioned, this scenario, although not entirely optimal for all actors except North Korea, is acceptable for them.
- II. **Chaos** – according to this scenario, a sudden collapse of the North Korean regime is possible. It would force other actors to react, what might present significant difficulties in coordination.
- III. **War/prolonged confrontation** – this scenario assumes the development of situation towards a prolonging escalation of tension provoked by actions of one actor or more. As a result, a politico-military crisis would be prolonged which, in extreme cases, would lead to an open military confrontation.
- IV. **Peaceful reunification, led by Koreans** – this scenario is a result of a combination of changes (or reforms) in North Korea and probably the return to the practices of *sunshine policy* in South Korea. It also suggests that the initiation of reunification process, its conditions, pace and execution would be led mostly by Korean people.
- V. **Reunification led by the international community** – scenario comparable to the latter, although led by external powers.

The presented list of scenarios is not in any case exhaustive. What is more, scenarios might occur concurrently. For instance, reunification led by the international community as a consequence of war or prolonged crisis might happen.

5. BLACK SWANS

This part is devoted to the identification of some phenomena and processes that are unlikely, but *might* occur on the Korean peninsula. The degree of their probability currently seems to be low but they might significantly influence the development of the subject of prognosis.

- **Massive protests/rebellion in North Korea** – despite the totalitarian character of the North Korean regime which strongly reduces a probability of political transition through social protests or civil war, the possibility of protests cannot be wholly excluded.
- **Policy of “reforms and opening” in North Korea** – the regime of the Kim dynasty aims to maintain the full control over society which is seen as the base of its power. Consequently, the regime remains insensible to suggestions of its Chinese allies who point out that adopting the policy of “reforms and opening” in the economic sphere, as they have done, is useful. It is also worth mentioning that the initiation of serious economic reforms in North Korea would without a doubt have serious consequences for regional relations.
- **South Korea’s abandonment of the reunification policy** – division of the peninsula accepted by South Korea as a permanent state would lead to the re-evaluation of inter-Korean relations. Probably, both Koreas would be obliged to create separate national identities. This scenario cannot be fully excluded regarding not only the atmosphere of anxiety in the South concerning possible costs of reunification but also alienation of both societies.
- **Deep economic and/or social crisis in South Korea** – one of the main aspects of the current political configuration on the Korean peninsula is a significant economic supremacy of South Korea over its neighbour in the north as well as the consolidated character of the South Korean democratic system. A serious economic and/or political crisis would without a doubt influence all main variables analyzed in this article.
- **South Korea’s alliance with China or Japan** – so far, prognoses were based on the presupposition that South Korea maintains the alliance with the United States or likely opts for a policy of independence. Despite the fact that a close alliance of South Korea with China or Japan is currently quite improbable, if this scenario occurred, it would have an essential impact on inter-Korean relations. Possibly, an alliance with China might facilitate reaching an agreement about the reunification of the peninsula while an orientation towards Japan might provoke the opposite.
- **Russia’s return as a key actor** – as mentioned before, the Russian Federation is not included in the analysis because of its weak position in the North-East Asia and limited influence on the Korean peninsula. However, if Russia regained the position of an important player in the region, calculations regarding the policy of external powers towards the Korean peninsula would change as the number of actors increased.
- **Change in China** – this factor should be understood mainly as a fundamental change of attitude the Chinese authorities have towards Korean issue and a re-evaluation of Chinese interests on the peninsula. It might be a result of the change of policy direction led by current regime or change of power in China, for example by following a democratic path.
- **Regional integration** – one of the most important factors supporting the status quo on the Korean peninsula is the divergence of attitudes and policies followed by each and every external power and South Korea. It makes the creation of a common position towards North Korea impossible and leaves North Korea with a significant liberty of shaping regional relations. If, through the progress of integration in North-East Asia, there was at least a partial harmonization of interests and attitudes by key actors, it would considerably influence the development of the political situation on the Korean peninsula.

