

THE ROAD TO INSTABILITY

Maxim Shevchenko



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Western democracy, as it is presently known, is nearly irrelevant. This is true, at least, for Western Europe. It is perfectly clear now that both Western European and American political parties have been effectively transformed into professional associations of politicians that regard politics as nothing more than a job. They are far removed from the people, while representing the interests of major financial lobbyists and employing powerful PR-technologies in the mass media as instruments for brainwashing the populace. Although they tend to reflect the

general accepted view of reality that is characteristic of Western middlebrows, they do not correlate with the people's aspirations. This is how factitious problems of migration ultimately come about. The real national ethnic and religious communities existing in Western Europe are, for some unknown reason, called migrants, in spite of the fact that some Algerians and Moroccans have been living in France for five generations. Prominent Moroccan and Algerian poets like Tahar Ben Jelloun are part of the glory of French poetry. Upon travelling in northern France, you can also see huge Moroccan cemeteries. During World War One, Moroccans were called to arms and they died for the freedom of France while fighting against Germany; a few hundred thousand of these soldiers were killed in this war. These Muslim natives of Northern Africa were considered as citizens of the French Republic, although they were never formally given citizenship. However, in times of peace, such people seem to be of no use.

The natives of former European colonies can claim Europe as their own just as much as the so-called Europeans. Besides, modern European middlebrows are no longer the 'classic' type of Europeans: they like Coca-Cola, they consume American goods and make use of all sorts of media technologies that are universal and cosmopolitan. By asserting their so-called European identity, they are simply standing up for their comfortable living.

Western society is trying to protect itself from the real mankind, which has to deal with real problems. It does so by escaping into a

virtual world, which rests on three pillars. The first of these is financial speculation, because it is obvious that neither the euro nor the dollar are supported by European or American economics no matter how powerful they are. This is virtual money backed by virtual financial-speculative economies. The second pillar is the mighty concentration of information assets on a one-lane information highway, stacked in just one hand. Third, there is still a substantial gap between European and non-European societies due to differences in the cost of labour. It is impossible to explain why a teacher in France earns 2000 euros per month, let us suppose, while a teacher in Egypt who works no less than his French colleague receives a salary of only 200 dollars.

Modern Western democracy is in the grip of a terrible crisis because Western societies are currently sustained at the expense of the rest of the world. When we speak about the problems of migration, we tend to overlook the problems of expansion. Western 'golden billion' treats the rest of the world as a resource for its own trouble-free living. This 'golden billion' *de facto* consists only of the ruling elites, not of peoples or countries. This is why Western democracy is a virtual lie. It is based on false democratic procedures. Real democracy only exists in Third World countries and those that rank close to it. Democracy in the Western world is pretty much a virtual thing.

Real democratic institutions are being formed right now. There are definite political forces in both the Western and in the Islamic world, as well as in other regions, which are

on a mission of consolidating political will. The problem lies in the question of how politics can be best correlated directly with the interests of real people, and just who are these real people? Why does a tiny group of people tend to define the unified global social and political climate? How can the direct representation of the interests for millions of working people — peasants, engineers, and bank administrators — be ensured? This is the task of democracy.

As ethnic and religious communities are continuously evolving, we should aim to determine modes of direct democracy for their direct representation in government institutions. The ruling authorities need to establish a dialogue with the segment represented by the political opposition, which is inspired by ethnic and religious views. We need to find new forms of political representation, which would provide an opportunity for all active people (who reject terror against civilians) to promote their political stance.

With the proliferation of communication tools such as *Facebook* and other media, I expect to see the emergence of new networking formats. The present elites do not yet know what to do with all that. **Even such powerful instruments as television or mass media empires might simply fail at any given moment.** The internet provides us with the opportunity to affirm that we do not trust the official propaganda and that we have a worldview of our own. Moreover, this worldview is capable of bringing millions of people together in the blink of an eye. This is not the same thing as a million virtual voters; it could be a group of very active people with their own firm beliefs, political and religious views, or national and ethnic background. This is pretty serious. The West does not yet know what to do with such coordinated expressions of popular will. President Obama is trying to outrun this train by launching processes of democratisation in America. However, by doing this, he is actually unleashing shifts in representation, which have the potential to undermine the internal stability of what is perhaps the most stable country in the Western world. ■

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A WORD FOR BRICS



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Over the last two decades, neo-liberal policies have met with their expected and inevitable social and political consequences. We saw resistance movements emerge in all parts of the world as wealth became more and more unequally distributed. Conversely, striking successes were obtained in Latin America, successes which remain to this day. These successes were based on a shift from puppet regimes propped up by the godfathers of ‘democracy’ to electoral openness, accompanied by a concerted effort to disengage the economy from international finance institutions, paying attention to people’s real needs within new forms of capitalism made subservient to national aspirations.

Meanwhile, neoliberalism began to make war on false pretexts, as an expression of unmitigated greed for resources and world dominance. As the current upheavals in the Arab world show, the imperialist West has no principled interest in democracy or in alleviating the suffering of those that are oppressed. Dictators who continue to play ball are acceptable, and people who oppose them are shot at. Those who do not play ball or have nothing left of substance to offer (Egypt, Tunisia) are allowed to fall to ‘democracy.’

The crash of godlike financial institutions, first in the USA and then in Europe, has led to counter-revolutionary moves by governments, with behaviors that are reminiscent of the Nazi era in Germany. The economic ills of the West are attributed to immigrants, democracy, the appeasement of foreign workers, etc. And a revival of racial prejudices has also accompanied these attacks. **Non-Western peoples are seen to be unsuited to western lifestyles, and their native countries are seen to be in need of ‘human rights’ and social reform.** Yet the contradiction remains that the emergence of new economic powers like the BRIC countries is making full scale assaults difficult to mount; the attempt therefore is either to co-opt some countries, like India, or to build containment strategies through military/ defense agreements.

The future course of world events will, I think, depend crucially on whether these newly emergent economies choose to ape imperialism or go the way of Latin America. A lot will also depend on how Russia develops in the days to come. Finally, popular revolts will also determine the course of events in many places around the world. ■