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THE RISE OF POPULIST NATIONALISM: AN INQUIRY INTO THE SYSTEMIC RETRENCHMENT OF THE LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL ORDER

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ABSTRACT

Today, the liberal international order stands challenged. Not so much by the usual suspects, as by its main architect. The postwar rules-based system that set the initial stage for international development is now found wanting. Globalization, which once quadrupled the world's output, today no longer serves the nation-state, much less the denizens thereof, claim the dissidents. This paper discusses current challenges to the global order, albeit situating the debates on issues experienced within domestic politics. It is an attempt to arrive at a nuanced understanding of the threats radical politics pose to democratic practices, and even more so — the lesser explored risk factor — of their implication on social cohesion and geopolitical stability. It involves unearthing the political economy underpinning a series of events that preceded the (re) emergence of populist movements in the American politics. This includes among other things, chronicling important political dispensations ranging from the inception of the Welfare State in the New Deal of 1932 through the return of market ideology Neoliberalism in the 1980s and to the ultimate collapse of the financial sector in 2008. It offers both empirical and conceptual analyses on the relevant findings and suggests that developments from within — political polarization, economic inequality and, cultural backlash — pose more threat to the order than do revisionist elements from without. The central thesis of the paper

argues that the aforementioned domestic factors coupled with the incumbent's protectionist and inward-looking policy responses to the plight of the populace has systematically undermined the liberal international order today.

Key words: populism, nationalism, globalization, order, and liberalism.

INTRODUCTION

Humans have always needed stories in order to survive and thrive in this ever-evolving "imagined reality" that they constantly (struggle) try to make sense of. Each of these stories served a distinct purpose depending on a particular historical epoch. For example, the underpinning narrative of the classical-age differed from that of the medieval period. Much in the same way, the scientific paradigm of the enlightenment marks a significant departure from the rest of the periods, in that rationality and empirical inquiry became the indubitable certainty in our approach to understand reality. Admittedly, humans have needed stories and narratives in the past to traverse through the known unknowns, they supposedly have one today that underpins the known globalized world and they probably need a new one to help navigate through the unknown unknowns.

The dominant narratives of the 20th century were communism, fascism, and liberalism. Out of which, liberalism stood out as the most ideal narrative around

which humans should organize themselves, as it were. The fall of authoritarian regimes towards the end of the 20th century marked the triumphant victory of this story of liberalism. So much so, the likes of Francis Fukuyama (Political scientist) found himself declaring “The end of history” — the endpoint of humanity’s socio-cultural evolution. Liberalism then eventually became the philosophical bedrock upon which politics was conducted in a sociopolitical society. By extension, it became the basis for international politics, trade, labor and social mobility, cultural exchange so and so forth. However, the recent political developments in the American polity characterized by a backlash against this very rules-based arrangement have caught policymakers of the country unawares. In response, political actors resort to protectionist measures and inward-looking policies. Policy responses that fundamentally run counter to the very ideals of the liberal international order.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The liberal international order is today challenged, not by the usual suspects, but by its very own architects. The postwar rules-based system that once set the stage for international development is now being systematically undermined. Globalization and democracy, elements of the order that once served the broader interest of the world are no longer serving the nation-state, much less the citizens thereof, claim the dissidents. The discontents were marked by the resurgence of radical politics across western democracies, invariably touting a new brand of nationalism. Phenomena that originally seemed confined within the margins of domestic politics have now demonstrably pose complications for global cooperation and multilateralism.

Economics and culture lie at the core of these movements, as the literature suggests. However, an empirical inquiry to these claims is not forthcoming as much as their political debates are, leave alone a philosophical inquiry. It is this backdrop against which the tectonic shifts in politics concerning the American polity are mapped out. The approach adopted is one of multidisciplinary, involving the disciplines of International relations, economics, and political sociology. It is an attempt to arrive at a nuanced understanding of the threats radical politics naturally pose to democratic practice, but even more so to — the lesser attention paid by political science — their implication on social cohesion and geopolitical stability. The project also chronicles the development trajectory of welfare state and its ideological nemesis neoliberalism vis-à-vis their policy agendas. Furthermore, it attempts to offer in-depth analyses, both qualitative and quantitative, of the political economy underpinning the two systems of governance

How did we get here?

The Oxford dictionary declared ‘Post-truth’ as the word of the year in 2016. Post-truth may be defined as an era where society increasingly adopts a worldview that elevates feelings and preferences over objective facts and figures. The phenomenon evidently played out in the public opinion polls conducted across democratic polities; that feelings and sentiments have larger influence than do well-researched objective facts and figures in public policy making. Interestingly, in the following year Cambridge also came out with its word of the year 2017 which is ‘Populism’. According to Wikipedia, “Populism refers broadly to a range of political stances that emphasize the idea of “the people” often juxtaposed against “the elite” or the establishment” Populism is a phenomenon that developed in the late 19th century and has been applied to

various political events, politicians, political parties and movements since.

The meaning of the term now has, for the most part, evolved with changes in politics, culture values, and not in the least, revolution in the ICT (Information and Communication Technology) space — dramatic transformation on dissemination of information and news, and the ever-evolving pattern of consumption thereof, across the broad. Having registered this caveat in our discussion, one may not be readily equipped with the conceptual framework and the analytical precision with which to define populism such that it sufficiently captures the nuances of contemporary politics (Bart Bonikowski, 2018). For one, despite it being politically loaded, the phenomenon is not necessarily limited to one end of the political spectrum alone, and certainly, not restricted to the “right.”

