

**THE CONTOURS OF THE FUTURE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE
WORLD'S CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
“PROBLEMS AND WAYS OF SETTLING MODERN INTERNATIONAL
CONFLICTS”**

An empire building, not a peaceful world

Since roughly 20 years, we have entered into an era of post-modernity. Since a few years, we are in an era of post-truth and post-democracy. On the international level, we are supposed to leave the era of post-hegemony in order to enter into a multipolar world. Maybe! That’s possible that the scholars who are inventing words to describe our new realities are right. But for me, this is only new words concealing old realities behind a cloud of dust.

And the sad reality of our times, despite all we can say about IT revolution, new industrial transformation, economy 4.0, digitalization and robotizing, the only crude reality is that we are entering in a new merciless competition for the world domination. The planet is limited, its resources are limited, markets for international corporations are limited, climate is changing, underdeveloped peoples as well as more powerful nations aspire to be ruled by themselves. The Western hegemony under the US leadership is under pressure. In that context, the tensions and conflicts between peoples, religions, ethnic groups, social classes can only grow on the long term. Culture and information become more and more instruments of power, they are embedded in the global fight for world dominance.

To understand the current state of the world, the notion of a new Cold War is not the best one. This concept sounds very well to our ears but it is confusing and leads to a misunderstanding. To understand what is happening nowadays, we have

not to look in the recent history but in the deep past, in the long history, when the Roman Republic was decaying and transforming itself into a world empire.

In my view, we are indeed in a period of transition between what we could name the “United States imperial Republic” and the “New American Empire”. The terms are important because the goals, ambitions and resources of an imperial republic are quite different than the goals of an empire.

The goals of an imperial republic are unlimited, unrestricted. An imperial republic is aimed at a total hegemony over the world. It pretends to impose its moral and political values to the entire humankind which has not the chance to share its generous views. It was the case of the Soviet Union, which wanted to bring its communist values to the rest of the world as it was the case of the United States liberal democracy which wanted also to impose the supposed benefits of its own system to the world suffering under the communist rule. This was the ancient times of the Cold War, which was the confrontation of two imperial republics.

After the self-collapse of Soviet Union, the US liberal republic has known a brief decade of complete hegemony. The neoconservatives and liberal democrats in Washington have briefly thought that they had won the Cold War and imposed the liberal democracy and free market to the entire rest of the world, as Francis Fukuyama wrote in his book on the end of the History and the triumph of the liberal democracy values.

President Bush the First and Bush the Second, President Clinton the Husband and would-be President Clinton the Wife as well as president Obama were the interpreters of this imperial hegemony will. For them, Russia was a stone in their shoes and they always looked to break it - as suggested by Zbigniew Brzezinski Great Chessboard in 1996. But as it was not successful, they tried to submit it or transform it, by force like today with economic sanctions, but especially by tricky

softpower means, into a western liberal democracy and free market economy dominated by United States multinationals and ruled by representatives of a globalist oligarchy.

In that view, the European Union, dominated by good willing Angel Merkel Germany and a new anti-Gaullist, Sarkozist and Hollandist France which wanted urgently to join NATO commandment and play the role of the loyal supporters of US interests against their traditional enemies like Kadhafi's Libya and Assad's Syria, the European Union has been transformed into the proxy relay of the western values, liberal democracy and free market economy in Europe and Ukraine but also in the rest of the world, and in Africa and Middle East especially.

But the election of President Trump has broken this project and well-oiled narrative.

That's the reason why Trump is so contested in America and why the US russophobia is so high nowadays. Trump's election has announced a big shift in the American policy and the renunciation of the goals of the imperial republic, i.e. a total hegemony on the world, for a more pragmatic and convenient domination on a limited portion of this world. Trump - as Obama did more soberly before him - has recognized the rising of China and the reemergence of Russia as given facts. He shares the view that present United States must focus itself on its core territory (whose infrastructures and lower social classes are in despair) and its zone of influence, in rough words, Europe, Latin America, Israel and Pacific vassal states like Japan, South Korea or Thailand. That is this point which hurts the neoconservatives like John Mc Cain and the liberal democrats like the Clintons. They cannot accept this renunciation to world hegemony and they have to make the mourning of their dreams. That's the reason why they cannot pardon to Trump, who has broken their Game Boy.

