Promotion of Democracy: Naive, Hypocritical and Pragmatic Approaches

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1. Prospects and limits of the post-Cold War Western triumph

The end of the Cold War brought about the acceleration of processes of globalisation that for the first time have covered practically the whole world. Essential parts of these processes have been the spread of principles of market economy (often by means of 'shock therapy' and in the form of free markets as expounded by the Chicago School of Milton Friedman) and ideas of democracy for which there has been both demand from the East as well as supply from the West.

The end of the Cold War signified indeed a triumph of the Western style democracy and market economy over the Soviet version of communism. The Western world had shown not only that its values corresponded more to the aspirations of most people than the Soviet imposed value system. It also did prove the much greater effectiveness of the market economy over centrally planned economy. Of course, the more pragmatic Chinese communists had understood it a decade earlier when they under Den Xiaoping had started to reform their economy. Therefore, it may have indeed seemed that at the end of the twentieth century, as Francis Fukuyama (1992) wrote, out of the two major competitors only one had stayed in the ring. It seemed that the world, while naturally remaining heterogeneous in many respects, was becoming in some important ways more and more homogeneous. A liberal-democratic future of the world seemed, for a while and for some, possible.

Although new states of the former Soviet Empire were indeed in need of both free markets and democracy there was a lot of idealism (even naivety) and hypocrisy (even cynicism) both at the export and import ends of the process. The introduction of markets, usually carried out by means of 'shock therapy' prescribed by Friedmanite Chicago school of free marketeers, often clashed with the principles of democracy and the latter always had to give way. Hard matter prevailed over soft values.

The spread of market economy and democracy - the concepts that are considered by many to be something as obvious as god, motherhood and apple-pie - in practice often turns out to be a mixed blessing. If planned economy of the Soviet type indeed left everybody and society as a whole poor and market economy may indeed be one of the preconditions of political freedoms, shock introduction of unbridled markets makes a few extremely rich while many become even poorer than they were under the old system. As one of the central tenets of democracy, with some important qualifications of course, is that many count more than a few, it should be clear that economic 'shock therapy' and democracy are incompatible. Cambridge economist Ha-Joon Chang goes even further writing that 'Free market and democracy are not natural partners' (Chang 2007, p. 18), though it has to be emphasised that Professor Chang is not speaking of 'market economy', but of 'free market' or rather 'unbridled market', as advocated by Milton Friedman and his followers.

Although nobody should ideally suffer from the spread of democracy, which even more than market economy seems to be a universal value, its promotion in practice does not always bring about general happiness. On the contrary, some societies may greatly suffer not only from inadequate methods of

promotion of democracy but also from the failure to understand that a remedy that cures one patient may kill another. Moreover, though only few of those who are involved in the business of exporting democracy are driven primarily by altruistic concerns (mixed motives should not necessarily discredit positive achievements, even if they come as side-effects), quite a few of exporters of democracy have in mind rather different considerations such as oil, gas, war against terror and strategic advantages and do not give a damn about democracy.

In parts of the former Soviet Empire (both the internal empire, i.e. the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics - the USSR, and the external one that included those nations that were *de jure* independent but *de facto* tightly controlled from the Kremlin), there was indeed quite a widespread desire to accept many Western values, despite the fact that there was not much understanding what these values exactly meant. Some of the newly born countries had before had a short encounter with these values; they were also seen as being opposite to the imposed and hated Soviet ideals. Yet, soon quite a few started to miss the lack of the latter (e.g., free health care and education). However, when one changes the whole system one is often forced to accept not only advantageous but also undesirable aspects of the new system; a choose-and-pick approach is not always possible.

Other parts of the former Soviet Empire initially also went along with the general trend of democratisation though in many cases there was more hypocrisy or naivety (sometimes a combination of both) than genuine desire or understanding of democratic values and institutions, though it is necessary to admit that in different proportions such a combination has been present in all post-communist countries. A mixture of idealism that often equals to naivety and hypocrisy that may sometimes even have positive consequences (due to the so-called hypocrisy trap) seems to be present in all societies undergoing radical reforms (so-called 'transitional societies')- Pressure of various international bodies, Western governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) often led to formal acceptance of concepts and legally binding obligations that did not correspond to local realities and therefore had few chances of being implemented in practice.

Processes of globalisation in the post-Cold War World, which were welcomed by most world leaders, interests of Western, especially American, capital and the popularity of democratic peace theories led to efforts to spread democracy not only to the fragments of the Soviet Empire, but to other parts of the world as well, including rather implausible places such as Afghanistan, Iraq and the Greater Middle East as a whole. Western countries, first of all Washington, but also the European Union, its member-states and other European institutions (OSCE) started to implement programmes of democracy promotion. It was done without any serious discussion of the readiness of different societies to accept these concepts; this would have been even politically incorrect to question the readiness of some societies for democracy. As with some 'importers' of democracy, 'exporters' too had mixed motives and sometimes rather naive understanding of what democracy would mean in specific contexts of these far-away societies.

Idealism that often equals to naivety and hypocrisy that sometimes has to pay homage to virtue together with pragmatic approaches are all present in the export-import business of democracy. Naive and hypocritical approaches to democracy promotion, especially when objectives of a naive and a hypocrite coincide or when seemingly improbable combination of naivety and hypocrisy coexist in a decision-maker, aren't less dangerous than thoughtless experiments with markets and 'shock therapy'. Today they are contributing, as an ideological cocoon of economic and strategic interests, to the emergence of a new great power confrontation where an 'arc of democracies'[1] may face a circle or some other configuration of authoritarian powers. Today, it is clear that the end of history is not at the horizon. These are not only the so-called new and non-traditional threats such as global warming, religiously inspired terrorism or the spread of WMD that are challenging the world community of states. Unfortunately, at the horizon are already visible the contours of a new great power confrontation. The post-Cold War experience has shown that pushing aggressively for a change in other societies is as dangerous and counterproductive as rejection of changes, whose time has come and which are demanded by people at home.

Outside pressure for democratisation may indeed effect positive transformations, but usually in small countries, and even then only when there is a confluence of favourable conditions. In their foreign policy

For example, The Economist notes that the 'hawkish' former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe 'espoused a sweeping «arc of freedom and prosperity)) that was supposed to anchor Japan in a Eurasian community of democratic nations but was in practice a not particularly subtle attempt to throw a cordon around a rising China' ('The Return ...' 2007, p. 72). Such a theme is a constant topic of American neocons.

such states practice bandwagonning, i.e. they are prone to join stronger and more prosperous actors, accepting to a great extent also their ways of life. Big countries that due to their history, potential and size have great power ambitions, on the contraiy, resort to balancing, i.e. their response to outside pressure is usually defiance and internal consolidation against external challenges.

Conflicts of interests, especially between great powers, are inevitable in the world of limited resources. However, differently from the Cold War confrontation, there is much less ideology in today's great power disagreements and in order not to aggravate emerging rivalry, it is necessary not to burden real and often inevitable conflicts of interests with ideological motives. What made the Cold War so special and also dangerous was its ideological component. Therefore, while continuing to promote values such as democracy and human rights, it is necessary, first, to avoid as far as possible discrediting these noble aims by using them as a cover for mundane economic, political or strategic interests (i.e. for politicians not to be too hypocritical, and for the rest to learn to look behind the words, not to be too naive); second, not to think that democracy and human rights are like mechanical tools that work everywhere (to be realistic or pragmatic); and third, not to have trust in those dictators and autocrats who either claim that they have already brought a haven of democracy to their people or who refer to the historical and religious traditions of their nations in order to delay responses to calls from their people for democracy and human rights. Not every Western politician who speaks of democracy in far-away places is necessarily a hypocrite; not every human right activist who claims to know a remedy for a dire human rights situation in another country is inevitably ignorant or naive; not even every autocrat who claims to have the support of the population is automatically wrong. However, it is always safer to doubt and double-check; in matters where practical interests and ideology intermingle one can never be sure.

A new era of great power confrontation - though quite probable - is neither desirable nor inevitable. To avoid slipping into a new cold war it is necessary to separate the wheat from the chaff. It is necessary to accept differences of domestic arrangements and values that usually result from long historical evolution of societies, levels of their development as well as diversity of pragmatic interests. Here we need not only good faith but also good understanding of the inevitability of diversity that, especially for a Western mind, schooled in the Enlightenment's idea of universality of reason and values, is especially difficult to accept (there are many who think: what works in America, should work everywhere; what is good for America, should be good for the world). At the same time, let us not forget that naivety and especially hypocrisy are not only the tools of exporters of democracy but also those who are at the importing end of the process. There are populist dictators who suppress popular demands for democracy thereby destroying their countries. Although there is a lot of truth in the saying that peoples deserve their rulers[2], there are quite a few of them that no people should suffer from. It is necessary to confront such dictators, though even in such cases one is not to lose sight of the necessity of choosing remedies that do not make the illness worse and kill the patient.

Finally, let us always try to see through the words. Words, be they concepts, doctrines or laws, may indeed reflect values that are universal or at least in principle universalisable, but they may also be used, either deliberately or mistakenly, to pass parochial ideas for universal values. Already in the 1920s Carl Schmitt incisively wrote: 'When a state fights its political enemy in the name of humanity, it is not a war for the sake of humanity, but a war wherein a particular state seeks to usurp a universal concept against its military opponent. ... The concept of humanity is an especially useful ideological instrument of imperialist expansion, and in its ethical-humanitarian form it is a specific vehicle of economic imperialism. Here one is reminded of a somewhat modified expression of Proudhon's: whoever invokes humanity wants to cheat' (Schmitt 1995, p. 54). Schmitt's controversial political affiliations should not diminish the topicality of his insights.