Operational definition

Populist nationalism can be defined as an imprudent political response to a large-scale domestic discontent, one that's centered on the idea of restoring — a contagious sense of harkening back to the glorious past — the “peoples” economic and socio-cultural position in a given socio-political entity whose relative decline in status is attributed to globalization and the “others

Retrospective Diagnosis

“Hard times create strong men, strong men create good times, good times create weak men, and weak men create hard times” G. Michael Hop

The New Deal: Entrenchment of the Welfare system (Hard times that created the strong state that created good times)

Two events changed the course of history in the 20th century viz. the Great depression of the 1930s and the end of the Second World War. Much of the United States' economic recovery following the aftermath of the Great depression can be

traced back to the New deal of the 1932. The New deal was one such reform, enacted by Franklin D. Roosevelt, the then United States President, which sought to reconfigure the economic system such that it provided relief to all from the consequences of the great depression. Through the introduction of a series of recovery-oriented reforms, welfare programs, and various relief packages, the New deal helped restore social stability in the American society. The era was also marked by the emboldening of the welfare state system and the numerous mechanisms that flow from it— collective bargaining, redistributive policies, retirement benefits, health insurance so on and so forth. Measured by its output in terms of broad-scale social development, the liberals (the left) who spearheaded the deal legitimized itself to its electorates and, notwithstanding the general public at large.

Emergence of Neo-liberalism (The good times of liberalization and deregulation)

The successes of the post Great-depression welfare system came at the expense of sidelining the private sector. The State being the dominant player in the system — progressive taxation, extravagant social welfare programs, stringent regulations, and tightened labor and union laws etc — the private sector role was reduced to the minimum. The private sector's knee jerk imperative to once again re-assert its role as the vanguard of goods and services provider in the society, has ultimately birthed Neo-liberalism. At its core, an economic ideology, neo-liberalism stemmed out of a philosophical conflict if you will, between classical liberalism and the social welfare system. Two central arguments underpin the resurgence of this market ideology. The first, and perhaps, one that has appeals from classical liberalism, is ‘the growing primacy of the state’ the neoliberals claim has implications on the sovereignty of the

individual and the lack of agency thereof — the pursuit of life, liberty and (profits) happiness— and therefore, infringement on these essential rights is not in keeping with the very philosophical ideals that founded the state. The second argument, which hinges on the laissez-faire philosophy is, ‘the market is the panacea for the problems of scarcity’ in that the most ideal system of an economic arrangement is the free-market system, one that produces an optimum level of goods and services for all. The former had an indisputable philosophical appeal, except only to have its justification conveniently relied on the latter’s demand for a pragmatic response. Evidently it is an economic project that purported to increase outputs by largely encouraging the private sector not only at home but even across national borders. It was famously characterized by the liberalizing spree of labor market, financial and capital markets, privatization of various institutions that were erstwhile state-owned and so on.

The failure of the system (Good times that created weak-men who are responsible for another hard time)

The triumph of neo-liberalism, however, was short-lived when the world got hit by a big financial crisis in 2008. The crisis was labeled as ‘sub-prime crisis’ or ‘housing bubble’ characterized by massive defaults by major banks — banks in trying to keep up with stupendous demand for mortgage-backed securities in the secondary market sold too many mortgages when, suddenly home prices plummeted, and the resulting risk mounted up over the years cascaded to stakeholders of these derivative instruments, in effect, forcing them to default. The “good times” of deregulation in the financial sector gave the industry much leeway catalyzing excessive risk-taking behavior among “weak-men” (investment bankers) who ultimately created another “hard time”

Discontentment from within

Studies suggest that "when peoples' socio-economic conditions are at commendable levels and well-placed in a society, they are more likely to be accepting of outsiders and embrace non-native cultures than they are less likely to open up, feel insecure and express hostile sentiments towards them when economic conditions are in a precarious state" (Rajan, 2019). An extension of this theory also holds much water in that ‘when people become more educated — an increasing number of college graduates — they seldom care about material needs and economic security. They rather preoccupy themselves with post-material needs such as minority rights, cosmopolitan ideals, social justice, and multiculturalism so on and so forth’. In other words, a highly educated person is likely to hold a liberal worldview. The American society is a case in point with its marked change in peoples’ values off late, one that’s moving towards a more post-materialist culture. Characterized by various cultural movements, public debates and political activism mobilized around issues of social justice — minority rights, LGBT justice, pro-abortion, regulation of hate speech etc— that are commonplace in university campuses, public circles and political arenas. This marks a paradigm shift, especially for the left (the democrats) vis-à-vis its political agenda— away from the erstwhile broad ‘socio-economic equality’ centered welfare political agenda — towards a growing attention devoted to cultural issues. This shift has significant bearing on the electorates, who now have reservations about the party that represent them. Furthermore, the alarming levels of income-inequality coupled with automation induced job displacement has only added more reasons for the electorates to recoil from the establishment of the left— who have diverted energy, policies and attention

from socio-economic issues to one that adopts multiculturalism .