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FUELING THE DRAGON'S RISE PROSPECTS FOR THE CHINESE ECONOMY

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AS MANY CHINESE POLITICIANS SAY, CONTRARY TO RUSSIANS WHO, AT THE END OF 1980s, "NOSEDIVED INTO THE POOL FORGETTING TO FILL IT WITH WATER FIRST," CHINESE LEARN TO SWIM SLOWLY, WITHOUT "DIVING INTO DEEP WATER" OUTRIGHT", SAYS PROF. MACIEJ WALKOWSKI, AN EXPERT ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS FROM DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMY AT THE FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND JOURNALISM, ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY IN POZNAŃ, POLAND, INTERVIEWED BY RAFAŁ WIŚNIEWSKI FROM THE R/EVOLUTIONS EDITORIAL TEAM ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE CHINESE ECONOMY.

INTERVIEW WITH **MACIEJ WALKOWSKI**
BY RAFAŁ WIŚNIEWSKI

During the last three decades of "reform and opening" the Chinese economy achieved record growth rates. Which factors do you assess as the main drive for this "economic miracle" and are they likely to exact the same effects in the coming decade?

It is true that in 2010 China became the second biggest economy in the world surpassing Japan. Chinese GDP in 2010 amounted to 5,88 trillion (tn) USD counted according to nominal exchange rate (Japanese GDP- 5,47 tn USD). In that year 61 Chinese companies were included in the prestigious "Global Fortune 500" ranking which presents and classifies the world's biggest corporations. The value of China's trade turnover at the end of December 2011 was estimated at the level of 3,642.1 billion (bn) USD (exports- 1,898.6 bn USD, imports- 1,743 bn USD). At the same time China is the world's second (after the USA) importer and ninth investor. The value of Chinese FDI in 2011 amounted to 67 bn USD while the inflow of FDI to China in recent years oscillates between 80 and 110 bn USD. Chinese companies most often invest in strategic resources, especially fuels, new technologies, as well as energy and infrastructure. China – "world's biggest manufacturing plant," is additionally recognized by experts as the second most attractive economic region in the world (after India) for outsourcing activities (captive off-shoring and offshore outsourcing). In the year 2006 a program named "1000-100-10" has been initiated in China, with three goals in mind: development of 1000 Chinese companies capable of providing outsourcing services, convincing 100 international companies to conduct their outsourcing operations in China, finally creation of 10 outsourcing hubs in China. In the year 2010 those targets had not only been achieved, but even surpassed. Analysts of the socio-economic situation in China especially stress the phenomenon which is the longevity of unusually high GDP growth rate during almost thirty years of transformation. On average it is in the range of 10% annually, amounting to the highest rate of growth in the world, for such a long period of a state of this size.

China owes this startling development mainly to very beneficial investment conditions (special economic zones) and inflow of foreign investment and technology connected to them, still cheap but successive increasingly expensive labour force, traditional industriousness of Asians, export subsidies, as well as competitiveness of domestic production artificially sustained through the fixed and market-distorting tying of the yuan's exchange rate to the dollar.

It is a well known fact that further socio-economic development of the PRC encounters several serious challenges (like for example overdependence on exports and investment, “bad debts” problem, or environmental degradation). Which of them, in your opinion, have the greatest potential to disrupt the current period of high economic performance?

China faces many serious development problems. Among them we can name its ecosystems’ devastation (China is the biggest CO2 emitter in the world), crime, corruption (referring to the so-called “crony capitalism”), overpopulation, rising unemployment, the serious problem of its “greying society,” problems with energy balance, regular accusations of organised cybercrime (break-ins into servers of US IT companies and military), problems with intellectual property protection (massive counterfeiting of brand products) and accusations levelled at this state concerning production standards, potential dumping practices (social, pay and currency) or for example the use of its monopolistic position in the rare metals trade. The biggest barriers for China’s further development are growing income disparities (along the city/countryside lines as well as east/centre-west of the country divisions) and decidedly too low share of consumption in relation to its GDP (overreliance on exports and investment).

