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The End of History, Culture of Megalopolis and Geopolitics of Polis

Abstract

“The End of History” that Fukuyama predicted did not mean only the final triumph of liberal democracy, but also the final triumph of the Western civilization. Western values are transferred through the Culture of Megalopolis. This Culture aims to be globally accepted, universal and therefore able to assimilate all Poleis that exist in the world. However, it has been shown that traditional societies do not accept the Culture of Megalopolis because of the perception that it would lead to gradual political, economic and cultural peripherization. This is how the Culture of Polis, as an element of geopolitical positioning of regional powers is formed.

Keywords: Culture of Megalopolis, geopolitics, Polis, regional powers, The End of History, postmodernity.

Introduction

Transition between two centuries brought a dramatic quake in the international politics. The consequences of this are also visible in the field of international security (Fukuyama 1989: 3-18).² According to the Fukuyama’s opinion at the time, there was no adequate opposition to liberal democracy and what was waiting in the future of humanity is not a renewal of the old conflicts, but rather focus on solving the world’s economic and social problems (Fukuyama 2002). In the wider context of speaking, for him the end of ideological evolution of the mankind has brought The End of History in the form in which we knew the

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2 The significance of this quake is described best by the title of Fukuyama’s book “The end of History and the Last Man”, published in 1992. The essay by the same title was published in the magazine “The National Interest” three years earlier.

historical science until now. Although twenty five years later he preserved the same idea that all countries will sooner or later accept the liberal-democratic form (“all countries will ... get on that escalator”), Fukuyama is less of an optimist than before (Fukuyama 2014).

Alexander Dugin states that Fukuyama’s settings are “theoretically flawless” and that “all in all he was right” because “after winning the competition with fascism and communism, and was first to make the transition from modern industrial into the next, post-industrial era, liberalism was left alone with itself. /.../ All that turned out to be non-modernity— by its shape or even by its deep unconscious content – classified as politically incorrect, forever yesterday, outdated” (Dugin 2009: 26-27). However, the question remains whether the triumph of liberal democracy is also “the end of history”.

Dugin warns that we live in a historical period in which the breakdown of paradigm occurs. This is a situation comparable to the one when so-called New Age (modernity) replaced traditional societies (pre-modernity) (Dugin 2009: 23-24). Modernity “as a paradigm that was given birth by the Western Europe in the New Age, represented a rejection of traditional society. It is an alternative concept brought forth by the anti-traditional and post-traditional society that has developed a system of criteria in which science, experience, technical development, rationalism, criticism and individualism replaced theology, collectivity, faith, dogmatism, holism, intuition, ontologism of the traditional world” (Dugin 2009: 23).

Western dominance over world politics during the period of modernity resulted in a relationship often described as “the West and the Rest” or “the West against the rest” (Ferguson 2012; Hantington 2000). During entire period of modernity West has influenced the overall development of countries and societies across the globe. However, the difference in relation to the time of the “crash of paradigms” is that the “West” undoubtedly shows itself as dominant, but not as the only one, the universal.

Western civilization has influenced other civilizations, but the results of these effects were different in different parts of the world. Nikolay Danilevsky used agricultural terminology and descriptions to explain the process of transferring values from one civilization to another. He concludes that this can be done in different ways: by transplanting, by fertilization and by grafting (Danilevski 1994: 109-113). The

rich historical heritage and solid traditional base of other civilizations were important fact in determining whether in the encounter with the West's "fertilization or grafting" of their values, new and special (hybrid) values and moral norms were to be created. This process resulted in one way in China, in a quite different way in India, and in something different in Japan.

The triumph of liberalism over communism in the Cold War did not just mark the final victory of one over the other ideological and theoretical concept, but a "final" victory of the West. Ever since, the term "west" is equate to the terms "global" and "universal". Western values are increasingly being "transplanted" and rarely "fertilized" or "grafted" onto other civilizations. Fukuyama's "the end of history" without a doubt means not only the final triumph of liberal democracy, but also the final triumph of Western civilization and Western values.

At a time when Fukuyama wrote his work everything indicated that something like this can happen, because one of the characteristics of that time was a kind of a "voluntary colonization" in various countries. This was manifested by a rapid Westernization even in societies that did not belonged to the West in any way, or had a very limited and one-way communication with the West throughout history.