The paradigmatic reorientation of the left from the once broad economic-equality focused welfare state to multiculturalism policies has, according to analysts, left lacunae large enough for the avarice demagogues and populist actors to try and fill. Additionally, analyses from scores of political scientist tell us that, “the left began, nonchalantly, embracing multiculturalism and cosmopolitan ideals just as it was proving ever more difficult to craft policies for broad scale socio-economic change.”

Discontentment from without

Going by the conventional wisdom of International relations scholarship, the world under only one hegemonic leadership will result in a most stable international order. The central tenet of this theory is proven legitimate victors of global wars will be able to (re) shape the international order by setting the precedent flowing from the peace-making process. An immediate example is that of the United States’ hegemony post the two global wars — the Second World War in 1945 and the fall of Soviet Union in 1989), a country that proved its legitimacy by setting the stage for international development. Of late, this legitimacy, however, is now found wanting. This only goes to corroborate George Modelski’s postulation in that “Cycles of hegemony break down as the superpower begins to lose legitimate hegemonic control over the international system”

A security dimension

The United States, in the 20th century, devoted substantial amounts of resources and energy—military, economic, and diplomatic — towards ‘remaking the world in the image of America’, as the realist scholar John Mearsheimer would have it. Upon the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, the world ushered into a new era led

by the US, in which economic-cooperation, diplomacy, and liberal democracy held sway. But decades of channeling resources and focusing attention abroad didn’t come without a price. In the beginning of the 21st century, US was already posed with internal and external security challenges, evidenced by a major security threats from non-state actors that manifested in the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which completely altered Americans’ erstwhile traditional view of their homeland security as one that resembles a sanctuary. The concomitant response carried out, under Bush administration—waging global war on terrorism— rather than achieving its intended objectives, placed US under enormous fiscal pressure and damaged its international standing. On the other hand, the US had to come to terms with another challenge; the proliferation of non-Western superpowers, a development that is likely to have far reaching implication on its hegemony. Rightly so, as Obama assumed office in 2010, he inherited a world in which global power had slowly shifted away from transatlantic to transpacific — in a way that mirrors the ‘new features’ of the international system .

Even as the US was busy fighting wars abroad, the domestic economy of the US was facing its own crisis, in the meltdown following the collapse of the big banks (financial institutions) such as Lehman brothers and Goldman Sachs. In the ensuing years, several developments plagued the US domestic politics; the emergence of Boston tea party in 2010, the 2011 Occupy Wall Street activism organized around targeting injustices in American society and on the public policy front, political squabbles on issues such as immigration reform, Obama-care (health insurance) and debt ceiling. These developments have had unintended consequences for US diplomacy, so much so, a key figure in the APEC summit of

2013, President Obama — who ought to deliver talks on 12-nation free trade agreement known as Trans-Pacific-Partnership (TPP) — was conspicuous in his absence owing to the government shutdown.

On the budget front, the U.S. Department of Defense was, in the name of fiscal austerity measures, required to cut military spending by over 500 billion dollars over the following decade. This — all too fast, too much and abrupt cuts— according to secretary of Defense, would place America in a disadvantaged position in terms of its readiness and ability to respond to challenges. Indeed, the U.S. military strength has reached its limits, exemplified by the “leading from behind” strategy in the war in Libya, which exposed the constraints of the U.S. forces. Another case in point is, the Ukraine policy, where the Obama administration was certain that US was getting into a military excursion in Ukraine. In both cases, US lost face, not only in terms of its “defensive” geo-strategic posture, but also, more importantly, in the questions posed by the allies over its ability to continue fulfilling its international commitments (Jimin, 2014). The resulting trust-deficit had consequences for Washington’s ability in retaining its global leadership, granted the international order it had created relied heavily on the broad alliances and network. The very elements that underpin this network are the comprehensive power of the U.S. and the confidence that it will provide protection should any of these members of the structure run into critical moments.

In-Depth Analyses of Domestic (ANGST) Discontents

Income stagnancy and the mounting inequality

The United States unemployment is at nearly two decades low (3.9% as of July,

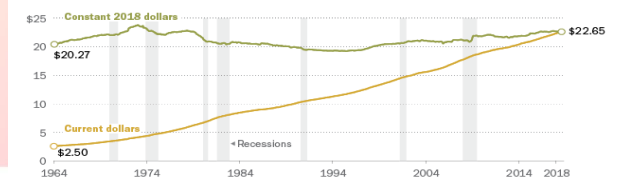
2018) and the private sector’s role in adding jobs for straight 101 months, has finally managed to offset the great recession-related job cuts in early 2010. However, the real average wage today (adjusted for inflation) in the United States has about the same purchasing power it did four decades ago

Figure 1.1

According to Pew research, this disconnect between the job market and the wage growth has stoked much of the recent domestic activism around raising minimum wages, and further adds that it has also become a factor in some of the congressional campaigns. Gains in wage have largely flowed to the highest earners. According to study, average weekly wages, since the year 2000, have risen 3% and 4.3% for the lowest 10th and the lowest quarter of the earning distribution. This growth is in huge contrast with a cumulative 15.7% increment (2112 dollars per week), for the top 10th of the earning distribution. About nearly five times the usual earnings of the bottom 10th (426 dollars a week)

