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A World of Superflous People: Globalisation and Democracy

DAG STRPIĆ

Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb

Summary

The problem of the fabled *denominator* that used to encumber classical political economy has made its appearance in the recent (political science) global political economy as a genie let out from a bottle by the contemporary realism and mercantilism, that the structure of the contemporary world will not let back in. The trends in the development of the globalised world cannot be reconciled with its globalisational politics without a clear liberating and harmonizing strategy of its leading national/market democracies. Without such a strategy, globalisation and democracy cannot be linked because they cannot find the classical common denominator. The mercantilist/realistic concepts of its identification cannot but fail since by definition they start from the pluperfect structure of the separate world of developed nation-states – but forget about their assumptions and the context – and, amazed, time and again they undermine their own efforts and the survival itself. The same happens with the imperial endeavours of the leading nation-state: it does not manage to be both, so eventually it may well be neither.

The alternative scenarios of the world political and politico-economic development included in our project will show that the possible successful strategy of globalisation and democratization (and its substitutes) have to start from completely novel analytical assumptions. Only one of them is formally old but substantially entirely new: an increasingly unavoidable planetary denominator whose variations enable if not entirely successful but at least viable planetary politics of human and democratic development.

Both in Croatia and abroad, the fundamental criterion of successful developments and harmonized policies will be the question: are there superflous people, regions, ideas? If there are, then in no time all people, all regions and all ideas are going to become superflous.

Key words: common denominator, democracy, development, Croatia, globalisation, superflous people



Mailing adress: Fakultet političkih znanosti, Lepušićeva 6, HR 10000 Zagreb, Croatia. *E-mail:* dstrpic@fpzg.hr

Exactly thirty years ago (1973) the celebrated book by E.C. Schumacher was published. Its unusual title and subtitle indicate the direction of the necessary change of the existing paradigm of the world development, as well as of the theoretical paradigm not solely in social sciences. As Joseph Pierce and Barbara Wood remind us (2002): *Small is beautiful*, which struck a chord in the world impressed only by size, but only as a sort of a memento to alternative movements and theories. However, “the research of economics as if people were important” has gone relatively unnoticed and easily slid into semi-oblivion.

Perhaps it was simply a case of barking up a wrong tree. Namely, economic science from its inception at the turn of the 19th and the 20th century had to hypothetically construe its own world that might be explored with the exactness of natural sciences (Marshall, 1890, 1987). The fact that the conclusions arrived at in that way were used as guidelines for some practical public policy, albeit economic, will most probably be declared by future historians of civilization as one of the miracles of the 20th century. The contemporary political science with its integrated political economy and public policies as its increasingly important branches, should be “the right tree” for Schumacher’s developmental and scientific plea provided it takes itself seriously enough and does not reduce its activities to the semi-fictional “pure political” world as economics did with the “pure economic” one (Strpić, 2000).

In the meantime, that already complicated world – following Schumacher’s plea – enormously changed and got more complicated. The monopolar globalisational pyramid that emerged with the disappearance of the bipolar world political structure has not made it more simple as might have been expected. The neoliberal faith in the metropolitan economic golden calf has put him on the legs of clay instead of gold. It came to life at an inopportune moment, at the time of the longest modern stagflation crisis (unprecedented until then; it had always been just the opposite), that began at the time of the appearance of Schumacher’s book. This new economic religion almost explicitly declared the majority of mankind if not superfluous then insignificant for the future thriving liberalized world. The only thing it did not establish is the moment of the final liberal salvation. All in its own good time. It is unusual that the increasingly integrated world with increasingly unimportant people and increasingly pressing problems that make people superfluous, at the same time has more time for solving these problems. Hence it is no wonder that the increasingly globalised world finds the only superficially paradoxically global democracy as an almost impertinent question. Democracy is in the domain of national governments and international political (and increasingly military) relations, just like the space of designing economic and political theory is the traditional national space. Only their applications are global.