[2] Thomas Friedman once put one of the most pertinent questions concerning democratization of some societies, though he himself either did not know the answer or did not dare to formulate one. He asked: 'Was Iraq the way Iraq was because Saddam was the way Saddam was, or was Saddam the way Saddam was because Iraq was the way Iraq was'? (Friedman 2006, p. 6). In some societies, unfortunately, a short, or even middle, term choice would be between a secular dictatorship, religious totalitarianism and anarchy or civil war. In such a case the best scenario may well be an 'enlightened dictatorship' (a rare breed indeed) that could gradually open up the way for democracy.

If this all sounds too Machiavellian, it is only due to the subject-matter - politics, especially in its international dimension. In world politics, Machiavellian answers are preferable to Pollyannaish recipes because of the nature of the phenomena we are dealing with. Pragmatism enlightened by idealism (or idealism moderated by pragmatism) that sees through hypocrisy and naivety is the best tool for understanding our imperfect but somewhat perfectible world.

Hence, what is this export-import item that has become such a hot issue since the Cold War and the bi-polar world came to an end?

2. A family portrait of democracy

Although politicians, statesmen and academics continue to argue over the meaning, definition and models of democracy, very few of them would today proudly claim that they are not democrats or that they consider democracy unacceptable for their societies not only for the time being but also forever. Of course, there is often a lot of hypocrisy in pro-democratic declarations and statements as well as genuine misunderstanding of what democracy means, though the latter, due to the elusiveness of the subject matter, should not be so surprising. Nevertheless, today a few would publicly agree with the greatest Greek philosopher who considered democracy as a corrupt and unjust form of government, as a rule of mob (Plato 1993, pp. 293-301). Therefore, today the issue is not so much whether democracy is, in principle, preferable to other forms of government. One of the most serious practical as well as theoretical problems in this field is: how to get there, how to transform a non-democratic society into a democratic one? This problem may be divided into sub-issues such as: are all societies indeed ready for democracy; are those who oppose dictators necessarily democrats (as is too often assumed); are not methods to promote democracy sometimes worse than the absence of democracy; and what may happen if democracy is brought, either through an internal popular demand or due to external pressure or by means of a combination of the both, to a society that is not ready for it? In this article I will try to reflect on possible answers to these questions based, to a great extent, on recent developments in the former USSR and specifically in Central Asia, though I am naturally borrowing from the wisdom of other writers as well as drawing parallels with other regions.

When we speak of democracy we must try not only to define what we are talking about, i.e. try to explain what we mean by democracy, but we also need to put this phenomenon into its proper context. This, among other things, requires us to compare democracy with other closely related phenomena such as human rights, liberalism, rule of law, good governance and modernisation. In some cases democracy may be part of these phenomena, in other cases it may be a precondition for their development, or *vice versa*, it may be a result of the advance of these other phenomena. Although it is difficult to give one widely acceptable definition of democracy, it can be recognised using the concept of Wittgensteinian family resemblances. There are some traits that all democracies, though in different degrees, have in common. What are these features that allow us to include some states into the category of democracies, other states into the category of non-democracies, whereas there may be grey zones with some vaguely discernable family features while other features clearly do not fit in?

Democracy is such a political system, such an organisation of a society, where those who govern do so for, with the consent of, and with regular consultation of the governed. It is governance by the people and for the people. David Held defines democracy as 'a form of government in which, in contradistinction to monarchies and aristocracies, the people rule' (Held 2006, p. 1). Charles Tilly considers that 'a regime is democratic to the degree that political relations between the state and its citizens feature broad, equal, protected and mutually binding consultation' (Tilly 2007, p. 14). Depending on various characteristics used by different writers, one may distinguish, for example, between direct and representative democracy. The notion of deliberative (or discursive, communicative) democracy is closely associated with works of Jiirgen Habermas[3] and even its partial implementation presumes high levels of institutional development of the

Jürgen Habermas gives a much fuller definition of the democratic principle when he writes that 'the principle that all "governmental authority derives from the people" must be specified according to circumstances in the form of freedoms of opinion and information; the freedoms of assembly and association; the freedoms of belief, conscience, and religious confession; entitlements to participate in political elections and voting processes; entitlements to work in political parties or citizens' movements, and so forth' (Habermas 1996, p. 128).

state, and even more importantly, highly developed political culture of the population that has internalized liberal-democratic values. Today this concept, or rather most of its elements, can be realised in practice only in highly developed societies. Although the term *liberal democracy* has been already used for long, only recently its logical opposite - *illiberal democracy* - has been introduced into academic discourse. (Zakaria 2003.)

Sometimes democracy is not only understood as liberal democracy only, but it is even equated with liberalism. For example, when Hong Kong - a British colony - in 1997 was handed over to China *The Washington Post* published an editorial entitled ' *Undoing Hong Kong's Democracy'* (1997). However, there had been no democracy in Hong Kong under the British rule, though the population enjoyed considerable economic and even rather wide personal liberties all granted by London. The people of Hong Kong had all the bread and butter but did not have any say (and until facing the hand-over to the PRC did not even actively claim it) in how to arrange their life. This example shows that there may be quite wide liberties, especially economic and civil (personal) liberties, without political freedoms and democracy. As Jtirgen Habermas notes, 'only the rights of political participation ground the citizen's reflexive, self-referential legal standing. Negative liberties and social entitlements, on the contrary, can be paternalistically bestowed. In principle, the constitutional state and the welfare state can be implemented without democracy' (Habermas 1996, p. 78).

Although democracy and liberalism are not to be mixed (often they may indeed clash) they are nevertheless, using the expression of Immanuel Wallerstein in the *freres - ennemis* relationship (Wallerstein). They usually support each other and create conditions advantageous for each other's development, but at the same time they also put limits to each other's flourishing. If we take the famous trinity of the French Revolution: *liberte, egalite and fraternite,* we may say that *liberte* is the essence of liberalism and as such it is in a relationship of *fraternite* with individualism. At the same time, *egalite* that is the essence of democracy very often comes into conflict with *liberte.* Wallerstein writes 'that liberals give priority to liberty, meaning individual liberty, and that democrats (or socialists) give priority to equality. ... Liberals do not merely give priority to liberty; they are opposed to equality, because they are strongly opposed to any concept measured by outcome, which is the only way the concept of equality is meaningful.' *{Ibid.)* Jacques Barzun observes that 'The strong current toward greater equality and the strong desire for greater freedom are more than ever in conflict. Freedom calls for a government that governs least; equality for a government that governs most' (Barsun 1986, pp. 25-26). At the same time, Robert Dahl observes that 'one of the most important reasons for preferring democratic government is that it can achieve political equality among citizens to a much greater extent than any feasible alternative' (Dahl 1988, p. 56). Does this mean that the more there is democracy, the less there are liberties? Of course not. Only by absolutising the importance of equality, or *vice versa* liberty, can one come to the conclusion that one negates the other.

The case of Hong Kong is, of course, a bit exceptional but enlightened autocrats like Lee Kwan Yew or Mohamad Mahatir may indeed grant significant economic and personal liberties to their people, while leaders elected more or less democratically sometimes resort to repression against political opponents and stifle entrepreneurship (e.g., in Belarus under President Lukashenka). However, Zakaria's use of the term 'illiberal democracy' somewhat misses the point since such 'democracies' have not only deficit of liberalism, i.e. lack or severe limitation of personal freedoms, but also democracy deficit, though certain formal attributes of democracy such as regular elections are present. It may well be true that some societies may benefit from enlightened authoritarianism; in that respect Singapore and Malaysia may arguably serve as examples, and Kazakhstan in Central Asia has similar claims, though a caveat is necessary - reliance on autocrats, even if enlightened, is a risky business; moreover, for one Lee Kwan Yew or Mahatir there are usually dozens of Mobutus or Mugabes.

Often democracy is identified through elections. Some, what I would call, extreme formalistic or superficial approaches to democracy even claim that governments produced by elections may be inefficient, corrupt, shortsighted, irresponsible, dominated by special interest, and incapable of adopting policies demanded by the public goods are nevertheless democracies (Huntington 1993; Zakaria 1997). To equate democracy with one, though important but relatively technical, aspect of it would make a mockery of democracy.

Does democracy necessarily presume free and fair elections based on the one man, one vote principle? It certainly follows from Article 25 of *The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR), which provides for the right of every citizen 'to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which

shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors'. It seems pretty certain that free and fair elections are one of the attributes or requirements of mature democracy in today's world but this does not necessarily mean that they are the sufficient or even absolutely necessary condition. Other forms of consultation may be used to discover the public opinion and the consent of the governed could also be expressed through other means. If the authorities in their policies do not ignore what the public wants and enjoy the consent of the governed, it is difficult to deny that there are elements of democracy in such a society even if their elections do not correspond to the Western standards, though in such cases we could hardly speak of mature or liberal democracy. Such governments are sometimes called populist regimes, but as Lord Dahrendorf has noted, 'one man's populism is another's democracy and vice versa' (Dahrendorf 2003, p. 156).

Although elections, *per se,* do not make a country democratic and there may be elements of democracy in societies whose practices do not conform with requirements of Article 25 of the ICCPR, it is impossible in the XXI century to speak of democracy in the country that does not hold regular elections. For example, in an article entitled 'No elections, no democracy', published in a local Beijing newspaper, Wang Changjiang (2006) - a scholar from the Central Party School in Beijing - writes that though we must not take elections as a miraculous cure for solving all problems of political democracy, they are 'an indispensable part of democracy'. General Comments of the Human Rights Committee on Article 25 also emphasize that 'genuine periodic elections in accordance with paragraph (b) are essential to ensure the accountability of representatives for the exercise of the legislative or executive powers vested in them' (*Para 8 of General Comment...).* Although the General Comment underlines that citizen's participation in the conduct of public affairs is 'supported by ensuring freedom of expression, assembly and association', it does not require the existence of a multi-party system.