“ THE BIGGEST BARRIERS FOR CHINA’S FURTHER DEVELOPMENT ARE GROWING INCOME DISPARITIES AND DECIDEDLY TOO LOW SHARE OF CONSUMPTION IN RELATION TO ITS GDP

It seems that Chinese party-state leadership has reached consensus about a need for deep structural reforms in order to preserve and further the economic achievements of the last three decades. Only this month the State Council has outlined a reform program concerning, among other things, taxation, exchange rate, capital flows or property and population registration issues. What changes are crucial in order to preserve the long-term health of Chinese economy?

The most important element is stimulating domestic demand what, considering the Confucian inclination of the Chinese towards saving, will surely not prove easy. Indicators of consumption in relation to GDP are presently worse in the PRC than in Japan and South Korea...

after World War II and almost two times lower than in the USA. The government must substantially strengthen budget financing of health care, pension and the disability payment system, education and many other forms of state’s social policy. To put it another way, it must relieve hundreds of millions of citizens from the necessity of saving money for those purposes, thus encouraging present consumption. At the time of global post-2008 economic crisis this is an especially salient proposition. The archaic system of temporary registration of rural citizens living in cities (called hukou), which prohibits ca. 150 million people from receiving public services, should also be abolished. Another task is to diminish the income gap now growing in the country and the social discontent (also in the form of ever better organized protests?). The Gini coefficient, which illustrates this problem, is higher only in India and Brazil. What good comes from the fact that China has the best developed market for luxury goods in the world, if still ca. 400 million people live for less than 2 USD a day?

The set of policies adopted by the Chinese Communist Party from the start of “reform and opening” in the late 1970s onwards and its effects have in large extent defied prescriptions of western economics and political science theory. Can we really talk about a distinct “Chinese model of state capitalism” which could hold lessons for both developing and developed economies?

In contrast to Russian neoliberal “shock therapy” from the times of prime minister and finance minister J. T. Gaidar (at the beginning of the 1990s) based on the rules of the “Washington consensus,” China strives “step-by-step” to realize the free market economic model of its own unique making. This attitude is conceptualized by analysts as: gradualism, growth based authoritarianism, the Chinese experiment, state capitalism, or the Beijing consensus. B. Liberska, a renowned specialist in the field of international economic relations, calls the model adopted by China “controlled (managed) globalization.” It means that the country opens itself to globalization, but on its own conditions, without giving up its ability to control capital flows and foreign investors’ activity, adopting the rules of the free market game selectively and opening up to competition only in selected sectors. This Chinese development model, in B. Liberska’s opinion, is attractive for many Third World states, which experienced various economic and financial crises in the past as a result of their application of the neoliberal recommendations of the IMF and after

opening their markets. Some of them, for example in Africa, Latin America or South-East Asia, recognize the Chinese economic model, coupled with a deliberate democratic deficit and authoritarian style of governance as a solution, which enables them to avoid crisis situations in the future, as well as guarantying faster and more stable socio-economic development. As many Chinese politicians say, contrary to Russians who, at the end of 1980s, “nosedived into the pool forgetting to fill it with water first,” Chinese learn to swim slowly, without “diving into deep water” outright. This approach softened the shocks during the market transformation, allowed attainment of macroeconomic stability and establishment of appropriate institutions of market regulation, control and supervision (however strange and incomprehensible this may sound to supporters of various schools of classical neoliberalism, among them the so-called “Chicago school” of Milton Friedman).

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SOME STATES IN AFRICA, LATIN AMERICA OR SOUTH-EAST ASIA, RECOGNIZE THE CHINESE ECONOMIC MODEL, COUPLED WITH A DELIBERATE DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT AND AUTHORITARIAN STYLE OF GOVERNANCE AS A SOLUTION

China has already surpassed Japan as the second biggest economy in the world. Right now many observers predict that it is only the matter of time before the PRC catches up and even perhaps surpass the current no. 1- USA. Is it a realistic notion, and if yes, under what conditions?