A World that “has Time” Full of Superfluous People

In one Zagreb daily an economist recently perfectly summarized one of the many stereotypes on globalisation, this time in its relation to democracy: the more globalisation, the less democracy. And vice versa.

The very opposite thing has been said many times, with equal justification: globalisation spreads democracy worldwide. Moreover, it is said that in that respect there is no sense talking about transition, because the institutions of the market and democratic system have already been introduced, at least in their elementary form, in the states which the transitional quip referred to. The remaining problem are the countries with the best developed market and democracy, and the central institutions of the global world order as well as the tenor of their strategies and politics. Like the once again ideologically invented market that is presented as a new/old *deus ex machina* of endless progress¹, globalisation also enjoys the image of unstoppable and inevitability. Or a widespread unacceptability when understood as a voluntarist callousness of the rich. Or an entirely new field that has to be designed between these two cornerstones (Hart/Prakash, 2000).

Do we really live in a world of quips and counter-quipps with prejudices as the basis instead of a fundamental social science? Are all the areas of world operation really so anarchic (Bull, 1977, 1984) that all the options are on the table, and it is a case of “the mightier (and the more quick-witted) the rightier”? Has the world theoretical establishment really introduced a moratorium on the production of global solutions to their quandaries (Spivak, 1990)? It seems that the American war in Iraq has confirmed both (cf. *The Economist*, 2003).

If there is a moratorium, it has been used for a theoretical multiculturalization of political science relying, at least nominally, on most of its founding traditions. It has also been used for its official structuring into several branches/sub-disciplines (Goodin/Klingeman, 1996).² One of these sub-disciplines, the reanimated political economy, was recently (Lowi, 2000) pronounced to be a political science instrument for a vivisection of globalisation, potentially more successful than the analytical instruments of economic science, particularly if there is a need for a globalisation with a “more democratic” or “more human” face (Stiglitz, 2002) or for a necessary reform of world economic policies (Rodrik 1996), or if there is a mingling of the dominant external economic policies within, for the time being, a utopian integral global economic policy (Tyson, 2002).

In order to become something of the kind, political economy should primarily make a step further in the direction of turning into a sort of an aspectual as well as a comprehensive political science in small (in my opinion, this goes for every other branch of political science, and is a criterion for deciding whether some field of political science research is a branch/sub-discipline or not).

For that purpose, like any other science, it must reconstruct its analytical instruments in line with the new problems it is confronted with. Until a new paradigm is designed,

¹ Cf. Ginsberg (1961): *The Idea of Progress: A Re-evaluation*, Evolution, Development, Progress. Ginsberg gives a very erudite survey of the older literature.

² Political theory, political institutions, comparative politics/national politics, political economy, public policy/public management, political behaviour, international relations, methodology. I would add political history, and together with political behaviour (with its political/psychological, political/sociological and political/economic aspect) its political-communicational/media aspect.

the paradigm that is sought by all like the Holy Grail – though it sometimes seems that even more of them prays to God it is not found – it is possible to supplement the existing instruments with the components that have been forgotten in the development of modern political science and contemporary political science and have consequently gone out of use.

For me, the first such component for the last 15 years has been Hobbes' classical understanding of the commonwealth as a political/economic community (cf. Strpić, 1998). This interpretation has partly been reinstalled by Dahl and Lindblom (1953) and Macpherson (1962), and in a broader classical context by Hirschman (1977) and Meek (1967).

The second component is the understanding of the world system developed by, more or less, I. Wallerstein (1974, 1980). According to him, the world system and its processes are considered to be the fundamental political/economic entity, made up of nation-states and the world market in a productive combination with national markets.³

The third component is the understanding of political/economic cycles, more integrated than the one offered for political cycles – through the analogy with the business cycles – by Huntington (1991) and supported by Alt and others.