If we compare democracy with human rights we see that the so-called political rights, as they are enshrined, for example, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) are rights close to the essence of democracy. Article 25 of the ICCPR provides that 'Every citizen shall have the right and *the opportunity* (sic, emphasis added), without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions: (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; (b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors; (c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country. Therefore, Professor Thomas Franck was not far from the truth (though this truth is normative, even a bit hypocritical, if there can be such a thing in parallel with absolute or relative truths) when in 1990 he wrote of the emerging right to democratic governance (Franck 1992). However, as with some other human rights, this right seems hardly be universal; its content is too general and its practical implementation not general enough.

As there are many models or forms of democracy, it is important to somehow limit the use of this term, i.e. it is necessary to say also what democracy certainly is not. That, however, is easier said than done. It is, of course, possible, to use the old method and say that I know it when I see it. According to this method, say, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) would not be a democracy, however loose definition one may use. But what about the People's Republic of China or the Russian Federation? Are they democracies? Of course, there are those who have very clear, though obviously radically opposite, answers to these questions, but in an academic discourse that has to be as impartial as possible, I would prefer to follow the formula: the more I know, the less certain I am, and therefore I would not jump to hasty conclusions on such difficult matters. Rather than divide countries into clear categories as democratic and non-democratic (or even as the Freedom House does, into free, partially free and not free), it is better to see regimes on a scale between the absolute non-democracy (e.g., DPRK) and absolute democracy (only an ideal on which, moreover, there is no consensus).

3. On instrumental and intrinsic value of democracy

There are logical arguments favouring democracy over other forms of governance such as 'a human being can be fully human only when he or she fully participates in the political life of his or her country', that democracy is 'a fundamental mode of self-realisation', or even that 'only democratic governance can put an end to famines' and other similar arguments put forward by intellectual giants such as Jiirgen Habermas and Amartya Sen[4]. However, such reasoning cannot persuade those who prefer pragmatic or emotional arguments to logical or rational reasoning, as many people do. One of such arguments in favour of democracy is best expressed by Richard Rorty, the greatest pragmatist philosopher who passed away in 2007: 'Followers of Dewey like myself would like to praise parliamentary democracy and the welfare state as very good things, but only on the basis of invidious comparison with suggested concrete alternatives, not on the basis of claims that these institutions are truer to human nature, or more rational, or in better accord with the universal moral law, than feudalism or totalitarianism' (Rorty 2007, p. 211). As Cambridge philosopher Simon Blackburn writes, Rorty 'opposes the tradition which descends from Locke or Kant to recent writers such as Jiirgen Habermas and John Rawls, which seeks to prove that a democratic and liberal state is the only rational mode of social organisation. For such writers, someone who chose to live in an illiberal or undemocratic state would be trampling on his own reason. It is irrational to sell yourself into the mental servitude that a theocratic state demands. But for Rorty, this Enlightenment attitude with its talk of irrationality is useless. The right pragmatist observation is that theocratic states seem not to work very well, by comparison with liberal democracies - it is theocracies who lose refugees to us, and not vice versa. We can cope, and theocracies cannot' (Blackburn 2003). Rorty would have probably agreed with Winston Churchill who famously in the House of Commons of the British Parliament declared that "Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time." *(A House of Commons speech ...* 1947.)

There are certainly some strong points in Rorty's arguments, though most of those millions who leave their war-torn and poverty-ridden countries behind do not seek at all democracy in the West. Often they bring their highly undemocratic habits and traditions with them and even try to spread them in countries that have given them refuge. Of course, it is possible to argue that Western societies are prosperous because they are democratic, though it may well be the other way around - it is prosperity that leads to democracy. The truth is, probably, somewhere in between and where there is a chicken and where an egg is depends on concrete circumstances.

I enjoy living in a liberal-democratic country and I believe that notwithstanding all its imperfections it is best for me and for my family. However, it would be a mistake to make from this personal observation the following extrapolations. The first such invalid extrapolation would be the belief that everybody is like me. I would call it a 'Bush fallacy' since it has been President George W. Bush who has most clearly and quite often expressed the belief that what are self-evident truths for the Americans are true for all and everywhere. The second is that even if democracy, especially liberal democracy, is in principle good for everybody (of which I am not so sure) the problem is when and how to get there.

American philosopher Daniel Dennett, who believes that his sacred values are obvious and quite ecumenical, enlists them in alphabetical order as 'democracy, justice, life, love, and truth' (Dennett 2007, p. 23). Is democracy really ecumenical and sacred? Does it have any intrinsic value at all or is its value wholly instrumental? David Held notes that 'Within democratic thinking, a clear divide exists between those who value political participation for its own sake and understand it as a fundamental mode of self-realisation, and those who take a more instrumental view and understand democratic politics as a means of protecting citizens from arbitraiy rule and expressing (via mechanisms of aggregation) their preferences. … According to this position, democracy is a means not an end' (Held 2006, p. 231).

[4] Nobel economics prize winner Amartya Sen writes that 'famines are easy to prevent if there is a serious effort to do so, and a democratic government, facing elections and criticisms from opposition parties and independent newspapers, cannot help but make such an effort. Not surprisingly, while India continued to have famines under British rule right up to independence (the last famine, which I witnessed as a child, was in 1943, four years before independence), they disappeared suddenly with the establishment of a multiparty democracy and a free press' (Sen 1999, p. 8).

Democracy, in my view, has indeed some intrinsic value, though I would not call it sacred. The gist of this value is that humans, at least most of them, and in principle, I believe, all adult and mentally non-handicapped persons, when their immediate needs for survival are met, are not content or happy if it is somebody else who decides what is good and what is bad for them, what they are allowed to do and what should be prohibited to do.[5] There have always been those who have not been satisfied with material well-being only. However, Dennett himself observes that 'Biology insists on delving beneath the surface of "intrinsic" values and asking why they exist, and any answer that is supported by the facts has the effect of showing that the value in question is - or once was - really instrumental, not intrinsic, even if we don't see it that way' (Dennett 2007, p. 69). Although democracy has also this intrinsic value because only under democracy - as if by definition - human beings obtain their adulthood, become citizens instead of subjects, its primary value is instrumental - it has to contribute, and usually it does, to the realisation of other values such as material prosperity, social stability, personal freedoms and security, scientific or artistic creativity. However, this is not what always happens since even the road to hell is also paved with good intentions. Moreover, if we speak of those who are involved in democracy promotion we have to remember that according to the Bible, a good Samaritan is rather an exception than a rule.

4. On absolute and relative universality of the concept of democracy

In the 1770s, a royal physician Johann Friedrich Struensee, who by a strange and fatal confluence of circumstances became so close to physically feeble and mentally unstable King Christian VII of Denmark that soon he was the most influential person and *de facto* prime minister of the country, issuing laws that, among other interesting and wonderful things like abolition of serfdom and secession of subsidies to unprofitable industries owned by the nobility, also included unrestricted freedom of expression and religious freedoms (see, for example, Enquist 2003; Ross 1980, p. 707). Unfortunately, though quite predictably, such laws had little effect in the eighteenth century Danish Kingdom and the only tangible result of the freedom of expression was that shortly everybody started to talk about Struensee's love affair with the Queen. Soon the man who was well ahead of his time was executed and the Queen was sent into exile.[6] As a reaction to Struensee's reform attempts, Denmark became even less tolerant and free than it had been before the Royal physician had tried to put into practice some radical ideas of the Enlightenment. It took centuries before these noble ideas became the reality in Europe, including the Kingdom of Denmark.

Now, let us move more than 200 years and from Scandinavia to the Middle East. In 2003 the Bush Administration, enlightened *inter alia* by the neo-conservative (neocon) ideology, which too may have some one-sided links with the Enlightenment heritage, undertook an attempt to export democracy to Iraq. Two years earlier the same export item was sent to Afghanistan. Of course, neither Afghanistan nor Iraq can be considered as pure testing grounds for the export of democracy, though some neocons probably sincerely believed that by overthrowing the bloody regime of Saddam and democratising Iraq, it would be possible to bring democracy also to the wider Middle East. However, pragmatic reasons were prevalent in both of these cases. A1 Qaida terrorists had found refuge in the Taliban's Afghanistan and Iraq had invaded oil rich Kuwait and Saddam's regime was indeed constantly in breach of UN Security Council resolutions.[7]

Both, the Struensee case as well as the current attempts to promote democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq, show that it is not enough to have a burning desire to bring about democracy; quite a lot of more is needed

[5] Although one should not underestimate the human desire for emotional comfort that is provided by relieving people from the need to constantly take decisions. Somebody else - the parents, a party, the government, God represented by the clergy - takes over the burden. Many feel themselves comfortable only amongst their co-religionists or in the military. See, e.g., Revel 1976.

[6] This case is interesting and topical also because it allows to distinguish between pretexts and reasons. The love affair served as a pretext, while Struensee's reform attempts were the reason of his downfall. Today's politics is full of such examples (e.g., the attempts of US Republicans to impeach President Clinton over his affair with Monica Lewinsky or the Khodorkovsky criminal case in Russia).