It is worth remembering, that the PRC has for many years now attracts most foreign investors in the world, regularly updates its production and services, develops the stock exchange, emphasizes education and science and generally has an excellent understanding of the main challenges it will face in the coming decades. The PRC’s development policies are being mapped out every five years. They sketch out the direction of the country’s development, which affects both the private and state dominated sectors. The present, twelfth plan has been published in March 2011 and covers the 2011-2015 period. The plan contains policies which are supposed to facilitate the rise of domestic consumption, improvement of the quality of life, development of the western and central regions, as well as improving environmental

protection. It names seven strategic economic programmes which will receive special exemptions and financing:

- Energy consumption limitation and environmental protection
- New information technologies
- Biotechnology
- Manufacturing of high quality machinery
- New energy sources
- New materials
- Vehicles powered by clean energy

If these are realized, there is a great probability that already around year 2020-2025 China will become world’s greatest economic power (overcoming the USA) by such measures as share in global GDP or current account balance. However, the Chinese standard of living, measured by GDP per capita (even in PPP terms) will remain lower than in the Triad economies for much longer.

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PLA ON THE MARCH

MILITARY TRANSFORMATION AND MODERNIZATION IN THE PRC

“ CHINESE MILITARY ENVISAGES GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT FROM REGIONAL TO GLOBAL POWER. HISTORY SHOWS THAT CHINA ALWAYS HAS TIME AND LEADERS IN BEIJING KNOW THIS”- CLAIMS PAWEŁ BEHRENDT, DEFENSE ANALYST FROM CENTRE FOR STUDIES POLAND-ASIA, INTERVIEWED BY RAFAŁ WIŚNIEWSKI FROM R/EVOLUTIONS’ EDITORIAL TEAM ON THE TOPIC OF PRC’S DEFENSE POLICY.

INTERVIEW WITH **PAWEŁ BEHRENDT**
BY RAFAŁ WIŚNIEWSKI

Let us start our discussion of Chinese defence policy with the fundamental strategic considerations. What is, in your opinion, the overall threat assessment as seen by the top civil-military leadership of the PRC? In other words, what kind of conflict is the People’s Liberation Army preparing to fight in?

PRC and PLA leadership has traditionally remained enigmatic about this matter, however recently this has changed. In last year’s report about the government’s work Wen Jiabao stated that: “the most important thing (for the PLA) is to win local wars under conditions of information age.” From that moment onwards, this doctrine has been confirmed several times by top political and military leaders and officially confirmed in the 2013 Defence White Paper.

The People’s Liberation Army is currently undergoing a period of far-reaching transformation in terms of doctrine, training and equipment. Despite impressive achievements, questions remain as to how deep and effective the reforms are in reality. In your opinion, how well is the PLA prepared in order to conduct a “high-tech local war under conditions of informatization”?

The PLA is just at the beginning of transformation and modernization processes. The industry is set to begin serial production of modern equipment. Work on new training programmes, which concentrate on new technologies have only been announced in February 2013. Despite declarations of greater transparency on the PLA’s side we still don’t know how much progress the Chinese have made. There are few elite units which have been issued modern weapons and equipment. Those units also conduct exercises testing new doctrines. For example in November 2012 one of Beijing Military Region’s mechanised divisions conducted combined forces manoeuvres with joined command post on board of an AWACS1 aircraft. Despite big PR successes like the presentation of J-20 and J-31 fighters, there is still a long way ahead and the majority of units still use equipment based on technologies from 1980s or even older. Nevertheless, modernization programmes have been awarded high priority and enjoy high level support. Thus we can expect that in 10 years time the PLA will be ready for “high-tech local war under conditions of informatization.”

1 AWACS- Airborne Early Warning and Command System (Editor’s note – RW)

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DESPITE BIG PR SUCCESSES LIKE THE PRESENTATION OF J-20 AND J-31 FIGHTERS, THERE IS STILL A LONG WAY AHEAD AND THE MAJORITY OF UNITS STILL USE EQUIPMENT BASED ON TECHNOLOGIES FROM 1980S OR EVEN OLDER.

The official Chinese doctrine stresses the defensive nature of the state's military posture. A lot is made of the PRC's desire to acquire capabilities for denying its surrounding airspace and sea to potential opponents (read US). At the same time, so is the process of fielding some systems (like for example an aircraft carrier or long range transport aircraft) which are associated with power projection. What is your take on the issue of the further development of Chinese military? Will it concentrate on regional operations or pursue power projection in distant theatres?