Americans’ paychecks are bigger than 40 years ago, but their purchasing power has hardly budged

Average hourly wages in the U.S., seasonally adjusted



Note: Data for wages of production and non-supervisory employees on private non-farm payrolls. "Constant 2018 dollars" describes wages adjusted for inflation. "Current dollars" describes wages reported in the value of the currency when received. "Purchasing power" refers to the amount of goods or services that can be bought per unit of currency. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

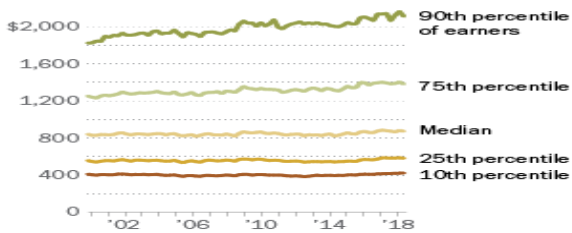
Figure 1.2

In another study by EPI (Economic Policy institute), there is a huge gap between growth in the productivity levels and that of the average workers wage. Which implicitly suggests that, the stagnant and unequal wage growth culminated from a growing disparity between overall productivity — efficiency

in the amount of goods and services produced per hour worked — and the compensation received by a typical worker.

Wage increases in the U.S. rise to the top earners

Usual weekly earnings of employed, full-time wage and salary workers, not seasonally adjusted, in constant 2018 dollars



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Note: Data are for compensation (wages and benefits) of production/nonsupervisory workers in the private sector and net productivity of the total economy. "Net productivity" is the growth of output of goods and services less depreciation per hour worked.

Source: EPI analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics and Bureau of Economic Analysis data

Updated from Figure A in Raising America's Pay: Why It's Our Central Economic Policy Challenge

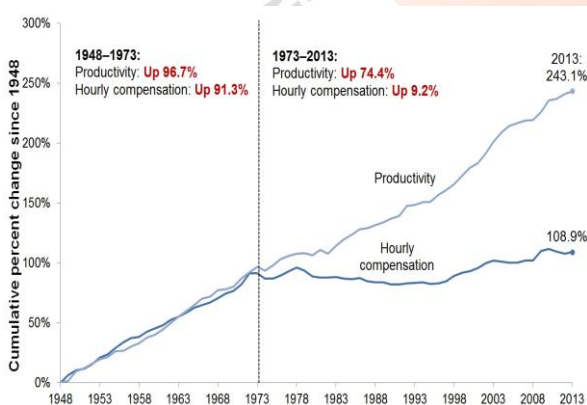


Figure 1.3

The above figure shows that, in the next three decades that followed the 1945, hourly compensation as measured per hour for majority of the workers rose to 91 percent, which is roughly in keeping with the 97 percent growth in productivity. But for the entire past generation (except for a brief interjection in the 1990s), compensation for vast majority of the workers fell further and further behind overall productivity. For instance, the hourly wage for a typical worker rose just 9% as against the 74 percent growth in productivity. Among other things, it means workers have been producing far more than what they receive as compensation.

According to Pew research, there is a possible explanation for this huge disconnect in that, wages in the form of cash money are not the only compensation workers receive, other benefits in the form of — retirement contributions, health insurance, tuition reimbursement, transit subsidies, and health insurance —all can be part of the package. Nonetheless, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, wages and salaries account for the largest and the most “visible component” of workers compensation.

Benefit costs have risen faster than wages in recent years

Employment-cost index for all civilian workers in the U.S. in constant dollars, not seasonally adjusted



Note: The employment-cost index is a measure of the change in price of labor, defined as compensation per employee hour worked. "Total benefits" includes overtime payments, paid leave, insurance premiums, retirement contributions and other benefits.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 1.4

Wage stagnation is a subject of much social and economic analyses, although perhaps, there is very little consensus on its causes. One explanation for this incongruence in the wage growth is the surge in employer provided total benefits. According to this theory, employers are constrained to raise cash wages, owing to existing mechanisms like employer-provided benefits. The Bureau of Labor Statistics-generated compensation cost indices, suggests that, since 2001 there is a 22.5 % (accounted for inflation) rise in total benefit costs for civilian workers, versus 5.3% increase in costs for wages and salary.

There are other contributing factors to this inequality, these include largely the huge decline of labor in manufacturing and production sectors which, as a consequence, necessitated such sectors to shift towards low-wage economies like China and emerging economies, the decline of workers bargaining power, low level of educational attainment relative to other countries, no compete clauses, restrictions on job-switching, so on and so forth. The most cited key factor behind the ever-broadened income inequality in the United States is stagnant wage growth. Based on household income data from the Census bureau, Americans in the top tenth of the income distribution earned 870% as that of Americans in the bottom tenth of the income distribution (100,578 dollars versus 12,523 dollars)

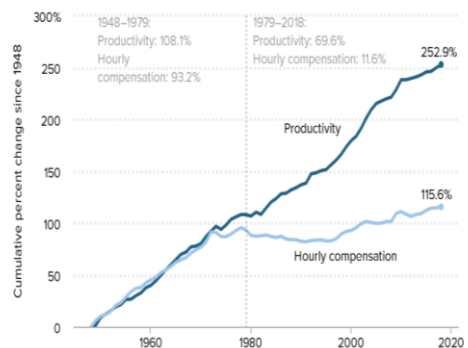
Income stagnancy revisited

There is, without a doubt, concerns about income stagnancy in the United States, predominantly among the civilian workers over the last half a century. It isn't wage stagnancy in and of itself that's pressing but the stupendous rise in productivity levels over the same period that the increases in wages have not kept up with. Below is a figure that gives a snap

shot of the gap between productivity growth and compensation growth since 1948 till 2018. The data suggests that since 1948 productivity growth remained consistent with compensation until in the 1970s where the increase in productivity alone skyrocketed leaving the compensation growth way behind. Between 1948 and 2018 productivity clocked about a 252.9 % growth as opposed to a mere 115.6% growth in compensation.