[7] A reminder: there is a lot of oil in Iraq and in the Middle East as a whole and whenever somebody talks about democracy and human rights in regions rich in energy and other mineral resources one should be especially on guard when hearing lofty words.

if one were to succeed. At the same time, there are big differences between today's Iraq and Afghanistan, on the one hand, and the 1770s Denmark, on the other. One of such differences is especially important for our discussion on democracy promotion. 230 years ago Enlightenment ideas concerning personal freedoms and democracy were nowhere realised in practice and therefore may have been considered by many, probably by most of the people at that time, not only **Utopian** but also simply mad and dangerous.[8] Today this cannot be the case. Democracy and freedom of expression exist in reality in many countries. However, if today these ideas cannot be considered as **Utopian** in an absolute sense, i.e. in the sense that they can never and nowhere be put into practice since they, say, go against the human nature (whatever this may mean), maybe they are nevertheless **Utopian** in relative sense, i.e. in the sense that they are not acceptable in some places and at least for the time being?[9]

One of the differences between concepts such as communism and democracy is that democracy, even if always far from the ideal (but ideal is always **Utopian** and Utopia can exist only as an ideal since in Thomas More's coinage the very term Utopia means 'no place'), does exist in practice. In the case of democracy, we could speak of **Utopia** only in the sense whether it can exist everywhere (whether this is a universal or in principle a universalisable concept); if the answer to the previous question is positive then whether certain economic, social and other preconditions are nevertheless needed for democracy to emerge and take roots; and closely related to the last point, whether it can be exported or promoted from outside or whether it has always to be home-grown?

It has to be emphasized that an approach expressed in President George W Bush's words about freedoms in the United States and the world, that if 'the self-evident truths of our founding are true for us, they are true for all' (President G. W. Bush 2003), is not only simplistic; it is simply wrong and dangerous. There are societies, some of them, say, in Central Asia, that prioritize many things higher than personal freedoms though this does not mean that for them such freedoms do not have any value at all. There are many peoples in the world who put stability first and value strong, even authoritarian-style leadership over individual liberties. These are not always just the leaders of such countries and their closest entourage who directly benefit from authoritarian regimes. Many people who may even suffer from such regimes nevertheless believe that strong, that is to say authoritarian, leadership is preferable to chaos that may (or will) follow if the reigns of power are loosened. Therefore, President George W. Bush is wrong when he believes that everybody in the world cherishes individual liberties to the same extent as most Americans do. People who have gone through wars, be they international or civil, or revolutionary turmoil in which thousands perish, usually value stability and order more highly that individual liberties. Besides, historical traditions often support and magnify value ladders that may significantly differ from Western priorities. Randall Peerenboom, for example, writes that 'not everyone assigns the same value to civil and political freedoms relative to social order. Social order ranks much higher in the normative hierarchy of most Chinese than it does in the normative hierarchy of many Westerners, in part because stability is precarious in China. The consequences of instability for China, the region, and the world would be severe. Adopting this measure virtually assures a wide margin of deference to restrictions in the name of public order' (Peerenboom 2007, pp. 124-125). This is not to say that there are not people in China or in Central Asian societies who highly value individual freedoms; this is not even to say that such societies will never start valuing individual freedoms more highly than an order that limits these freedoms; this is to say that because of different histories, both ancient and recent, as well as differences in their current situations, societies have different value priorities.

At the same time, in the world, which is rapidly becoming smaller and smaller as well as more and more 'networked', pipelined and criss-crossed by various communication means, twenty first century ideas and

[8] The editors of a book on democracy promotion write: 'Certainly, in most countries, even that celebrated home of constitutional liberty, Great Britain, democracy was not something that gradually evolved and matured some time after the Napoleonic Wars, but was rather a political aspiration that had to be fought for against those who sought to control, manipulate and often retard what they saw as this most dangerous of political deviations. Regarded by its enemies - included most nineteenth-centuiy liberals - as a threat to stable order and the institution of private property, democracy had few friends in high places' (Cox, Ikenburry & Inoguchi (eds.) 2006, p. 1).

[9] Anthony Dworkin, for example, questions: 'Is it right to see the neoconservative project of exporting democracy as itself **Utopian,** sharing some kind of essential flaw with other **Utopian** projects, despite obvious differences?' (Dworkin 2007, p. 42).

practices, including democracy and human rights, are spreading around even without purposeful efforts of governments, intergovernmental bodies or civil society organizations (NGOs). The combination of such 'automatic' spread of democracy and focused efforts of various institutions is certainly changing societies much faster than had they evolved in sovereign isolation. Albeit, this role of external examples and efforts, though mostly positive, is not without problems. Of course, this means that it is not necessary for every society to invent their own 'social wheels'; others show what they have achieved and may even help take over many things. However, this also means that borrowed may be ideas and practices that either do not work everywhere (that are not universalisable) or for introduction of which certain important preconditions are needed (that are in principle universalisable but not yet universal).

5. On idealism, hypocrisy and pragmatism in promotion of democracy

So, we have seen that democracy is indeed a high value good, though not seen as such by everybody and everywhere. Its value is also relative to the time and place. Now, what about motives of those who are involved in the business of its promotion?

The 'exporters' of democracy have been led by three categories of motivations that, though *in abstracto* completely incompatible, in practice may nevertheless become bedfellows, albeit uncomfortable. These motivations are idealism, hypocrisy and pragmatism.

Idealists want to better the world and as democracy, as they know it, is preferable, notwithstanding all its deficiencies, to all other existing social and political arrangements, they believe that by helping less fortunate or less developed nations to achieve what they habitually enjoy in their home countries they make other peoples happier, the world more prosperous and peaceful and their own societies safer. They often claim that democracies do not fight each other and those who resort to terror do it because of their discontent and frustration caused by oppressive and undemocratic regimes.

Hypocrites do not give a damn about democracy, especially in faraway places, but today it is more difficult than ever, and politically incorrect and almost suicidal to reveal what the real interests behind lofty words are (remember Ferenc Gyurcsany, the Prime Minister of Hungaiy, who admitted that his Government had constantly lied; instead of welcoming such frankness most people were appalled, though only the most naive person does not know that governments are often economical with the truth). Oil, gas, directions of pipelines and safety of tanker navigation are their values, but these interests have to be expressed in terms of democracy, human rights and development. A more general strategic goal, for hypocrites, allowing to reach various more specific known as well as even unknown objectives, is the maintenance and consolidation of existing hegemonic domination, or vice versa, the change of the existing unfavourable for them *status quo.*[10]

Commenting on the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the UN Human Rights Commission, headed at that time by Eleanor Roosevelt, and the Soviet attempts to derail the work on an international bill of human rights, Maty Ann Glendon writes that 'Washington and London may not have been displeased [though Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt certainly was] at Soviet obstructionism in the Human Rights Commission. As historian Brian Simpson has demonstrated, the Foreign Office viewed human

[10] If the United States today is a status quo power in the sense that it seeks to maintain and consolidate its dominant position in the world (notwithstanding that by exporting 'democracy', say, to the Middle East Washington may seem to change the region), China in that respect may be indeed seen as a revisionist power. Of interest in that respect is an article by Chinese scholar Feng Yongping entitled 'The Peaceful Transition of Power from the UK to the US' (The Chinese Journal of International Politics, 2006, no. 1, pp. 83-108), who ends his historical study with an unmistakable conclusion: 'From the perspective of China, which can be considered in a similar state to the United States at that time [i.e. when Washington peacefully took over from London the reins of world politics], the example of successful transition undoubtedly holds deep implications and provides a source for inspiration'. One can be sure that such ideas do not inspire people in Washington. That is why, among other issues such as Taiwan, Tibet, Xingjian and the trade imbalance, references to China's democracy deficit and human rights violations may be used as an instrument to stop or slow down the coming transition of power. Democratic, i.e. peaceful, transfer of power in the balance of power world is somewhat really exceptional. The US national security strategies of 2002 and 2006 are both based on the premise of American economic and military superiority that should help the US shape the world and not to be shaped by it; no strategic competitor is allowed to rise.

rights as basically for export and as a weapon to be used against the Soviet Union' (Glendon 2001, p. 87). Unfortunately, things have not changed much since the rise of the human rights movement after World War II. As one of the strongest advocates of promotion of democracy Thomas Carothers correctly writes, 'where democratic change in a particular country or region aligns with Western economic or security interests, it receives support. In many places, however, the United States and Europe have been and continue to be quite happy to support or get along with autocratic governments for a host of reasons' (Carothers 2007, p. 21). What he does not mention is the fact that Washington has more than any other state in the world helped overthrow democratically elected governments, such as Mossadeq's government in Iran in 1953, Arbenz's government in Quatemala in 1954 and Alliende's in Chile in 1973, when their policies threatened American economic or strategic interests.

Then, there are pragmatics who may even be fond of the goals of idealists but who think that these goals are **Utopian** and therefore attempts to put them into practice will be counterproductive or who believe that before to enter a brawl one should have a clear exit strategy, i.e. who often concentrate on the means so much that they lose the sight of the ends. Therefore pragmatics are cautious, sometimes overcautious, when facing prospects of radical change (they may be suffering from a Burkean complex). They recognise the importance of oil and gas in the real world and see the inevitability of competition, if not conflicts, over the access to these and other resources. Pragmatics are often cynical when dealing with issues of international politics not necessarily because they are cynical by nature, but because such is the character of the subject matter they are dealing with. As private persons, not as professional statesmen, politicians or diplomats, they may be the most moral persons, while you would not invite a good number of professional idealists to dinner.