Chinese leaders attach great importance to both “peaceful development” policy and restoration of their great power status. CPC leadership recognizes that armed conflicts are not conducive to realize their primary interests, however there exist the political will and means to become a global power. As we can see in the case of People's Liberation Army Navy, its ability to conduct regional operations is only one stage on the road to “Middle Kingdom's” revival. The PLAN development's concept includes three stages: a Brown, Green and Blue water fleet. The Chinese navy is now somewhere between the first and second stages. The Brown water fleet should be capable of conducting operations in neighbouring waters, that is: the Yellow, East and South China Seas. A Second stage includes the development of potential for operations in the Philippine Sea and waters surrounding the Indonesian archipelago. Finally, the Blue water fleet is an oceanic navy, which could rival the US Navy in the Pacific. This stage is supposed to be completed in the next 20 years. We can suspect that analogous plans have been prepared for air and land forces. In other words, Chinese military envisages gradual development from regional to global power. History shows that China always has time and leaders in Beijing know this.

Recently many questions have been raised concerning the presumably growing political clout of military leaders in Chinese politics. Those issues are inherently difficult to study, as they are shrouded in secrecy. Nevertheless, could you comment on the current state of civil-military relations in the PRC?

This is a very difficult question; I would even say that such knowledge is hermetic. The CPC views the military as one of the basic pillars of its rule, but also wants tight control over the PLA. From their side, top military leaders declare absolute loyalty to Beijing. How relations between top level officials or local administration on the one side and the military on the other look like, I don't know.

Chinese military modernization does not take place in a vacuum. Asia is bursting with arms procurement and military build-ups. What is the PLA's position in comparison with armed forces of such states as Japan or India?

Chinese military build-up is one of main reasons for arms races in Asia, but hardly the only one. The entire continent is bursting with conflicts such as Korea, territorial disputes, revolts of ethnic and religious minorities and old resentments. Dealing with Japan and India alone, we must remember that both states are China's old rivals and possess both the will and capabilities to become great powers. Japanese Self Defence Forces are the most modern armed forces in Asia, second only to USA. What is especially interesting, Japanese defence spending is traditionally limited to a maximum level of 1% of GDP. Even then it permanently ranks among the ten biggest defence budgets in the world. The main obstacles for full remilitarization of Japan are its pacifist constitution and society weary of foreign adventures. However, because of China this is changing. In the last general election defence issues played an important role for the first time. India, similarly to China, buys much weaponry from Russia; however its defence modernization faces numerous problems stemming from corruption and other defects of state administration. For now Indian ambitions are directed towards the Indian Ocean basin, but in light of the Chinese engagement in the Af-Pak2 region and Burma, New Delhi seeks cooperation with another potential enemy of PRC- Vietnam. Generally, the PLA is numerically superior to any other Asian military force, except India. In terms of military technology and modern training China still lags far behind Japan or Republic of Korea.

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2 Afghanistan-Pakistan (Editor's note – RW)

CHINESE - INDONESIAN RELATIONS

THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

MACIEJ MAÇKOWIAK

essay

ANALYZING CHINESE – INDONESIAN RELATIONS IS A HARD TASK INDEED, NOT ONLY DUE TO THE FACT THAT THE FIRST LEADER OF LIBERATED INDONESIA – SOEKARNO, WAS PERCEIVED BY SOME AS A “PUPPET”¹ OF THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT AND ACCORDING TO OTHERS A CIA AGENT (THESE EXTREMES WILL BE PUT ASIDE), BUT ALSO DUE TO PERTURBATIONS THE BILATERAL RELATIONS HAD UNDERGONE DURING THE SUHARTO ERA. THE PAPER THUS WILL TRY TO EXPLAIN THE HISTORY AS WELL AS THE CURRENT TRENDS IN THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THESE TWO COUNTRIES. NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE SITUATION IS CHANGING RAPIDLY. HOWEVER THERE ARE SOME PATTERNS THAT ONE CAN OBSERVE, BECAUSE INDONESIA IS KNOWN TO DEMONSTRATE THE ABILITY TO BLEND POLICY WITH FLEXIBILITY AND PRAGMATISM.