The gap between productivity and a typical worker's compensation has increased dramatically since 1979

Productivity growth and hourly compensation growth, 1948–2018



Notes: Data are for compensation (wages and benefits) of production/nonsupervisory workers in the private sector and net productivity of the total economy. "Net productivity" is the growth of output of goods and services less depreciation per hour worked.

Source: EPI analysis of unpublished Total Economy Productivity data from Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Labor Productivity and Costs program, wage data from the BLS Current Employment Statistics, BLS Employment Cost Trends, BLS Consumer Price Index, and Bureau of Economic Analysis National Income and Product Accounts

Updated from Figure A in *Raising America's Pay: Why It's Our Central Economic Policy Challenge* (Bivens et al. 2014)

Economic Policy Institute

Figure 1.5

Amidst this pressing concern, however, equally important to note that wages and salaries alone do not account for total compensation, although they comprise the bulk of it. There are other ways a worker gets compensated namely employer provided benefits such as health benefits and total benefits. The ECI (Employee Cost Index) is an index that accounts for the changes in the cost for hiring employees. It is a principal federal economic indicator that measures how the labor cost are changing and how the

economy is performing. Under this indicator, the total cost to employer for an employee, or in other words, total compensation (wages and total benefits) has certain components. The components include among many items social insurance expenditures that are legally required, labor-related taxes minus subsidies, health insurance, education subsidies, and directly-paid benefits which are primarily pay for leave time.

Chart 2. Employer costs for employee compensation per hour worked in private industry, March 1986–2018

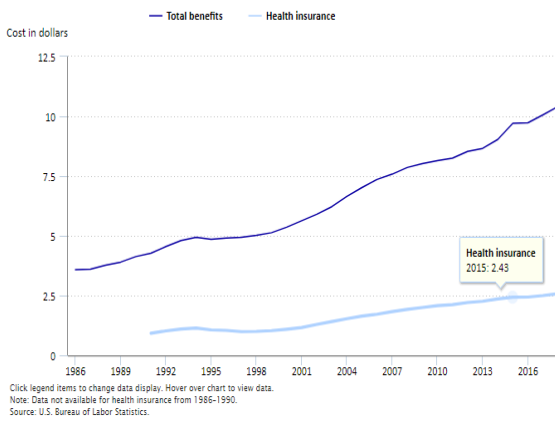


Figure 1.6

The chart above shows the increase in the cost for total benefits per hour work from 3.58 dollars to 10.41 dollars between the years 1986 and 2018 respectively

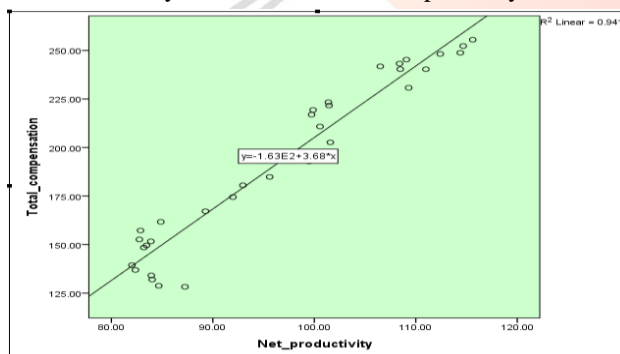


Figure 1.7

DATA ANALYSIS

First Phase

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-4.481	.540		-8.298	.000
	Change in percentage	.061	.006	.891	10.949	.000

Second Phase

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-162.869	16.096		-10.119	.000
	Change in percentage	3.680	.165	.970	22.252	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Total_compensation

From the studies conducted by two different policy research institutions namely EPI (Economic policy think tank) and Bureau of Labor statistics respectively, we extract relevant data for our own analysis. We then run a regression analysis, wherein in the first phase we control the independent variable net productivity and see its influence on the dependent variable total benefits. We find that the coefficient beta value is .89. This means for every unit of productivity there is 89 percent increase in total benefits. In the second phase, we compute the two variables viz. total benefits and wages and salaries, to form a new variable called total compensation. We then run another regression where net productivity remains as the independent variable and the total compensation as the independent variable. The statistically significant result is 0.00 — less than 0.05. And the coefficient beta value is .97. The interpretation of this analysis is, for one unit of change in productivity level there is 97% increase in total compensation.

Inference

We can infer from this striking result that although wages have not seen as much

growth as productivity, in the last four decades or so, there has been a corresponding increase in other non-wage benefits. This could mean among many things that, people's living standard as compared to three decades ago hasn't actually deteriorated, as claimed

A Stanford study: Findings that run counter to conventional wisdom.