But let me explain what are the characteristics of an empire and what does it mean for Russia.

The biggest difference between an imperial republic and an empire is stability. Empires look for stability while imperial republics look for conquests, new territories, adventures, revolutions. Instability is their motto and their reason to live. Imperial republics are always subjected to frustration, their aspiration for power is never finished while empires can admit their own limits if they are not threatened inside their core territory. The democratic confrontation of people, political parties, cultural differences, religious divides inside an imperial republic maintain the pot in a permanent boiling state: the cap can always explode and the conquest of new spaces is a condition of their existence, it doesn't matter what it is: cultural achievements, religious beliefs or physical territories.

If you look the history, the roman conquests have been done by republican generals and oligarchs and not by emperors. The Roman Empire created by Augustus has abandoned the idea to conquer new territories and to submit new peoples in order to keep the existing state of things and was quite happy to administrate it and manage it in the boundaries established by the old Republic.

In that perspective, we can consider Trump as a visionary pioneer of the new emerging American empire. The history of the coming years will tell us if he will be seen as a successful genius like Emperor Augustus, who was able to put an end to the imperial republic and to create a long term empire. Or if he will be a new Julius Caesar, who wanted to create a new monarchy but was finally killed by the last partisans of the decaying Republic.

To ensure stability, empires need to fulfill two basic conditions: prosperity and security. In order to keep the people quiet and in a permanent state of moderate

social temperature, empires must be able to provide to its peoples a minimum standard of living and comfort. In Roman times, this capacity was named *panem and circenses*. In other terms, as long as they can provide bread and games, food and entertainment, the empires can survive during centuries: their legitimacy is not in question.

The second condition is security. Within the empire, the citizens - citizens don't exist anymore in an empire because they are not allowed to participate to the governance of the empire but it is very important to keep alive the fiction of democracy as Augustus perfectly did - must enjoy a reasonable level of personal safety. Domestic police must be strong and efficient: pirates, thieves, fraudulent speculators and social troublemakers must be condemned or publicly crucified like Jesus Christ or Spartacus.

They also can be given to lions in order to ensure a good spectacle for the joy and the edification of the masses: everybody can applaud and see what he has to expect if he violates the imperial order. Former Presidents Milosevic, Saddam Hussein and Muammar Kadhafi have played this role with a great success on the international arena these last years. They deserve our gratitude because they died with the honors of the fight and gave to western masses a great and entertaining spectacle. President Assad was also requested to play such a big role but he was more resilient or luckier because he was rescued by an unexpected strongman called Vladimir Putin. Let see if King Jong-Un will agree to be the next candidate to be sacrificed in the great circus of the American empire under the unanimous applauds of the western media. As the show must go on, we can be sure that other candidates will be selected one day or another one.

As you I can understand with these examples, in order to keep domestic peace, empires often need to wage wars outside their borders. In order to keep a low degree of violence inside the domestic area, empires have the necessity to expel

their violence outside their walls. That's the reason why an empire is never in peace with its neighbors for a long time. It must wage a war at least at each human generation, every 20 or 25 years, but not more. During the imperial republic time, the necessity to wage wars is much higher: if you look the 230 years of American history, you can observe America has waged a war every 3-4 years.

The good news, if we can say, is that the more United States will change into an empire, the less they will be tempted to wage frequent wars. If Trump is successful to manage to transform America into an empire, the risk of wars will be reduced by 3 or 4. But it will not disappear at all. As they are intrinsically authoritarian, empires need strong military forces as they need strong police forces. The bad news is that these wars, if less frequent, will never end as we can see in the NATO commitment in Afghanistan. An empire can only win a war. If it loses the war, the empire would disappear.