* Indonesians tend to think that politics is similar to *wayang* theater, where politicians are merely puppets and someone powerful pulls the strings.

SOEKARNO ERA

Indonesia declared independence on the 17th of August 1945 (de facto acknowledged in December 1949) and established diplomatic relations with China on April 13, 1950.¹ However the *Orde Lama* (Old Order—a term used to describe the country’s politics between 1945 and 1965) had a strong tendency to be pressured by anti-communist tendencies within Indonesia on the one hand, and by critics of the first government (led by Mohammad Hatta, and his *bebas-aktif*²-independent and active *policy*) doctrine on the other. However, the relations were rather low-key due to the fact that prime minister Hatta and Soekarno did not want to fully engage in a relationship with a communist country, thinking that it would cause a negative view of their country in the West. The politics of the 1950’s was very demanding due to the fact that a balance had to be preserved between the following forces:

- **Masyumi Party** – (Council of Indonesian Muslim Associations) a Muslim political group.
- **Army**³ – as a rule nationalist and anti-Chinese.
- **Pribumi** – Ethnic Indonesians.
- **Tionghoa**- Chinese Indonesians.

The policy had to be extremely careful in the first years of free Indonesia because a spark between any of these groups might have led to violence and disintegration of the state. Unfortunately brutal actions took place in 1967. Soekarno however played games in international politics flirting in turns with the Soviets, the Chinese and the West. He ordained “Guided Democracy”⁴ and “Guided Economy”⁵ for the achievement of Indonesian Socialism. His neo-Marxist, crypto-communist ideology was partially welcomed by the government in Beijing. However, strict Indonesian law affecting Chinese-Indonesians, discriminatory in every way towards the minority, made the Chinese in Indonesia more and more loyal towards Beijing. Thus the government in Jakarta became doubtful about the loyalty of the aforementioned ethnic group.

1 Sukma Rizal 1999.

2 Hatta Mohammad 2002.

3 Also known as ABRI.

4 Demokrasi Terpimpin.

5 Lev 2009.

THE COUP OF 1965

The coup of 1965 was a turning point in Indonesian-Chinese relations.⁶ It started with the combination of factors, the supposed PKI coup and the Cultural Revolution in China, which led to the suspension of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Worsening of the Indonesia-PRC relations seemed inevitable. PKI collapsed and because anti-Chinese racism was on the rise (on the excuse that Ahmad Aidit⁷ – the leader of the Partai Komunis Indonesia had brought the party closer to China) most of communist leaders were killed alongside many Chinese communist sympathizers.

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DURING THE INDONESIAN KILLINGS IN 1965-66 ABOUT 500.000 TO 1.000.000 PEOPLE WERE KILLED-HOWEVER THE ACTUAL NUMBER STILL CANNOT BE GIVEN.

And so Soekarno's careful balance of the so-called NASAKOM⁸ was destroyed. The PKI, which strongly supported him and (during his later career) had a strong influence on his decisions, was eliminated both politically and physically from the scene. The players that remained were the army and Islamic politicians.

The PKI was later portrayed both as an increasingly ambitious, dangerous party and as mastermind of the 30th September Movement. Books and newspapers told horrific stories about Chinese minority in Indonesia, Chinese government and PKI. All were accused of the following: castration, rape and murder. Those terms became keywords when talking about the aforementioned groups. During the “Indonesian Killings” in 1965-66 about 500 000 to 1 000 000 people were killed.⁹ However, the actual number still cannot be given.