The conventional wisdom holds that business elites with enormous wealth and influence would invariably advance policies that redound to their benefit and exacerbate inequality. However, this is not in keeping with today's reality in that technology entrepreneurs' behavior represents a puzzle. Tech-entrepreneurs subscribe to a certain breed of politicians—surprisingly not republicans, whose support for de-regulation and lower taxation would serve their material interest. On the contrary, tech-entrepreneurs increasingly are a reliable democratic constituency. According to statistics from various sources, campaign contributions to Democratic Party from the tech-industry (employees and wealthy individuals alike) have long exceeded contributions to Republicans.

Tech-entrepreneurs policy preferences

The study brought about some striking results that show that tech-entrepreneurs differ to a large extent from the Democratic Party conventional values in one key policy area with obvious consequences for further inequality: regulation, specifically of the labor market (Lenz & S, 2012). Tech-entrepreneurs are very much against government regulation and also overwhelmingly hope to see collective bargaining groups namely the labor union's influence decline. In this aspect, tech-entrepreneurs are much more aligned with republican donors than they are with their democratic counterparts. The study also goes on to show that the tech-entrepreneurs' preferences are not a by-product of their wealth or education

and rather stresses on the important role self interest plays in the whole gamut of policy choices. Additionally, the findings of the survey suggest that the tech-entrepreneurs opposition to government regulation and control doesn't appear to be grounded in self-interest alone but rather mostly, in their (positive) predispositions towards market and entrepreneurship.

Policy Implications

Two major contributions stand out from these findings. One, these findings substantively add nuances in understanding how the phenomenon of inequality will have consequences on the American politics moving forward. Insofar as the massive economic success of the tech-entrepreneurs continue, it may translate into more leverage within and stimulate the fortunes of the Democratic party, which may potentially serve as an unexpected source for supporting liberal policies in many domain areas. At the same time, this mixed bag of values—tech-elites hostility towards regulation (especially labor market) and unions — is likely to result in high-profile conflict within the party's coalition in the coming days. Theories of political development predict that, “as an economically powerful group with vested interest disproportionately gains influence within a party, it can redirect party ideologies and values towards its views and priorities” (Shickler & Eric, 2016) Paradoxically, while the increasing wealth of tech-entrepreneurs may undermine the liberals' support for policies that decrease inequality such as regulation, especially of labor market and unions. It may on the other hand, actually boost the Democratic party's chances of electoral success and also the subsequent increase in support for multiculturalism policies and other policies that enhance economic, social and global equality.

THE LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL ORDER

Order

In today's world, order includes a web of formal institutions, namely the United Nations (U.N.) and World Trade Organization (WTO); both bilateral as well as regional security organizations; liberal political norms. The global international order distinguishes itself from the broader concept of the global international system in that it reflects numerous realities and trends viz. the power equilibrium between leading states, the degree and distribution of development, levels of interdependency or globalization, endowment of resources so on and so forth. A system, however, is the comprehensive international context within which states operate. On the other hand, order can also be understood as the organized configurations within the aforementioned system. According to G. John Ikenberry "an order is a set of governing arrangements between states, including fundamental rules, principles, and institutions."

Components of the Order

Elements of the liberal order exist across three main components: Economic, Politico-military, and other cultural and philosophical components. The postwar order was planted on this broad framework, and most powerfully on two principal architectures; the trade regime being the first, a catalyst for liberalizing economies across the globe and linked the global community together through broadened and ever-more-close networks of interdependence. The next component is the security dimension, built on the charter of the U.N. and its fundamental principles of territorial nonaggression. The security order exists as an effort to obviate large-scale aggression and to regulate the use of force to prevent unnecessary conflicts, but also a mechanism to restrain unchecked aggressions and abuses, thereby, curtailing

the use of force as an apparatus for managing relations between states. By the beginning of the 21st century, the postwar order evolved into a position of significant strength, both institutional and normative. It eventually became the fundamental architecture for international affairs and its norms were increasingly adhered to around the world.

Chosen Indicators for Measuring the International Order and the Rationale for Each, by Index

Index of Order	Indicator	Rationale
Participation in formal international institutions	Membership in institutions, regimes	Measures institutional reach and state preferences
	Membership in alliances	Demonstrates commitment to shared security institutions
	U.N. Security Council resolution and veto trends	Measures the effective operation of the leading institution of the order
	WMD norms, institutions	Measures constraining mechanisms, which are commonly viewed as success stories of institutional order
	Support for new norms and institutions on emerging issues	Measures the ability of order to encompass rising challenges
Degree of participation in economic liberalization and interdependence	Trade, capital markets, FDI	Demonstrates shared interest in economic exchange on which order builds; may demonstrate effects of institutions; outcome measure
	Development assistance	Demonstrates shared interests in development, shows coordinating effect of institutions
	Peacekeeping contributions	Used as a signal of desire to participate in the order; reflects shared interests in controlling conflict