In that case, it has only two deadly solutions: be invaded by the winner of the war or being overthrown by a revolution like in Russia in 1917. Empires can only lose battles but not wars. The Roman Empire has lost many and many battles but not a single war until it was fully conquered after seven centuries of existence. Same for the Byzantine Empire, which was able to survive during one thousand years. The genius of Greek emperors consisted to avoid losing wars and, if it happened, to be able to transform this unfortunate defeat into an honorable peace agreement thanks to a skillful propaganda.

Empire also means:

- the domination goals on a more delimited territory with growing vassalization of its members. In fact (but not in words), an empire doesn't recognize allies or friends, but only vassal states. That's what is now in course in Latin America and

Europe with the end of South American leftist governments and the full submissiveness of European Union to American policies.

- a slow but regular decay of democracy. We are entering in a phase of post-democracy and the establishment of an oligarchic state with a democracy limited to local level, i.e. municipalities and regional governments.

- an astute management of violence. As an empire is less and less democratic and more and more authoritarian, it has a problem in the management of violence. In order to keep domestic peace inside its borders, it has to expel its own violence outside its borders, in the outskirts of its territories, for instance in the Muslim countries and Arab world. In order to keep its internal stability, it has to manage the instability in the outskirts, actually the Arab world. This special exportation of violence has been theorized by a Muslim thinker Ibn Khaldun who has tried to explain the success and failure of the Muslim caliphs. Ibn Khaldun has showed that the legitimacy of an empire relays on its capacity to bring prosperity and security to its population. For achieving it, it has to encourage internal exchanges of goods and services and to expel insecurity outside. In other terms, an empire needs permanent wars outside of its territory: that's the deep meaning of the actual War on Terror or wars against supposed Rogue States driven by United States.

- an empire, by definition, is not national. A nation could give birth to an empire, that's a fact. But as soon a national republic transformed itself into an empire, it cannot be anymore a nation. An empire is an addition of different nations, religions, cultures and so on. An empire is cosmopolitan by essence, by definition. It could be a melting pot or an open market to migrations, which obliged it to be authoritarian in order to manage xenophobic reactions.

- a new organization of labor with the creation of a new type of serfdom. In the new imperial order, which is deeply oligarchic, the economy tends to become more and more concentrated into the hands of a small group of entrepreneurs which are becoming richer and richer. That is exactly what happened after colonial wars of the Roman Republic: the distribution of land to the citizen-soldiers and small farms have been replaced by a concentration of land and the appearance of big landowners, called the *latifundia*.

In that sense, equality and middle classes are disappearing in order to be replaced by only two classes: the big owners and oligarchic class at one side and the popular masses reduced into a vulnerable and available working class, or even unemployed class like in the Roman Empire, when the lower classes were supported by public distribution of bread and grains.

This new economic order is also promoting a privatization of the State. Public services and usual state responsibilities are step by step privatized or delegated to private hands as it was the case under the Roman Empire or the French monarchy. Armies are actually privatized through the so-called professional armies with paid soldiers. The citizen-soldier and mass conscription are disappearing. And soon, in the next decades, the fiscal services will also be privatized under the pretext of a better efficiency of the private sector.

- an empire is more stable and more predictable than a Republic but also more dangerous.

For Russia, it means that if Trump is successful, it will bring a temporary respite for her, but only temporary. In the long term, the dangers of a direct war and direct confrontation are bigger with an empire than with a Republic.

In that kind of world, the true culture can only decay. There is no more the room for creativity, independence and breakthroughs. It can only use old patterns or new trivial and socially insignificant novelties. Mass culture is predominant and

spectacular but the true culture is limited to small circles of thinkers or artists who keep the lamp lighted but only for limited audiences.