If hypocritical approach to world politics, which uses lofty words such as democracy and human rights to conceal economic and military-strategic interests, is always to be deplored[11], idealism - even if often naive and sometimes indeed dangerous - may serve as an engine of progress. Anthony Dworkin, in response to John Gray's attempt to outlaw all **Utopian** projects as dangerous, writes in defence of minor **Utopias,** 'If realism is a necessary corrective to **Utopian** idealism, it is equally true that unchecked realism is likely to lead to a narrowing political possibility. Without some appeal to universal values, there is no standpoint to challenge unjust practices that are widely taken for granted. To take two examples from the Enlightenment era, the slave trade would not have been abolished when it was, nor the use of torture banned in criminal investigations, if William Wilberforce, Cesare Beccaria and their followers had not clung to grand visions of human advance' (Dworkin 2001, p. 44). Today too, idealism remains a tool of progress. However, in social affairs generally and in international relations specifically idealism has to be tempered by realism. Social experiments are not carried out in laboratories; they directly affect the lives of millions. Failures of such experiments may be fatal and their consequences are usually irreversible.

The current process of promotion of democracy has, like its predecessor *mission civilicatrice* or white man's burden of the nineteenth century, though in different degrees and forms, two aspects - idealistic humanitarian and hypocritical. Both of these aspects have their roots in the Enlightenment's dual legacy: desire for freedom and tendency for domination. Within Europe, at least initially, Enlightenment ideas, to a great extent, served the liberating purpose, while it created conditions, material as well as intellectual and psychological, for the colonial domination outside Europe. Dan Hind observes that 'we can certainly trace one history of Enlightenment from Bacon to the British Empire and to the modern global administration. The insurgent European powers of the period after 1700 depended heavily on the "enlightened" institutions for a technological base that in turn empowered global domination. The desire for total knowledge, in the service of total power that we find in the Department of Defence and the Ministry of Defence is an expression of Enlightenment. But this history must ignore the sense of Enlightenment as freedom of inquiry and freedom to publish. For the Enlightenment could not be contained within those institutions and their equivalents in Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany. Enlightenment informed the movements of national and social liberation within and outside Europe as surely as it informed the colonial powers' war-making technology' (Hind 2007, p. 104). Swedish writer Per Olov Enquist observes that 'if the Enlightenment has a rational hard face, which is the belief in reason and empiricism within mathematics, physics and astronomy, it has also a soft face, which is the Enlightenment as freedom of thought, tolerance and liberty' (Enquist 2003, p. 92).

[11] Although there is a so-called hypocrisy trap, which means that accepting or recognising hypocritically some obligations or values, one may later be forced to act upon them.

This 'hard face', which is morally neutral, has been indeed used not only to liberate men and women from oppression but also for the purposes of domination. As one of the profoundest thinkers of the past century John Kenneth Galbraith famously said: 'Under capitalism man exploits man: under communism, it is just the opposite' (see, e.g., Chang 2007, p. 103).

John Gray explains that former British Prime Minister Tony Blair's vision of the world was a simplistic unilinear vision where the world is moving towards a specific final destination since he 'never doubted that globalisation was creating a worldwide market economy that must eventually be complemented by global democracy' (Gray 2007, p. 97). Therefore, he also believed in the power of force to ensure the triumph of good *{ibid.).* Gray is right when he is warning against the dangers of **Utopian** visionaries who have acquired political power. Bush-Blair axis did indeed lead to some disasters, among which the Iraqi invasion of 2003 stands up as a warning for future generations. However, Gray, like his predecessor at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) Karl Popper, who introduced the concept of 'piecemeal engineering' into philosophy of politics, is himself too absolutist when he denies any positive role for social **Utopias** and visionary politicians. Gray is also too harsh towards the Enlightenment legacy seeing it as a monolithic whole. The so-called 'war against terror' is not a war of reason against religiously justified violence. It is rather a war of a faith against a faith. It is the faith in the supremacy of Western values, including free market, globalisation and spread of democracy against the faith in the ability of Islam to bring justice and wellbeing to the whole mankind. It is not by chance that Tony Blair is one of the most, if not the most, religious British Prime Ministers for years and President George W. Bush is not only a newly-born Christian but he has also been very close to American religious conservatives most of whom believe in literal interpretation of the Bible. If idealism has to be tempered by pragmatism, faith has to be moderated by doubt; at least for a politician.

6. To what extent can external support compensate for weaknesses of domestic democratic potential?

Academics, who either consciously serve certain political interests or whose views otherwise coincide with those of politicians, often elaborate various doctrines that are called to theoretically explain respective political or economic approaches. During the Cold War, when the Soviet Union tried to extend its sway over the so-called Third World countries and prompted them to choose the only true, socialist, way of development, Soviet experts invented a peculiar version of 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'. In accordance with Marxist orthodoxy, for a society to reach socialism, it was necessary first to pass through a stage of developed capitalism, which would not only generate material preconditions for a socialist revolution but would also create the proletariat, which later - through the exercise of its dictatorship - would then lead the society to socialism and communism. According to this theory, countries such as Mongolia or Vietnam, which had not yet in their evolution gone through this stage, could not become socialist without first being capitalist. Of course, such a way of reasoning was not to the liking of the Soviet leaders since this would have meant, *inter alia,* that those countries would have fallen into Washington's and not Moscow's sphere of influence. To avoid such a conclusion, a theory was invented, which asserted that in the absence of proletariat at home the world socialist system, i.e. first of all the USSR, could play a role of 'proletariat's dictatorship', i.e. the absence of internal conditions for socialism could be compensated by external assistance.

Mutatis mutandi, something like that is today happening with the idea of the spread of democracy. If there are no internal conditions for the emergence and especially development of sustainable democracy in a country, the European Union, the Organisation on the Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), NATO or Washington can serve the role of 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'. Of course, I do not want to equate the Soviet attempts to spread its totalitarian ideology and all the efforts, though sometimes misguided and often hypocritical, to widen the camp of democracies. If a society indeed becomes prosperous and democratic due, *inter alia,* to outside efforts, even if the latter are not wholly noble and altruistic, so be it. Moreover, there are governments, international organisations and other bodies that carry out rather painstaking and usually not very visible work helping other societies gradually democratise and modernise. My point is about the limits of external efforts in the absence of sufficient internal factors that are necessary for democratisation. It is also about the wishful thinking in the elaboration of theories that correspond to one's interests, be they altruistic or self-serving.

This, however, does not mean that in some specific circumstances external prompting or assistance for democratic reforms can not work. For example, in cases of small countries, especially if they neighbour developed democratic societies, external assistance may indeed compensate for the absence of material preconditions, insufficiency of historical traditions supportive of democracy, or relative lack of experience of domestic actors. We see this trend in the post-Cold War development of the Baltic and Central European states. The Bulgarian political scientist Ivan Krastev, observing that 'the liberal era that began in Central Europe in 1989 has come to an end' and that 'populism and illiberalism are tearing the region apart' (Krastev 2007, p. 56) (in my opinion, a slight exaggeration notwithstanding some worrying tendencies, especially in the Kaczynskis' Poland), however, incisively concludes that 'in present day Central Europe, unlike in Europe in the 1930s, there is no ideological alternative to democracy. ... The membership of the Central European countries in the EU and NATO provides a safeguard for democracy and liberal institutions' *(ibid.,* p. 58). It is not only that today liberal democratic Western Europe with its institutions that are now extended to the most of the European continent serves as a guarantor of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s the geographic closeness to the liberal democratic Europe of some societies under the Soviet sway, its example as well as timely assistance helped newly liberated societies in their efforts of building market economy and democratic institutions. However, generalisations from this experience have to be done cautiously. It would be a recipe for disaster if one were to base one's foreign policy on the 'analysis' expressed in the comment made by American diplomat Elisabeth Cheney, a daughter of the US Vice-President, that 'there was a "direct parallel" between reform movements in the Arab world and Poland's Solidarity in the 1980s, which lit the "spark of freedom" in the Soviet block' (Baxter 2006, p. 27). Such a comment is as wide off the mark as possible.

The famous Soviet dissident, who later became Israeli Government Minister, Anatoly Sharansky, whose book was allegedly read and admired by President George W. Bush, argues that 'When freedom's sceptics argue today that freedom cannot be "imposed" from outside, or that the free world has no role to play in spreading democracy around the world, I cannot but be amazed. Less than one generation has passed since the West found the Achilles heel of the Soviet Union by pursuing an activist policy that linked the rights of the Soviet people to the USSR's international standing' (Sharansky & Dermer 2004, p. 145).

Sharansky, in my opinion, makes at least two mistakes in this assertion. First, the Western efforts played, if not a minor then at least a secondary role in the collapse of the Soviet Union. Sharansky may understandably exaggerate the effect of the Western pressure on the USSR since he himself was indeed freed from a labour camp and allowed to emigrate to Israel due to such pressure. But for the country as a whole this effect was only cosmetic and from it benefited only a few individuals (though for them this may have been a hundred percent good). Internal contradictions and the disastrous economic system were the factors that forced Michael Gorbachev to attempt to radically reform the system that was not, however, amenable to any noteworthy reforms. Secondly, even if external factors would have played a more significant role in the case of the Soviet Union, this does not yet mean that they could necessarily work in the case of different countries, in other parts of the world. What may work, for instance, for Estonia, may be disaster for Tajikistan.