Snapshot of the Status of the International Order's Key Indicators

Index of Order	Indicator	Status
Participation in formal international institutions	Membership in institutions, regimes	Stability in key measures and commitments (e.g., U.N.) but growing rebellion versus regional, global institutions
	Membership in alliances	Only question is renewal of U.S. commitment
	U.N. Security Council resolution and veto trends	<i>Unclear:</i> No measurable rise in vetoes but growing divergence of U.N. Security Council members
	WMD norms, institutions	Consensus on nonproliferation remains strong
	Support for new norms and institutions on emerging issues	Weak at state level: cyber failing, climate sliding backward; unofficial network norms show progress
Degree of participation in economic liberalization and interdependence	Trade, capital markets, FDI	Slowing trade integration and FDI; anti-trade sentiment
	Development assistance	Persistent; some key actors raising contributions, viewing it as a route to status and role in order
	Peacekeeping contributions	Persistent; some key actors view it as a route to status in order and as means to demonstrate commitment to order

Index of Order	Indicator	Status
Respect for the order's core norms of sovereignty and peaceful settlement of disputes	Treaties of pacific settlement	Remains stable in most areas
	Territorial changes resulting from conflict	Long-term trend positive; multiple measures show post-2012 spike; rising hostility and rivalry portend growing risks
	Levels of conflict	Still no major interstate conflicts, but tension and risk of unintended conflict rising
	Aggression without U.N. Security Council approval	<i>Unclear:</i> No rise yet; states anxious to stay under thresholds of obvious aggression
Adherence to liberal procedures and norms	Global indexes of democracy	Weakening but still huge gains from the 1980s
	Human rights conventions, practice	Worsening in many countries relative to the 2000s
	Ratings on corruption and the rule of law	<i>Unclear:</i> Worsening in some areas; overall stability
Elite political and strategic signaling about the legitimacy of the order	Order-related official narratives, use of history	Nationalism and populism generating selfish narratives
	Public statements on order	<i>Unclear:</i> Rising complaints but support the U.N. and the order
Public attitudes toward elements of the order	Public opinion and attitudes on elements of order	Worsening but mixed picture; many areas of stability

NOTE: Green = stable or improving. Yellow = showing reason for concern. Orange = significantly threatened. Gray = unclear.

Gauging the health of the liberal international order

While mere participation in institutions may not be a strong indicator, the outcome from such indicators is ideally positive for the health of the order. Regardless, the participation rates are high, from an institutional point of view. Dominant players in the international arena, including the emerging ones also rely heavily on supranational institutions like the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, region-specific multilateral institutions, the International Atomic Energy Agency, and many other machineries of the order for resolving disputes, evaluate issues and determine norms and rules. Despite these positive turn outs, studies suggest three potentially alarming trends.

Firstly, some of the major institutions of the postwar are losing their significance, as many scholars familiar with the system would have it. They further state that, the abrupt and dramatic increase in competition between states stymies the process of clear-cut decision making at the supranational level. The WTO with all of its resolution mechanisms may be in place but there is very little progress made on trade liberalization front within the framework of the WTO.

Second, with many competing powers there is a concomitant surge in alternative platforms albeit informal, attempting to replace the existing formal ones. Exemplified by a number of multilateral regional agencies that, over the last decade, illiberal (non-democratic) regimes have championed, and unsurprisingly many liberal states are a member of. These trends are, suggestive of the fact that, the order needs an update. And from an institutional standpoint, revitalizing the order is evermore warranted. These are some indicators among others that the order is eroding.

The third and perhaps one that also substantiates the central argument of this

thesis is the wholesale discontentment against globalization, and the free trade arrangements— under the banner of populism. These movements have forced states to call into question their membership and support for liberal institutions. The phenomenon of populism has swept almost the entire geography of the “vanguard” of this very liberal order. Examples may range from the United Kingdom’s exit plan from the European Union, through the United States’ attempts to alter the rules of the game vis-à-vis trade agreements and other security structures, to Russia’s stance in a range of United Nations agencies. This collision course between the phenomenon and certain arrangements of the order has already begun to undermine the stability of the liberal institutions. According to Rand Corporation studies, thus far, these effects concentrate on the periphery of the order’s core institutions and concede that important institutions — the UN, WTO, ASEAN and other regional bodies — of the order still remain stable. However, recent developments across the political landscapes indicate that populist waves and anti-globalization sentiments are on the rise. Therefore, in so far as these trends gather momentum, the core ideological foundations of the order could be in serious peril.

DISCUSSIONS AND ARGUMENTS

The growing tension between globalization and national sovereignty

The world’s output quadrupled with the advent of globalization (Fukuyama, 2018) and huge gains accrued to countries that opened their economy versus countries that remain closed. But it is not the case that everyone necessarily participates in this growth story. For example on the goods market the easy availability of cheap import goods makes domestic

businesses incompetent, often resulting in huge losses, specifically in terms of market share competition. Similarly, the abundance of cheap labor in the jobs market —supplied by the large influx of immigrants coupled with the relocation of manufacturing jobs to cheap labor regions — has also pushed wages (for the working class) further down, thereby raising concerns about wage stagnancy. All of these domestic concerns combined have resulted in a wholesale backlash against globalization and the free trade arrangement. Although the more immediate attack begins at home, targeted at the establishment who the populace claims is responsible for the status quo. The establishment in an escape hatch further shifts the blame onto the “others” — immigrants, racial minorities, and emerging economies — who they alleged to be the main culprits. And as the domestic angst slowly percolates into the policy-making realm; leaders left with very little policy options respond with inward-looking measures that, more often than not, run counter to the agreed-upon norms of the rules based system. This abrupt withdrawal from trade arrangements like NAFTA and TPP and other actions undermining important multilateral structures like the WTO are cases in point demonstrating the incessant effort of political actors to reinstate their sovereignty as a nation.