Post-modernity had its boom with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism. This has left the United States as the world's only superpower; assuming a key role in the world. World political system has become unipolar, the time of Pax Americana in which cultural values of Megalopolis are being spread had begun.

The Culture of Megalopolis

What is the Culture of Megalopolis? As a contrary to the concept of Polis (by the term Polis here we mean the "great spaces" or "integrated entities" which will be formed around certain regional powers) that was usually associated with the period of modernity, when the key factors of international relations were people and nations, with their cultural heritage, religious and moral values, organizational structure, national ideas, ideologies and geopolitical objectives in the period of post-modernity the concept of Megalopolis is being developed. "To talk from the perspective of Polis means to try to build a collective

identity of the city to which a soul is attributed /.../ That, of course does not mean that inside such Polis there are no social stratification, but it does mean that towards the Other Polis is set as a entity, because its inhabitants, regardless of the different group and individual identity, when confronted with the Other share the same fate. This presents the main difference between Polis and Megalopolis: for the elite of Polis (Capital or City) their fellow citizens are considered as human beings with which they share the place in the same boat. For the elite of Megalopolis, however, the real residents are just particles of non-individualized bio-mass, and in that way utterly dehumanized: hence in the concept of Megalopolis there is something truly antihuman /.../ This is the reason why urban discourse does not want to accept the concept of Polis or collective identity that simultaneously protects the dignity of the individual and allows him to communicate with the Other within that identity and not opposite or against it; allows him to develop his own creative energy. This concept is a nightmare for urban discourse, because it exposes its antihuman background and neo-feudal hierarchy in which money plays a role of origin, the hierarchy which is constantly seeking to justify and legitimize” (Vladušić 2013: 121)

Megalopolis should assimilate all Poleis in the world as a kind of a melting pot. A new cultural form would be used to create a single, global society. This is presented as an urban discourse, the only one that is capable of ensuring development, technological progress, improvement of living standards and so on. The Culture of Megalopolis does not imply the existence of the state, nor of the regional powers or regional geopolitical players. It promotes the unipolar political system, with a single, global government and the West as a “global metropolis”.

Instead of ideological and theoretical concepts that have existed in the period of modernity (nationalism, communism, liberalism), an entirely new concept – the Culture of Megalopolis, is being developed on the foundations of Western liberal universalism! The first step towards the global spread of the Culture of Megalopolis was the inevitable westernization, as a radical split with every kind of traditionalism. The spread of liberal democracy is only a stage in westernization, which occurs as a precondition for further expansion of the Culture of Megalopolis.

Alain Touraine properly observes that those who were opposed to globalization, despite well-founded criticisms, did not realize that it is

precisely during this period that the multicultural sensibility was established (Turen 2011: 35). Communication between the West and the rest of the world was a two-way street, so the Western values also went through some changes. Therefore one can say that Culture of Megalopolis is also shaped by other influences. However, from the point of view of the “rest”, “the end of history”, as Fukuyama explained it, means the beginning of unipolarity and Western domination - political, military, economic and cultural. This emphasizes the western dimension of Megalopolis culture. This is particularly noticeable since the beginning of the Second Gulf War, when the phase of “abandoning multiculturalism” by the United States came into use, causing an increase in anti-Americanism and anti-Western sentiments in many parts of the world (Turen 2011: 35-36).

During the 1990’s there was noticeably a rapid westernization in many Islamic countries. This created the impression that the breakdown of the traditional Muslim society will happen shortly. Fukuyama remarks that not even Islam, despite its vitality based on a large demographic growth, can resist a liberal democracy and its ideas. He predicts that the traditional society will suffer defeat even in the Muslim countries (Fukuyama 2002: 69-72).

This phenomenon of accelerated westernization in traditional societies was also noticed in the late seventies by Alexander Zinoviev. He prophetically warned of the tragic consequences that such a process can create. In addressing the issue of relationship that traditional societies have towards the “Western values”, he said that the ultimate goal of “westernization” was not to create economic and social welfare in these countries or regions, as it was represented (reason why, for the most part, the others wanted to imitate Western countries and accept “Western values”). According to him the goal of westernization was to bring these countries to the point where they would lose their capability for individual development and to include them in the western sphere of influence, but not as equal and powerful partners but as satellites or in other words as colonies of the new type. These countries under the Western rule are intended for the inferior or secondary role (Zinoviev 2002: 308).