And finally, there is the understanding of institutional, business and political strategies of development rooted in public policy as a harmonized policy of development, an understanding that assumes “that people matter”, e.g. Schumacher (1973), Sen (1999) and now Stiglitz (2002) in economics, and earlier Lindblom and Dahl, Hirschman (Foxley 1986) among political scientists and political economists.

Combining these elements in a recently launched project “Public policy, development and political analysis”⁴, I am trying to develop a model of structural political/economic capital that might represent a common denominator for analyzing political and economic processes in the international and national political/economic communities; it could also be the basis for the “analysis of forms” in their various structural segments, more narrowly in political, economic, social, cultural, and other. I would say that a lot of research in the world is going that way (Keller/Lowi/Gendlin, 2000).

The globalised situation that ought to be used as the starting point by every research of this kind is characterized primarily by several points. First it must be emphasized that it is relatively sharply divided into the processes of *mondialisation* (an older French word for globalisation)⁵ and globalisation or into already relatively anonymous processes of technical, traffic, communicational, cultural, and partly economic linkage of the world society (Wallerstein) into a single though not a unified system. We might say it

³ In my opinion, Wallerstein himself underestimated the significance of nation-states within the world system and their complementarity to the world market and the system as a whole. In this he anticipated the emergence of many similar and dissimilar later underestimations. Nevertheless, as often happens, his methodology itself corrects his hypotheses.

⁴ With my colleagues Dragutin Lalović and Zdravko Petak.

⁵ In France still synonymous with globalisation.

has been relatively successfully globalised. It is also, albeit in an entirely different way, divided into the globalisational processes, clearly subjectivized processes of the implementation of political and business strategies of power that wish to make use of the globalisational processes. This second aspect of the ongoing economic/political *mondialisation/globalisation* is understandably dubious in several ways. Apart from being dubious from the point of view of values/outlooks, it is controversial because of its rather obvious lack of success. This foundering gives rise to the efforts to implement it by force.

Globalisation as a primarily economic process is legitimized from the economic point of view by Smith's arguments of the "invisible hand", embedded in Say's pattern of the "market law". That law is quite understandable within Say's paradigmatic context, but absolutely unfeasible within the contemporary neoclassical and neoliberal context. At the level of the national market, Keynes (1936) already showed – by introducing the up to then ignored time as the model's factor – that Say's law as the foundation of an economic policy whose goal is a high utilization of production factors is feasible solely with the constant intervention of an active anticyclist economic policy. It does not matter if these interventions are not of the Keynesian but perhaps the Buchanan-like liberal-constitutional type. They spread even further to the so-called political market and – purely theoretically methodologically speaking – they form a system that in principle does not differ from the market of the Stalinist-CC-cum-*Gosplan*-type. Besides, the political market can be analysed only by means of the principles of the limited and cosmopolistic (but not perfect) competition by means of strategic games.

Things get clearer at the level of the world market where Say's law cannot operate (in Say's way) by definition, because apart from the time delay there are numerous other obstacles that cannot be theoretically globalisationally fully eliminated. The competition on the world market cannot be full or perfect even theoretically.

Here we could counter the legitimation via a successful "invisible hand" by cynically invoking Hayek's argument against the system of centralized planning. A centralized globalisational system should not be rejected primarily because it would not be acceptable as a value as an imperialist or a non-democratic one would be. Thus it must be challenged because it is by definition and by the strength of its own arguments – impossible.

I would say: what a pity! But it is as it is. As much as we support it, legitimize it, and declare it irreversible, the globalisation as we know it today is doomed, at least from the perspective of the goals its proponents proclaim. This does not mean that it cannot be successful in some other ways.