6 Vickers 2005.

7 Shot on the 22nd of November 1965.

8 Term derived from the words Nasionalisme, Agama and KOMunisme.

9 Friend 2005.

SUSPENSION OF INDONESIAN-CHINESE TIES

There was and partially still is an opinion among politicians in South-East Asia that when the PRC is strong enough, it will try to meddle with the other countries' internal affairs. This point of view is very popular in Indonesia, where most political scientists claim that if China is powerful enough it will “eat you alive.” What also should be pointed out is that the suspension reflected the image of the Order Baru (New Order) as anti-communist, furthermore the new rulers wanted to reinforce their legitimacy and produce the atmosphere of mistrust towards anyone of Chinese origin and to the PRC itself. Increased vigilance was introduced. The Pribumi¹⁰ were supposed to inform the police about any suspicious activity by the Chinese (or communists). At the same time the Chinese businessman Bob Hassan who had close ties with the Suharto family was able to profit from the widespread corruption (also known as KKN – Korupsi, Kolusi Nepotisme) and a system of “contributions” and mob-like ties of the regime, Hassan's birth name is The Kian Seng.¹¹ But the sole fact that the businessman managed to profit from the system did not make the situation any better. On the contrary, Hassan became a symbol of the money-laundering, greedy Chinese. This stereotype casts a shadow on today's relations between both native Indonesians and Chinese-Indonesians, as well as between the two countries. This factor is still relevant because of the fact that, despite their notable financial position, Chinese-Indonesians are not a strong force on the Indonesian political scene.

However since 1990s, the two countries' relations have been growing fast, especially in the fields of politics, economics and culture. Direct links took some time to materialize, as there was opposition from the nationalist quarter and the military. Both groups were allowing the private sector to play a larger role in national life during this period. However, as always, it did not go smoothly due to a big problem over the claims to the South China Sea (specifically the claim to the natural gas fields northeast of the Natuna island group). After the Asian Financial Crisis and the fall of gen. Suharto things started to work faster in the field of bilateral cooperation. At that time while Indonesia's economy shrunk by 13.7 percent, China still managed to reach a high level of economic growth.

10 Term used by the Dutch colonial administration. Pribumi are those population groups, which were considered native to the country, in contrast to “Europeans” and “Foreign Orientals.” (Editor's note – JvdB)

11 Mallet 1999: 181.

POST SUHARTO ERA...

As mentioned earlier Indonesia, as the largest ASEAN country with ambitions to be the most influential in the region (despite its obvious social and economical shortcomings), cooperates with China in the field of trade. However it is always watching whether the PRC is not trying to meddle in its internal affairs. In particular, the establishment of China-ASEAN Free Trade Area in 2010 (which was said to positively change China-ASEAN cooperation), met with lukewarm reaction in Indonesia. For various reasons the government in Jakarta failed to inform the public about the implementation of this agreement and the results it will have. Indonesia is constantly flooded with cheap, not always legal, imports from China. That may be an important factor facilitating aggression towards the Chinese.

Booth states: “(...) *China is forcing several ASEAN countries back to what could be termed a ‘colonial pattern of trade’ whereby they produce raw materials in exchange for manufactured imports. If this is in fact the case, especially for Indonesia, what are the longer term consequences for Indonesia’s economic development in the medium term?*”¹²

It is no surprise that economic factor plays the most important role in relations we are talking about. However, PRC is always keen on proving it has strong ties with Indonesia:

“(...) China’s exports to Indonesia in 2012 reached \$34 billion, making Southeast Asia’s largest economy China’s 14th-largest export destination comprising 1.7 percent of China’s total exports that reached \$2.04 trillion. Meanwhile, Indonesia’s exports to the world’s second-biggest economy might reach around \$32 billion, a tiny portion of China’s record \$1.81 trillion in imports.

Based on the latest data from the Central Statistics Agency, Indonesia’s trade with China surged to \$46.43 billion — comprising \$19.59 billion in exports and \$26.84 billion in imports — during the first 10 months of 2012, up to 4.26 percent from \$44.53 billion during the same period in 2011.”¹³

Similarly to Indonesia’s relations with Singapore and Taiwan, which are based on economic factors, politics does not play a large role. In Indonesia’s relationship with China political and economic interests can be separated.

¹² Booth 2011: 1.

¹³ Jakarta Post 2013.

From the Chinese perspective, Indonesia plays a key role not only due to the fact that the country is the largest ASEAN member. The PRC also thinks of the ASEAN as a pole in its multipolar order theory. Due to its status as a key player in Asia, as well as worldwide, Chinese domination is even more keenly felt than usually and the countries of South-East Asia are afraid of its growing nationalism. The biggest manifestation of this so far is the continuing Chinese naval activity in the South China Sea (ongoing for decades), which can lead to growing tensions between the two countries.