In that respect, Sharansky is highly critical of two prominent Israeli politicians Simon Peres and Yossi Beilin. Peres had said: 'I do not believe that democracy can be imposed artificially on another society' *(ibid.,* p. 154). Beilin had also stated that 'if we wait until [the Palestinians] become democratic, then peace will wait for our great-grandchildren, not ourselves ... My first priority is to make peace with the Palestinians, I do not believe that it is up to me to educate them' *(ibid.,* p. 183). Sharansky is a hawk and believes in force while Peres and Beilin, as politicians, are more or less dovish. The fact that the hawk seems to care more about democracy than the doves leads me to suspect that not all is so pure in the hawk's approach to democracy. Is he na'ive or is he against any concessions to the Palestinians, since he is hardly a great believer in a democratic Palestine. I do not know. He may be even a naive hawk? In any case, the sad situation in Iraq testifies to the effect that democracy cannot be exported to every country and the matter is not only that military means are not appropriate for the export of democracy. If people would find that something is good for them, that their lives improve considerably, they would not probably reject such an export even if brought to them on the bayonets. Germany and Japan that were defeated in World War II and that became democratic to a great extent thanks to long efforts of the occupying Western powers cannot, however, serve as examples for the Middle East or some other regions. What they may show is that when there are domestic factors conducive to democracy and elements that would support democratic reforms

then external efforts may sometimes indeed help those factors prevail, if in extreme circumstances even military force may be used (though the reason for the use of force should not be the export of democracy).

James Kurth, the editor of *Or bis* seems to be closer to the truth than Natan Sharansky when he writes that 'it seems clear enough that in the foreseeable future, the choice of many Muslim-majority states and most Arab ones, and our choice for them, will be limited to either an authoritarian state or not much of state at all - whether that condition be called a failed state, a turbulent frontier, civil disorder or simply anarchy' (Kurth 2007, p. 58). However, Central Asian Muslim states, or at least some of them, have much better chances to move towards democracy, especially if assisted thoughtfully and by democracy we do not necessarily mean only so-called Western style democracy or liberal democracy.

In most cases Popperian 'piece-meal engineering' and not Bolshevik's grand designs is to be preferred when one becomes at all involved in the business of effecting changes in other societies. Therefore, it is amazing and disturbing how easily some American conservatives, who are cautious about any radical changes at home, undertake to promote radical changes in places they know veiy little or nothing about. American neoconservative author Andrew Sullivan, in a self-critical article (Sullivan 2006), writing about what had gone wrong in Iraq, observes that 'the final error was not taking culture seriously enough. There is a large discrepancy between neo-conservatism's scepticism of government's ability to change culture at home and its naivety when it comes to complex, tribal, sectarian cultures abroad'. It indeed is.

Whether and to what extent outside forces can influence democratic processes in a specific country depends on many circumstances including, but not limited to, the relative strength of local pro-democratic forces, the presence and the level of material and cultural preconditions, the presence and the size of the middle class, identity based divisions (ethnic, religious, regional), the size and even geographic location of the country (e.g., whether it is next to Finland or Afghanistan) and many other variables. Thomas Carothers does not consider such factors as preconditions but rather as core 'facilitators or non-facilitators' that would make democratisation 'harder or easier' (Carothers 2007, p. 24). I would agree with that if we were to add that some combination of such 'non-facilitators' make democratisation also impossible, at least for the time being.

It is important to note that democratic reforms in societies that have not had any or veiy little previous experience with democracy are the most serious business that cannot be approached slightly. Democratic institutions, if introduced from outside without being called for domestically, as Jiirgen Habermas observes, 'disintegrate without the initiatives of a population *accustomed* to freedom' (Habermas 1996, p. 130).

7. Russia's case: from Yeltsin's 'democracy' to Putin's authoritarianism?

Before its disintegration in 1991, the Soviet Union was a stable totalitarian state with some imperial characteristics. At the end of the 1980s, when Gorbachev reforms had opened the country, both internally as well as externally, many people, in the West as well as in the former USSR, believed (now we may say, rather naively believed) that it would be possible to relatively quickly and painlessly transform this closed totalitarian society into an open, democratic, market oriented country. Unfortunately this was not to be the case. Its disintegration was not only inevitable; for many it was quite a positive development and not at all 'the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century', as President Putin put it (MSNNews, 25 April 2005). Alas, some states can exist only as autocracies, since when they open up they tend to disintegrate and attempts of the world community or regional alliances to keep them together may only prolong and increase the suffering. The fate of the USSR and maybe also the SFRY testifies to that effect; today Iraq (a multiethnic society held together by a uni-ethnic state (Kurth 2007, p. 60)) may well be on its way either to a stable dictatorship or to the disintegration into different entities with equally questionable democratic credentials. So-called 'nation-states' in Western Europe did not emerge as democracies. This probably would have been impossible since their ethnic, linguistic and religious homogenization that helped them create national economies and gradually democratize would have been impossible if, say, policies such as ethnic cleansing or forcible assimilation would have been outlawed.

The regime in the USSR was not simply authoritarian; it was, using the distinction made by Jean Kirkpatrick between 'traditional autocracies' and 'radical revolutionary' or totalitarian regimes (Kirkpatrick 1979), totalitarian. Moreover, it was a **Utopian,** artificial totalitarianism. There were two big social experiments in the twentieth century - communist and fascist experimentations, though there have been

many smaller ones and today social testing are continuing, especially when objects of them are peoples of other countries. Although these experiments were very different in many important respects, they had also several substantial aspects in common. Unfortunately, these common features were, to some extent, due to some traits of the Enlightenment heritage, especially of its emphasis on the power of reason to foresee and mould the future - a feature that both the Soviet communists and German Nazis distorted and abused to the extreme, while neglecting such important aspects of Enlightenment as democracy and individual liberties. I am saying unfortunately, since due to this link between the Enlightenment, on the one hand, and communism and fascism, on the other, the whole Enlightenment heritage has become considered, by quite a few influential authors (see, e.g., Gray 2007), in a negative light, as something that has to be discarded or overcome. This is a wrong and dangerous tendency.

Besides high levels of repression that was common to communism and fascism (how else could one realise **Utopian** projects?[12]), they both were ideological, experimental or artificial dictatorships. This makes them somewhat different from most other dictatorships that have existed in history in all parts of the world or that even today subsist in various regions. It may be politically incorrect to assert that dictatorships or authoritarian regimes may be natural, but it has certainly been true in most of the periods of human civilisation and it may well be true in some cases even today. Usually it is not by chance or historical accident that some societies have freely and democratically elected leaders while others have authoritarian rulers or outright dictators. Not only would a Mobutu or a Mugabe have little chances of ever leading a Swedish government, but any Swedish prime minister would not last long, even if a chance were given, in the highest office either in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or in Zimbabwe.

Because of such historical baggage, the transformation of the Soviet Union was to be especially difficult and painful since Soviet successor societies had to radically change their economic and political systems as well as discard completely their ideological basis that in some cases left deep voids that became filled with nationalistic or religious ideas, often in extreme forms. Some parts of the former USSR, for example, the Baltic countries, due to a series of factors, among them their past short encounters with democratic ideas and practices, small size and closeness to the EU, have had relatively fast and not so painful democratic and market-oriented evolutions. However, if your neighbours are not Finland or Sweden, but, say, states more like Afghanistan, the reform processes - political, economic and social - are much more difficult. These factors, together with historical heritage - both pre-Soviet and Soviet - have to be taken into account when one is assessing the process of reforms - their speed, success or failure - in different parts of the former Soviet Union.

The democratization and liberalization of societies with strong collectivist traditions, where often subordination to and genuflection before authorities at times turns into violent revolts against them (e.g., remember Russian peasant revolts of Stenka Razin in the seventeenth century and Yemelyan Pugachev in the next one), is like an operation in mine-clearing with many unknowns as to the nature and conditions of the mine (using Donald Rumsfeld's famous formula, there are even unknown unknowns). The *status quo* is unacceptable, while the mine-clearing operation, if carried out in a 'gung-ho' manner and without the proper expertise can blow up the whole edifice. On the other hand, neither insiders nor outsiders can have enough expertise on such political transformations due to the unique nature of every one of them. Such societies that have to negotiate an itinerary between the Scylla of authoritarian dictatorship and the Charybdis of disorder (or even civil wars) often find themselves in a vicious circle in which these two extremes alternate.

[12] Many socialist ideas were put into practice in developed Western European societies, especially in Scandinavia. This shows that not everything in Marxist thought was **Utopian.** What, however, is always **Utopian,** is the belief that a grand social theory can ever be realized in practice, as many Marxists thought. Especially disastrous for the peoples of the Russian Empire, and damaging also for Marxist thought, was Lenin's attempt to put into practice Marx's theory, which was developed in the context of and for advanced Western societies, in Russia where there were few preconditions for the realization of its non-utopian elements. Instead of creatively developing Marxism, as Soviet Marxists claimed, Lenin rather distorted it. He squeezed it into the Procrustean bed of Russian realities while at the same time ruthlessly chopping off some central ideas of Karl Marx. One of the most important of them was the point that socialism can be built only on the solid foundation of highly developed capitalism. The assertion that such foundations were created, as the Soviet Marxists claimed, in the period between the February 1917 bourgeois revolution that overthrew the Czar and the October 1917 Bolshevik takeover, i.e. within less than the nine-month period, simply defies common sense. When, as an undergraduate of Moscow University in the 1970s, I humbly expressed my doubts on this matter my mark was lowered for not being politically correct enough.

Therefore, it is not surprising that authorities, in order to avoid chaos, and not only for the personal quest for power, usually bend over backwards to strengthen authoritarian rule even further. The outside world cannot do much to change the situation. Equally damaging would be outside pressure for rapid democratization and liberalization, on the one hand, and unqualified support for dictatorial regimes and closing eyes to their often appalling human rights records (especially if these regimes are either strategic partners in the war against terrorism or control rich hydrocarbon resources), on the other. For outsiders, it is necessary to try to distinguish between genuine and more or less objective difficulties such as age-old traditions or genuine terrorist threats (and not to diminish the negative impact of these traditions or threats), on the one hand, and man-made, or rather authorities-made, problems and pretexts that serve to prolong the *status quo* favourable for the authorities, on the other. For that some kinds of principled double standards may be even needed.