According to the first element of the model (Strpić, 1996, 1998, 2001), the state/nation as a political community loses in the ongoing globalisational processes the inherent balance among its former "natural" segments. Particularly blatant is the weakening of their mutual constraints, so vital for democracy. In my opinion, this is much less noticeable in the often mentioned vanishing of the nation-state and much more in the weakening of its democratizing momentum and the efficiency of its public policy. This is perhaps most easily verified in economic policy. Between globalisation and de-

mocratization I think that the pattern of the existing trend of gains in the international decision-making is uncertain while the losses at the national level are definite.

According to the second element of the model, the weakening of the state-like character of the elements of the world system does not strengthen it as might seem; on the contrary, this weakens it and alters its character. It is yet not certain whether it represents the threat of a transition into some Wallerstein-like or Hart-like world empire or something else, but it surely is not conducive to the proclaimed goals of globalisational strategies and policies. Although it is theoretically possible to imagine a culturally, democratically and economically prosperous world empire, for the time being there is not much that speaks in favour of it.

According to the third element of the model, it should be immediately pointed out – together with Lowi (2001) and others – that the existing globalisation has its precedents and is increasingly dangerously reminiscent of them, particularly of the pattern of the “collapse of the liberal civilization of the 19th century” as described by Polanyi (1944). Not only in my opinion, that pattern is further characterized by a misconceived strategic assessment of the then “European concert” and other levels of decision-making (as well as the established sciences of that time). It is not known to what extent the power of the then world centre rested on the power of the world periphery, and the latter was too weak to provide the necessary boost at the times of growth, let alone in world crises. Tentatively speaking, Say’s law failed at the world market, and there was no corrective strategic intervention at that point of the system.

The same can be said again because in recent years the “silence of world leaders on an urgent global economic policy is becoming deafening” (Tyson, 2002). USA has become all too important as the economic world trail-blazer, but too frail for this leading mission. The economic mission cannot be made up for only in the political and military spheres. On the other hand, regardless of the level of their “globalisation”, the semi-peripheries and peripheries are too weak to bolster USA, a necessity in the existing world political/economic order. It seems there is no idea whatsoever how to strategically invigorate them but only a wan hope that a *deus ex machina* of the globalised market will suffice.

Regardless of how paradoxical it might sound, the interests of globalisation, of the world centers of political power and of the world capital today can be saved only by the ideas that run counter to the world establishment, similar to some of those championed by antiglobalists, like the one by Schumacher (1973) that there are no superfluous people, ideas, regions, and countries.

If the silence surrounding these ideas remains deafening, the history of the falls of ancient civilizations may perhaps not be repeated as a tragedy or a farce but – as Mark Twain would say – it is surely going to rhyme with them.

A Country that has no Time: A Croatia of Superfluous People?

At the time when such rhymes are already echoing as an introductory punchline for a new steep downward slope in the world, it is important not to lead separate public

policies (foreign, economic, educational, scientific, transport, communicational) in an isolated and routine manner but in a harmonized manner, within an integral strategy of development and an integral implementational developmental policy. This is particularly important in a small and not entirely normalized country like Croatia.

Together with a survey of basic public policies in Croatia it is always good and, in at first sight chaotic or hopeless situations even essential, to have a look at them as a whole. The understanding of the states or processes that are to be maintained or modified, as well as the conduct of individual policies, are going to look somewhat different from that angle.

A comprehensive understanding and management of the conduct of a community is an age-old idea. It might be said that this is one of the fundamental original ideas related to politics and the political in general.

The idea originates from the ancient Far-East's and Antiquity's Mediterranean perception of the community (including its relations with other communities) and its spiritual and ethical or theological/philosophical and political/jurisprudential grounds. The tenor of this idea was somewhat altered in the cameralism and the political economy of European Modernism, as well as in the related sciences of the state and later political sciences, based on the theory of the state and the theory of the society, and on the actual formation of nation-states and their world. But the idea itself remained.