In spite of Fukuyama’s optimistic announcements, the practice has shown that Islamic society is not ready to limit itself to a negligible role, because of a perception that this would lead to a gradual political,

economic and cultural peripheralization. Therefore, the resistance of Muslim countries toward the western liberal universalism grew over the years, becoming tougher and stronger. This also meant the birth of resistance towards the Culture of Megalopolis.

A similar process is taking place in other traditional societies (for example, during 2014, due to the development of the Ukrainian crisis, this became apparent in Russia), although in some cases it is not so visible. Therefore, with the exception of the western countries, the Culture of Megalopolis is not becoming a dominant cultural model. In other parts of the World this culture does leave its imprint and affects development of forms of social and moral norms, but it is not becoming dominant.

In contrast to the aspirations to spread the postmodern values of Western civilization, to make the Culture of Megalopolis generally accepted, a policy of Polis is starting to take a leading role in different parts of the world. Regional powers are being born (in some cases it is more accurate to say that some powers are making a comeback onto the world stage), the regional geopolitical players such as China, India, Brazil, Russia, South Africa, players who have the ambition to transform the structure of the world political system into a multipolar one.

Liberal democracy did win in most of these countries, and in cases like China, where we cannot speak of liberal democracy, there is at least liberal capitalism. However, it is noticeable in the actions of these countries that acceptance of liberal democracy and liberal capitalism did not contribute to their “incorporation” and “integration” into the unipolar world. Just the contrary, it has created diametrically opposite tendency. Just like in the case of Islamic traditional society, many other traditional societies did not want to limit themselves with the peripheral role.

Strategic striving of regional powers toward creation of a multipolar world is shaped within new economic trends that are manifested in time of unipolarity. In a number of countries and regions, the unipolar world, westernization and entering into the world of global liberal capitalism did not bring any economic improvement, on the contrary, it caused stagnation or even led to some new economic problems. In the mid-seventies Immanuel Wallerstein distinguished four spheres of the world economy: metropolis, semi-periphery, periphery and the rest of the world (Wallerstein 1974). Controlling “symbolic economy” and financial flows allowed metropolis to direct entire world economy

leaving regional powers, in the best case, with the possibility of becoming semi-peripheries. The post-Cold War period was marked with the explosion of so-called financial or symbolic economy, as opposed to the “real” economy. Instead of trade of goods and services the motor of the global economy became the constant flow of money. According to Alexander Zinoviev in the sphere of the world economy “real” and “symbolic” economies became significantly independent of each other (Zinoviev 2002: 87-88).

The outcome is that in the first decade of the XXI century we can say that the members of BRIKS, Mexico, Turkey and Indonesia... belong to the economic periphery. Wallerstein remarks that what was effective for the economic metropolis (western metropolis, wider center of the unipolar world) turned out ineffective in the economic periphery and economic rest of the world.

The global liberal capitalism, through which postmodernity was manifested, was not geopolitically neutral, but aimed at establishing a clear hierarchy and a long-term preservation of unipolar structure of the world political system. Disagreements, and even open conflicts between the sole superpower and regional geopolitical players do not come out of ideological reasons but out of reasons such as: the interests of big capital, security issues, interests concerning energy security, control of key trade corridors and resource potentials (water, arable land, minerals and energy).

Geopolitics of Polis

The Culture of Megalopolis, seen from the perspective of regional geopolitical players, could also be understood as an instrument to conquer the regional powers. The postmodern Culture of Megalopolis “highlights projects of: globalization (globalism) - against classic bourgeois state; planetary cosmopolitanism - against nation; complete indifferentism or individual myths creation in the context of neo-spiritualism - against strict guidelines on secularity; arbitrariness of establishing their own relationships with others by each individual - against humanistic strategy of human rights“ (Dugin 2009: 35).

Just as modernity was focused on overthrowing identity of pre-modernity, the post-modernity is trying to destroy the identity of modernity. Culture of Megalopolis is encouraging the creation of a system in

which the West would be the “global metropolis”. The West is the center, the functioning core that defines and transmits paradigms of values, economy, etc. These paradigms are becoming “globally accepted”. According to Thomas Barnett, the rest of the world is divided into three zones: the zone of connectedness, the not-integrating gap and the zone of disconnectedness (Barnett 2004).