Those who, from the outside, push for quick democratic reforms in societies that are not able to do that, i.e. in societies which do not have the economic, political and social capacities to rapidly carry out such reforms, whose historical baggage does not contain seeds of liberalism, are either incompetent or they are consciously trying to weaken states whose governments refuse to toe the line. Michael Cox, John Ikenburry and Takashi Inoguchi write that 'The causes of the failed transition [of Russia to democracy] are many. But the West cannot escape its fair share of the blame. It was especially foolish to demand the impossible and to believe one could construct a viable capitalism and American-style democracy together - the so-called 'market democracy paradigm' - on the fragments left behind by the Soviet communism. This was 'panglossian complacency' of the highest order and was bound to end in tears. Put bluntly, Russia simply could not bear the weight that the West placed on it' (Cox *et al.* 2006, p. 15).

However, in my view, it was not only 'panglossian complacency', though for many in the West as well as in Russia it was. For some it was the desire to enfeeble Russia, to turn it into a state that would toe the line, that would follow Washington's lead without questioning its wisdom, without pursuing its own interests, especially if the latter differ from American interests.

When Boris Yeltsin, advised by the World Bank, IMF, Washington and experts such as Professor Jeffrey Sachs, exercised 'shock therapy' on Russia, his anti-democratic behaviour (rule by decree instead of law, declaration of state of emergency, by-passing, dismissal and finally shelling of the Parliament etc.) were welcomed in Washington. Serious people there well understood (as Pinochet's repression in Chile and other experiences in Latin America had proven[13]) that 'shock therapy' and democracy are opposites. The harshest 'rebuke' came from Warren Christopher, the then Secretary of State, who stated that: 'The United States does not easily support the suspension of parliaments. But these are extraordinary times' (Klein 2007, p. 229). Indeed, when one deals with hard matters like oil, gas or dismantling of one's strategic competitor, the 'evil empire' (today, terrorism is a must), one cannot be stymied by considerations of 'soft' issues like democracy (if I am ironical here, then only a bit; what I really do not like is hypocrisy since its purpose is to fool everybody, including you). Jeffrey Sachs, has recognised with hindsight, as Naomi Klein writes, that at the beginning of the 1990s, when Russia's economy was undergoing 'shock therapy', 'many of Washington's power brokers were still fighting a Cold War. They saw Russia's economic collapse as geopolitical victory, the decisive one that ensured U.S. supremacy' *{ibid.*, p. 250).

It seems that the objectives of the US policy of advancing democracy and supporting the so-called 'colour revolutions' in strategically or resourcefully important regions are twofold: if democracy, due to American efforts, takes roots in such a country, this country becomes an ally of Washington; however, if a country fails to build a sustainable democracy it ends up in turmoil and becomes a weak entity that does not threaten American or wider Western interests. Naturally, the first scenario is preferable but the second, from the point of view of US interests, is not a complete failure either, though weak or failed states may become hotspots of terrorism.

[13] It is important to note that what the Chinese leadership suppressed in Tiananmen Square in 1989 were not exactly the shoots of Chinese democracy. There was a crucial choice between political 'shock therapy', which could have indeed ended with the country in turmoil, and the continuation of rapid economic reforms that would have been impossible to carry out using democratic means. One is advised to question why Washington supported the bloody regime of General Pinochet in Chile that overthrew (with the help of the CIA) the democratically elected government of Salvador Aliende thereby opening up the country for economic liberalisation while after the Tiananmen sanctions were applied against China. Isn't it because Pinochet Chile became an ally of Washington while China was already then seen as the main strategic competitor that cannot be allowed to become too strong?

Anatol Lieven and John Hulsman observe that 'among neoconservatives and liberal hawks, the desire to spread democracy can also take a form that is explicitly dedicated to the weakening or even destruction of other states, even when these are by no means full-fledged enemies of America' (Lieven & Hulsman 2006, p. 104), or that 'too many American Democratists (i.e. those who believe in what the US National Security Strategy of 2002 and 2006 say about the export of democracy) base their approach to the world on the assumption that they know how best to run countries of which they know nothing and whose languages they don't speak - countries that quite often they have never even visited' *(ibid.*, p. 109).

Sometimes I indeed have the feeling that the West, especially Washington, prefers to deal with weak and unstable states rather than face stable and strong but uncomfortable powers that pursue their own interests (like the US itself naturally does) and that do not act according to the 'Washington consensus' (WC) (not only in a narrow economic-financial sense but also in a wider philosophic-political sense) but prefer to reach, say, the 'Beijing consensus' (BC) or have their own parochial (no offence meant) understanding of their national interests. This does not mean that there is nothing good in the WC or that the BC is preferable to the WC; the point is that in today's globalising world there should be some consensus between the WC and BC and that none of them can be imposed. Nations, like individuals (especially young) tend to reject what they perceive as imposed on them, even if this may indeed be for their own good. The adage that the road to hell is paved with good intentions is truer in international relations more than in any other area of human activity. This is one of the characteristics of the so-called 'soft power' that it not only has to be accepted voluntarily but even more importantly it has also to be perceived as accepted voluntarily.

One should not let oneself be fooled by claims of governments of *mission civilicatrice,* as it was in the nineteenth century, or promotion of democracy, as it is called today. Peter Hopkirk writes that, besides military-strategic reasons, the nineteenth-century Great Game 'for St Petersburg … turned out to be at the same time the extension to new markets …' (Hopkirk 1990, p. 102). Some Western scholars have, however, denied that economic considerations were pushing forward Russian expansion in Central Asia, or elsewhere for that matter (see, e.g., Fuller 1992, p. 290). It is true that Russian and especially Soviet expansionism, differently from, say, British and later American expansionism, was often motivated more by political, military and ideological than economic calculations. Eastern European countries of 'people's democracy' and especially so-called 'countries of socialist orientation' (Cuba, Angola, Mozambique and Vietnam), with their Soviet imposed artificial, ineffective planned economies, were indeed more a burden on the Soviet economy than a source of any profit. For the Kremlin, not the profit but the spread of socialist ideology and Soviet political influence were primary motives of its foreign policy. However, economic factors, especially for the Czarist Russia, though less for the Soviet Union, played a role, too. Seymour Becker is therefore right when he observes that Russia's aims in Central Asia in the mid-nineteenth century were both political and economic (Becker 1968, p. 13). Of course, the same held true for British interests. It was not only that the British were apprehensive lest it lose India to the Russians, who indeed were playing around with the idea of moving much further to the south than the then limits of the Russian Empire[14] (which were finally established by the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907), but London and Calcutta also tried to expand markets for their goods as far northward as possible, and to restrict the southward penetration of Russian merchants to areas too close to the British Raj.

It is of interest to note that even today we see that Russia and Western powers, especially the United States, use economic and political tools differently in their external affairs. Stephen Kinzer observes that 'spreading democracy, Christianising heathen nations, building a strong navy, establishing military bases around the world, and bringing foreign governments under American control were never ends in themselves. They were ways for the United States to assure itself access to the markets, resources, and investment potential of distant lands.' (Kinzer 2006, p. 34). Russia, on the contrary, is often using its economic resources, especially oil and gas, for political ends. Whether it was cutting off gas supplies to Ukraine in the winter of 2005-06 or suddenly finding traces of pesticides in Georgian and Moldavian wines in order to hit traditional export items of these countries, it has all been done for political purposes. It may be said, with some qualifications of course, that Russia, for the sake of achieving its political aims, is mainly resorting to economic tools, while the United States is using political and military instruments for economic purposes.

[14] Although today we may conclude that due to impenetrable Afghanistan interposing between the Russians descending from the north and the British advancing from the south neither could the Cossacks wash their boots in the Indian Ocean, nor could Sepoys water their horses in the Siberian rivers.

Such differing attitudes may be explained by different socioeconomic systems - the capitalist, market-oriented one, and the totalitarian, politically oriented one. To simplify a bit, the first uses all available tools, including political ones, to make money, the second uses money to gain long-term political and ideological influence (I have also observed that in America one has to be a millionaire to hold a high political office while in the East it is the opposite - a high political post helps one become a millionaire). Both versions have their shortcomings. The capitalist-democratic approach cannot have any long-term vision because of regular elections and pressure from lobbying groups; its attention span is too short. The communist or totalitarian approach fails because long-term planning, based on ideological dogmas, inevitably fails. That is why the USSR for decades supported Cuba and Vietnam without having, at the end of the day, any positive outcomes; that is why the US propped up dictators who were supposed to guarantee the economic interests of American firms (for a while they often did that and for these firms, not for America as a state, that quick buck was what they were looking for), but who often were overthrown and replaced by extreme anti-Western, anti-libertarian regimes. What remains true is that national interests, though often myopic, prevail over claims of bettering the world and bringing happiness to far-away peoples. Although even in that respect one should not be too absolutist. Some nations, especially smaller Western European countries, have become to understand, and act upon this understanding, that their well-being cannot be sustainable when people in other continents continue to suffer. Although their ability to change the world is even more limited than that of great powers, their slow, methodical and piece-meal efforts are in practice more effective than grand designs for the Greater Middle East or whatever.