This old idea was marginalized in the 1950s under the pressure of another, individualistically disguised, holistic idea of an exclusively liberal community that was (then) taken for granted but not understood, and which only tacitly precedes individual action and results from it; also, under the pressure of the inertia of specialized and sector-scientific and expert approaches. However, in the last two or three decades, this old idea has been revived in roundabout ways primarily on practical grounds since partial approaches in research and in everyday politics have proved lacking or at least insufficient.

Hence, in political and other social sciences and in specific developmental research as well as in the related professions, once again the importance of a comprehensive political science and a broader social science, humanistic, natural science and technical (as well as technical/business and managerial) understanding of the problems linked with public policy (and with their conceptions as primarily developmental policies) is appreciated or at least accepted. Their comprehensive planning, design and management become a pragmatic focus that turns out to be a necessary precondition of their efficacy. At first sight independently of the issues of scientific development, and more as a form of a more contemporary management of development, such a focus enables – or at least attempts – to make use of and implement all the relevant scientific and professional advances regardless of which scientific fields and disciplines or social sectors they occur in.

This approach is today typical for the countries with the most advanced private and public management, especially where this is linked with the dominant humanistic tradition in education and science and somewhere also in public debates about social problems. These are, then, the leading countries of the European and global development, the countries that it seems have managed to expand their time as well as their activity

scope, the countries that impose and use globalisational processes for a refurbished maintenance of their social, political and political/economic structures – for a long time a norm in the modern world.

The countries lagging in development after the world centre, in which those structures have been denormalized in relation to the centre from the outset of modernization, almost without an exception suffer from the denormalizational developmental crises. Instead in “normal” sequences (Binder, 1971; Grew, 1978), these crises have for a century and a half occurred in clusters from the start of the modernization of those countries and nowadays often even simultaneously, almost big-bang-like. A similar trend is passed on to the most developed countries via the processes of interregional world extemporalization (thus making this explosive pace global), although they still have an impression of a slow pace, as if they had time. The relative international clout gives an impression of a time reserve while haste is shifted to the periphery.

That is why the peripheral countries are much more aware that they do not have time, that all changes, often quite radical, have to be carried out simultaneously and with a thorough grasp of the essentials and the linkage of the domestic and the world context of the mainstream developments and their contextualized segments.

In those countries, a harmonized management of “sector” policies together with a full awareness that their developmental infrastructures of operation are contained in the others (Strpić, 1988) – which at another level also applies to sciences and occupations – is unfortunately more of an imperative than a real trend. The gap between the real and the perceived needs of the moment is here chronically acute.

Since it seems (with good reason) that almost everything ought to be changed, the relevant political protagonists easily draw a conclusion that in that case – paradoxically – nothing crucial can and consequently should be changed. On the one hand “it is known” that all “historical” changes have been carried out so that only lesser developmental adjustments are needed, the adjustments that seem important and urgent solely to an unhistorical and unqualified, even an attitudinally unsympathetic eye. From the perspective of everyday politics and frequently of the media, the obvious general lack of time is seen as its actual non-existence and is to a certain extent modified when it obviously has to or can be, but only in the existential politics and not in the public policies. The Croatian syndrome of party alternation and constitutional changes instead of and not parallelly to some radical public policy interventions is a sad example, but only indicative of the general malaise.

Due to this lack of time, politics (and its media: *show must go on*) care only about politics. And money, naturally, if tied to politics. But as somebody said a long time ago, this is the money of politics. It is the money of the political exchange, and not of the exchange of commodities or services, of the private and the public exchange. Politics is perceived as the foundations of a community and not vice versa as might be expected from a more vital perspective; from this marginally normalized perspective, however, such an expectation would not be “normal”. This kind of politics – in one version – first “gave” us a state, and then – in the other – freed us from the suffocating embrace of “the fathers of the nation”. That is why it has earned its money (both times, and it could do it again).