To some extent, this thesis overlaps with Wallerstein’s conclusions about the „metropolis of the global economy“ and three zones with different degree of integration and development. Certainly, this kind of a setup also means that the existing collective security arrangements must be changed, entirely new security system is needed. Consequently, from the perspective of regional powers, one can see a direct link between the spread of values of megalopolis culture and new security threats.

This is why even thou the cause of conflict is essentially not an ideological one (or it does not need to be) the geopolitical positioning of new regional powers-Poleis is based on creating distance from the Culture of Megalopolis.

In a time of collapse of paradigms and disappearance of modernity, Poleis will try to find their own paradigms and to define new patterns of behavior. Some values, such as free elections or market principles in the economy are accepted, but they can be used in a way that would strengthen their own positions and help them in designing their own development policy instead of contributing to the spread of cultural values of Megalopolis. In any case, poleis will try to solve their own economic and social problems in accordance with their own interests.

Geopolitics implies political and economic interconnection of interest in a particular area, but geopolitical unites must also have a certain closeness in a sphere of social values and moral forms. Due to the synthetic character and multidisciplinary nature of geopolitics, it can be concluded that this scientific discipline presents a systematic approach in identifying zones of control, influence and interest in a particular area, in order to ensure state security, social development and economic stability. Development of Polis culture provides continual and systematic penetration of regional powers influences in their immediate neighborhood (in this way zones of geopolitical control are formed) providing them, in a long term, with a state security, social development and economic stability.

China, India, Brazil and Russia are already working in this direction, looking for the answer in the Culture of Polis. Therefore, the Culture of Polis arises as a tool of Polis geopolitics, and at the same time, it must provide the answers to many questions to which the Culture of Megalopolis does not give a satisfactory answer.

Instead of the primarily ideological struggle that took place in the Cold War, present confrontation line is established between the Culture of Megalopolis, as a tool of soft power used by the “global core” and the geopolitics of Polis. This confrontation will have four dimensions: values, economy, resources and security. Thus there is a conflict between capital of Megalopolis versus capital of Polis; resources of Polis will resist the possibility to fall into the hands of Megalopolis institutions; the battle for the strategic positioning in the various points of the world will therefore follow (control of traffic corridors, important strategic points for defense or attack, etc.).

Even two decades ago, Samuel Huntington warned about possibility of conflict between the “global metropolis” or “global core” and regional geopolitical players. However, unlike civilizations, as Huntington defines them, Polis geopolitics can be developed by a greater number of regional powers from one civilization matrix. Instead of a single Islamic civilization few regional powers emerged with their own Polis geopolitics - Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia... Some of them have irreconcilable interests in certain areas and very complex history of mutual relations. Hence there is a violent confrontation between Iran and Saudi Arabia on the one hand and Turkey and the Arab states on the other hand.

The question that remains open is: how will certain Polis geopolitics look like? This is a difficult question to answer. To a large extent it depends on the role and intensity of traditional values and patterns, but also on religious and moral principles already built in different societies (civilizations). It depends on how much the Culture of Megalopolis will be able to “fertilize” or “graft” new values to the already existing values of Polis. In the end, it depends on what kind of relationship will be established between the Culture of Megalopolis and geopolitics of a particular Polis-whether it will be cohabitation, coexistence or it will cause conflicts on a larger scale. In accordance with the foregoing, it can be concluded that we live in an unpredictable world, in which conflicts between different regional geopolitical players can happen relatively frequently, a world in which there will be frequent earthquakes within

Poleis. Poleis will be placed under pressure of megalopolis, while attempting to define their own values and norms.

Seen from this angle, Fukuyama's forecast about focusing on solving world's economic and social problems seems too optimistic. Today's world is less stable and less predictable than the world that existed during the Cold War, and tomorrow's world will, presumably, be less stable and less predictable than the one we live in now. The victory of liberal democracy and liberal capitalism, therefore, did not mark the "end of history", in the context in which it is discussed here.

On the contrary, instead of strengthening of unipolar political system in a world with the ultimate goal of forming a unified world government, we are faced with development of different geopolitics of poleis, which tend to form a multipolar structure of the world political system. A change in the structure of the world political system has never been without major earthquakes and conflicts. One of the factors that will now play an important role are Culture of Megalopolis and geopolitics of different Poleis.

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