Therefore we can sketch out at least four types of possible problems between the two countries:

1. Different economies in terms of:
 - size
 - economic system
 - strategy of economic development
2. Sea disputes
3. Historical problems
4. The issue of Chinese-Indonesians

Needless to say, the PRC will try to impose its leading position using economic statecraft. This country’s activity within the WTO and on the China-ASEAN forum is seen in Indonesia both as a chance and a threat. It stems from the fact that the two economies have a history of non-complementing each other. They exported and imported similar products on world markets. The diversification of Chinese products in the mid 2000s caused a need for change in economic relations. However, lobby groups often warn the Indonesian public about the threat of Chinese products, yet for example the mining industry sees China as a “heavyweight” partner:

“The nation was the biggest buyer of Indonesian coal in 2011, accounting for 25 percent of shipments of 258 million tons, according to data from Indonesia’s energy and mineral resources ministry. Indonesia is also China’s biggest supplier of thermal coal, providing 57 million tons, or 36 percent, of imports in the first 11 months of this year.”¹⁴

¹⁴ Jakarta Globe 2012

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FROM THE CHINESE PERSPECTIVE INDONESIA PLAYS A KEY ROLE NOT ONLY DUE TO THE FACT THAT THE COUNTRY IS THE LARGEST ASEAN MEMBER, THE PRC ALSO THINKS OF THE ASEAN AS A POLE IN ITS MULTIPOLAR ORDER THEORY.

Obviously, there are positives and negatives in this situation. Economic stability is an important factor for both of those countries and for similar reasons:

1. China seeks to strengthen its position as competition to the American hegemony.
2. Indonesia wants to be seen as the leader of ASEAN, due to its size and ambitions

When talking about the Indonesian ambition we have to take under considerations the following:

- A relatively weakly equipped army compared to other ASEAN countries.¹⁵
- Domestic problems – Separatist movements in Papua and Aceh.
- Unresolved corruption problems.

The third factor is of course common to Asia as a whole. However, according to the public, corruption and nepotism are the most serious problems facing the country.¹⁶ For the PRC these problems of course exist, however, obviously, the political system is different. The role of the president cannot be downplayed, in a system where the President is head of state, head of government and chairman of the ruling party¹⁷ at the same time. Thus the presidential stance can often shape the policy between the two countries.

A factor rarely analyzed is the role of Australian-Indonesian relations in shaping the Indonesian-PRC relationship. Mutual cooperation is seen by both countries as a counterweight to Chinese expansion (of

course the official version mentions only reasons such as eliminating piracy etc.). Australia has to define its position in this area. However, as mentioned earlier, PRC's intentions are analyzed by Indonesia (as well as Malaysia, Singapore and other countries of the region) through the prism of its actions in the South China Sea. Oil and gas that lie beneath it are of course important factors shaping relations and their importance will rise, due to the fact the “the well runs dry”. In order to balance cooperation and competition in this field certain actions have to be taken within ASEAN and in Indonesian-Chinese relations.

Both journalists and politicians state that it is very important for China to change the language of its pronouncements which is often harsh towards other countries. This Chinese nationalism is often seen in media reports. However, a change has to be made also on the Indonesian side due to its misunderstanding of the Chinese culture and the prejudice held against Chinese – Indonesians.

Indonesian cooperation with the Chinese is right now the only way to properly function. Key word here is *balance*. Chinese have a strong tendency to interfere in other countries' politics, as soon as they feel they are able to. As Sun-Tzu put it:

“The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.”¹⁸

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¹⁵ Efforts to modernize the army are still under way, however there still is a large problem In terms of Armored fighting Vehicles as well as Air force

¹⁶ One example for the popularity of anti-corruption activities is korupedia (www.korupedia.org) that aims to diminish corrupt practices by providing a list of corruptors, their names and surnames, as well as a short description of the case. The page is immensely popular among Indonesians.

¹⁷ Since March 30, 2013

¹⁸ Sun Tzu, Giles 2009.

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