The contemporary social-democratic and social-liberal notion of a kind of a moderated laissez-faire (originally established in the conditions of a high utilization of all production factors) is interpreted within this denormalized derived rural syndrome as an assumption that one should primarily till the political field, while the money ought to be provided by the meadow of the production of goods and services. Politics is here only to financially mow, and not to worry how to produce (or to provide the necessary infrastructure for the production since in itself it is such a super-structural infrastructure). It is interesting to note how this syndrome has been maintained for decades in this region, even centuries in a broader sense, and how it perfectly corresponds to our centuries-old despotic, dictatorial and authoritarian political culture (and structure). Its harmonization constantly makes up for the harmonization of the real developmental management of public policies. That is why public policies in Croatia can only be routinely administered without the allegedly expected developmental results – as long as they alight the needs of the government, since fulfilling those needs and their only periodical legitimation before voters is the only genuine or at least primary goal of these policies as the classical state ones.

Namely, in the last two decades Croatia has gone through three post-realsocialist systems with an array of accelerated extensive constitutional, ideological, and political/party changes, no less significant than the recently recognized state independence. It is indicative that the perception and management of public policies have been the most difficult to change to the extent that this inertia might very soon undermine the gains of the other, seemingly more basic changes, and even threaten the survival of the existing Croatia, not only in Croatia. The latter leads to the former.

At biggest risk are two fundamental but most neglected (and soon perhaps the only) Croatian resources: the human and the social capital. If soon there is no reversal in the social/developmental direction in the public policy management, Croatia will indeed not be able to normalize its mid-term or long-term development.

At best, if we maintain this course, we might become EU's welfare case, tolerated for security reasons. The question is how long the statehood rationale of a nation may be based on that. The Croatian statehood rationale must be directed at the revitalization of our own resources and the best national and European values and the development based on them in as favourable international setting as possible. It cannot rely exclusively on that setting and its mix with the domestic balances of politicking magnetic forces, just as it could not have survived for long on the calculated politicking conflict with that setting with a domestic equilibrium in mind.

As everywhere else in the world of the new century, but even much more drastically so in Croatia, the fundamental criterion of a fruitful developmental outlook will be the question: are there, in the established perspective of development, any superfluous people, regions and ideas? If there are, then in Croatia soon *everybody* is going to be superfluous; hence Croatia itself will become superfluous.

Until now, Croatian development has been based on the superfluosity of people, regions, and ideas.

Croatia was formed on the territory similar to today's territory by means of a forced cession of fractions of its people and lands during the Frankish, then the Venetian and finally the Ottoman conquests, and later by a more or less forced acquiescence to the protected but also peripheral position in the different variants of the Hapsburg Monarchy with a plethora of superfluous people and ideas and with an extremely one-dimensional and one-sided structure and infrastructure of development.

The failed society, the failed capitalism, the failed democracy, and the failed multinational and unitary union of the Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs (later the short-lived Yugoslav Kingdom) collapsed under the burden of the same syndrome. Something similar (under different sobriquets) happened to the second Yugoslavia, though it laid the foundations of today's national independence. It would not be good that something similar happens to the first independent Croatia as a republic.

The primitive accumulation of capital and its party state that I diagnosed and wrote about twenty years ago (Strpić 1983) still has us all in its lethal embrace in the post-realist way. Not as firmly and as neo-stalinistically as several years ago or two decades ago, but (devastated more by the war and the revolutionary primitivization than physically ravaged and slaughtered) we are much weaker today and these not so pitiless pliers are nevertheless much more unbearable despite its beguiling pretensions.

Without a swift and a radical reversal in the basic idea of the policy of utilization of all Croatian resources – primarily human, natural and social – without a clear entrepreneurial, scientific and professional setting in which a belated development would be set in motion (together with the immediately efficient human and developmental solidarity) it will not be possible to break this relatively increasingly precipitous national deadlock. The public policies, however, rather inertly and surprisingly synchronously mostly go on pursuing the opposite course.

I am afraid that the spectre of Mark Twain haunting the world might call on us. And take up its permanent residence in Croatia.

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