8. A great power dilemma: concentrating on common threats or challenging each other

It seemed, at least for a while, that with the end of the Cold War ended also attempts to use concepts such as democracy and human rights as ideological tools in political struggle between the East and the West. However, this has not been the case. Russia's often awkward attempts to retain and revive its sway over former Soviet republics (e.g., Georgia and Ukraine), the so-called 'colour revolutions' supported and instigated by the West as well as American policy of 'promotion of democracy' in most implausible places show that ideology can be and is still used to cover or colour quite mundane economic and strategic interests, i.e. hypocrites are still able to fool all for some time and many all of the time. At the same time, there are also ideologues who genuinely believe that their course, their understanding of democracy and human rights is the only correct one and universally acceptable. Moreover, oppressive autocrats and populist dictators have not disappeared and the need for genuine concern for democracy and human rights has not diminished. There is a need for hard-headed ethical realism (see, Lieven & Hulsman 2006) that does not sacrifice values for the sake of material goals but that at the same time does not inhibit cooperation between states, which, while remaining different, face common threats and challenges.

Today, some of the post-Cold War uncertainties are disappearing and the world, especially its major decision-makers, have reached a crossroads where they are facing quite a definitive dilemma: to meet together common challenges notwithstanding remaining differences in their domestic arrangements or to concentrate on these differences in the hope of overcoming them by changing internal systems of some of the key actors or their allies and neighbours?

In that respect an article by Robert Kagan (2007) in *The Times* is most indicative. The title of the article — *'Forget the Islamic threat, the coming battle will be between autocratic nations like Russia and China and the rest'* - particularly well expresses that dilemma: whether the nations having different social and political systems and cultures will, notwithstanding their differences, work closely together in the face of common threats such as global warming, shortage of energy resources and threats of terrorism or will they let differences in their domestic arrangements dominate their mutual relations. Robert Kagan, who writes that 'the future is more likely to be dominated by the ideological struggle among the great powers than by the effort of radical Islamists to restore an imagined past of piety', advises that the US 'should join with other democracies to erect new international institutions that both reflect and enhance their shared principles and goals - perhaps a new league of democratic states to hold regular meetings and consultations on the issues of the day' *(ibid.).* Kagan may well be right that such a configuration of world politics hangs on the horizon, but such a new division of the world into two hostile camps, if it indeed will happen, will come true to a great extent due to the policies of Washington and its allies if they follow Kagan's recipes.

Islamist or any other kind of terrorism is not indeed a threat to the American dominance in the world, though Bush administration's responses to it have indeed undermined and shortened the latter. Therefore, Kagan is not speaking of isolating or changing, for instance, the regimes in Saudi Arabia, Egypt or Pakistan, that have contributed to the rise of Islamist terrorism at the turn of the century, but depicting Russia and China as main enemies of democracy and the West. However, the most important issue about these two big powers is not the lack of democracy, which in any case should concern mainly the peoples of these states. The main issue is that Russia, and especially China, could threaten American dominance, if not yet in the world as a whole, then at least in several strategically important regions. This could happen whatever domestic political systems these states would have because big and strong states will inevitably have their own interests that would often be different from American interests and that in the world of scarce resources would clash with those interests.

Although the emerging confrontation between the West, led by Washington, and China and Russia is not ideological but based on conflicting interests, ideology also certainly plays a role. Israeli strategist Azar Gat insightfully observes that 'authoritarian capitalist states, today exemplified by China and Russia, may present a viable alternative path to modernity, which in turn suggests that there is nothing inevitable about liberal democracy's ultimate victory - or future dominance' (Gat 2007). Russian analyst Sergei Karaganov, similarly, observes that there is another aspect of the emerging New Epoch of Confrontation (NEC), 'namely, the emerging struggle between two models of development - liberal-democratic capitalism of the traditional West, and "authoritarian capitalism" led by the Asian "tigers" and "dragons"' (Karaganov 2007). This means that for some developing countries the Chinese or Russian models of development may appeal more than Western recipes, and consequently, these large powers will also exercise greater gravitation pull - both in economic and political domains - over those who orbit them. Small 'authoritarian capitalist tigers' like South Korea and Taiwan or repressive regimes like those in Chile under Pinochet and in Iran under the Shah that for a while guaranteed, though with considerable social and humanitarian cost, some economic development, were firmly within the American sphere of influence. They did not have much, or any, gravitation pull. Today, there is no guarantee that new emerging 'tiger cubs' will not gravitate towards China or Russia. This will not only discredit ideas of liberal democracy, but more importantly, it will further diminish American economic and political dominance in the world.

China and Russia should democratise and liberalise not because this would please the West but because this is necessary for the peoples of these countries. It would not be easier to resolve the situations over Kosovo or Darfur if Russia or China were Western style democracies which they probably will never be. Russia has strategic interests in the Balkans that could be realised with the help of Serbia and China is after Sudanese oil, which is also coveted by Washington. There is no doubt that neither China nor Russia are interested in a nuclear Iran. However, it is also clear why, say, Beijing is not as worried as Washington over Teheran's nuclear ambitions. Therefore, nobody should have been surprised when Sinopec, the biggest Chinese oil refiner, signed a $2 billion deal to develop the Yadavaran oil field in Iran ('Sinopec to develop ..." 2007). The American cooperation with and the support of authoritarian regimes during the Cold War and today shows that these are not interests of democracy in far away places that strive foreign policy. As Washington has little against friendly autocrats, Beijing or Moscow would not mind at all dealing with friendly Western style democrats (the Soviet-Finnish relations during the Cold War well demonstrate that), especially if the latter do not vociferously express their anti-Russian feelings as Georgia, in the attempt of being holier than the Pope, for example, does (this is not said to justify Russia's misdeeds against Georgia; both have their own sins).

Mostly these are not ideological or cultural differences that prevent closer cooperation between China and Russia, on the one hand, and the US and other Western democracies on the other, but quite mundane economic and strategic interests of powerful states (I would like to emphasise the word 'mainly' since cultural, religious, political and other affinities certainly play a role). Differently from smaller and weaker states that practice the policy of band-wagonning, i.e. jumping into an alliance with a stronger leader, bigger and powerful states rather choose balancing. Russia under President Yeltsin tried to do some band-wagonning by following the West closely. This, however, brought little good to Russia. Yeltsin's first Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev was, in contradistinction to Andrei Gromyko - a long-time Soviet Foreign Minister (who became known as Mr 'Nyet (No) in the West), called Mr Da (Yes, Sir). As Dimitri Simes, the President of *The Nixon Center* and Publisher of *The National Interest*, writes, 'despite numerous opportunities for strategic cooperation over past 16 years, Washington's diplomatic behavior has left

unmistakable impression that Russia as a strategic partner has never been a major priority. ... The Clinton administration in particular appeared to view Russia like post-war Germany or Japan - as a country that could be forced to follow U.S. policies and would eventually learn to like them' (Simes 2007). He adds that under the fa?ade of friendship with Russia Clinton administration officials believed that Moscow should unconditionally accept the American concept of national interests of Russia *(ibid.).*

Ivan Krastev has a valid point when he observes that the key element of the model of 'directed democracy' of Russia under Yeltsin 'was that the sources of the legitimacy of the regime lay in the West. Imitating democracy assumes that the imitator accepts the superiority of the model he is imitating. Being lectured by the West was the price paid by the Russian elite for using the resources of the West to preserve that elite's power' (Krastev 2007). Today's Russian 'sovereign democracy', propagated mainly by the Kremlin Deputy Chief of Staff Vladislav Surkov, is to a great extent a reaction to Yeltsin period's humiliation suffered due to the Western insensitive and incompetent meddling in Russian affairs.

Today Russia is often over-reacting in its attempts to balance American influence in various parts of the world. However, what has to be understood is that if, say, Georgia or Ukraine can be close American allies and follow Washington's lead (not because they are democratic but because their governments are pro-Western), neither China, nor Russia, whatever their domestic arrangements, will follow the Washington consensus (WC), if it is not in their interest. And their interests and perceptions, as we see in today's world, may often differ from the interests of the US or other Western countries. It is only natural that in human, and even more in international, affairs interests often and inevitably conflict. This is so not only because humans and their societies are competing for limited resources, as they indeed are (think of today's competition for energy resources and control over pipelines). As John Gray writes, 'Conflict is a universal feature of human life. It seems to be natural for human beings to want incompatible things - excitement and quiet life, freedom and security, truth and the picture of the world that flatters their sense of self-importance. A conflict free existence is impossible for humans, and wherever it is attempted the result is intolerable to them' (Gray 2007, p. 17). A harmonious world is impossible since harmony in social systems can be only temporary. As one of the tenets of Marxist (and Hegelian too) thought claims, development occurs as a result of resolution of contradictions, whose resolution, in turn, creates new contradictions that need to be resolved. Therefore, permanent harmony would also mean permanent decay.

What has been said about China and Russia is also true of India; the stronger it becomes, the more independent will be its foreign policy. Size matters.

Neither China's nor Russia's major problem is the lack of democracy and human rights. Therefore, the focus of the Western criticism of the Government of Russia on its policies in Chechnya or how it deals with political opponents like Garry Kasparov, who in any case had no chances of success, or the one-sided criticism of China over Tibet and the red-carpet welcome offered to the Dalai Lama show that the West, and especially Washington, concentrating on ideological issues, blowing them out of proportion, may be moving towards a new great power confrontation. For Russia major problems are corruption, high crime rate, increasing social divisions between super-rich and poor, while China's most dangerous weakness lies in its environmental crisis. More democracy or liberalism, though obviously needed for both of these great powers, will not help resolve these most burning problems. On the contrary, as the experience of Yeltsin's Russia has proven, Western offered recipes may well aggravate dangerous situations. Only great power cooperation, not confrontation, can realistically lead to a safer and more prosperous world that more effectively tackles common threats and challenges. What would be completely unrealistic is an expectation that China or Russia will become more like America because Washington says so.

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