At least in principle, countries are well within their rights to carve out their territoriality by means of regulating the flow of goods and services or controlling the entry of aliens to their national boundaries, owing to the Westphalia treaty of national sovereignty and non-interference. However, in the 21st century, as countries become much more connected and ever more dependent on each other, the question of “how much control” as opposed to “complete control” appears to be an approach that’s more timely and viable.

The case for a well-managed Globalization

The great depression was one event that discredited the right (the Republicans) and standard economic theory that “markets are self-regulating.” (J.Samuelson, 2012) This subsequently set the stage for the left (the Democrats) to reconstruct the nation’s battered economy — plagued with stagflation and hyper unemployment — to the path of full employment. All credit goes to one British economist, John Maynard Keynes, whose policy prescriptions helped the economy recover from its depression . In his speech in the Breton Woods conference of 1944, Keynes advocated for a form of managed capitalism with a strong emphasis on full employment as an overarching agenda for economic policies, so that international finance would not undercut the ability of nation-states to have an egalitarian and prosperous globalization . The ensuing three decades post the great depression witnessed huge social benefits and stability resulting from the deliberate social contract. However, the economic downturn of the 1970s called this state doctrine into question. So much so, the incumbent’s inability to propose a viable solution to the dismal state of the economy combined with the opposition’s strong advocacy on reviving the market, have successfully clamped down on the government.

Fast-forward to the 1980s, the market ideology was reintroduced under the Reagan administration. This meant deregulation of the financial sector through large scale privatization to huge reduction in the government’s size. These reforms, in particular, gave much leeway to the financial sector, thereby enabling an unbridled development in the financial industry, in terms of size and sophistication . The size of the financial industry post-reforms paled in comparison to what it was in the 1950s (Ferguson, 2010). The deregulation of the financial

sector facilitated this unusual growth. This development eventually resulted in a crisis in 2008. The crisis was caused by the “unabated compensation for the management executives’ excessive risk taking” strategy — the massive risk-taking practiced in the financial industry — coupled with commercial banks unfettered lending behavior. At the operational level, more and more attractive incentives were guaranteed for excessive risk taking, risks that were essentially concealed from investors . The other, and perhaps on a systemic level, was the hubris of the industry and the moral hazards that drove bankers to audaciously continue excessive risk-taking practices on the unfounded confidence that the government would bail them out, should anything happen to them . The confidence actually held up pre crisis and the government did come to the rescue of these financial behemoths. Moments before the crisis, regulators essentially let the whole gamble untrammelled. The then existing independent institutions and regulatory mechanisms capable of preventing the crisis were abysmally weak, dysfunctional and in effect became apathetic to the situations.

Since the share of the financial sector in the economy is significant. The risks and volatility associated with the industry, should it fail, can potentially send shockwaves to the industrial world, if not the global economy. And the increasing complexity in the financial system never required more robust regulatory frameworks capable of monitoring these new developments. Therefore, on the whole, there is a strong case to revamp independent institutions that will responsibly police and hold the corporate financial industry accountable.

The dominance of identity politics across the left-right spectrum

The dominant feature of the 20th century politics was for the most part economic issues. The left positioned its ideology around issues like collective

bargaining — workers rights, trade union, social welfare programs, and redistributive policies. Whereas on the other spectrum, the right preoccupied itself with the growing size of the government and pushed for deregulation, tax breaks and asserted the private sector’s role in the country. However in the 21st century, politics came to be defined more by questions of identity than by material concerns about economics or ideology . Evidenced by the left’s marked shift from broad economic equality policies towards multiculturalism — promoting the interests of racial minorities, refugees, immigrants, and LGBTQ people. The right on the other hand, redefined its core strategy as the guardian of traditions and national identity which is explicitly linked with race, ethnicity, or religion (Fukuyma, 2018).

This paradigmatic shift turns long established view of political struggles as a result of economic conflicts, dating as far back as Karl Marx, on its head . Humans are no doubt still driven by material self interest but they are also motivated in large part by forces that best capture the current affairs in politics. Mobilization of electorates centered on the idea that their dignity as an ethnic identity or a nation has been affronted and is in dire need of restoration, became the unifying slogan that essentially underlies the recent political developments around the world.

Individual liberty over collectivist ideology; the case for liberalism

In order to arrive at the concept of individual liberty one has to unearth the essential philosophical tenets that underpin the worldview liberalism. Of all the other conceptions on how best to organize a socio-political entity, liberalism arguably stands out as the most legitimate one principally owing to its universal appeal, as political scientists would have it . The notion of universality attached to it distinguishes liberalism from the rest in that it ascribes universal value

to the individual. Predecessors such as realism and nationalism have this exclusionary element built into their system. Wherein, with respect to the former, the state remains the final unit of analysis and, much in the same way, the latter conceptualizes an identity within a political framework that's at best centered around shared-narratives of the past and at worst an ethno-centric if not religio-centric understanding of an identity as a nation. History is replete with experiments of these alternative systems and, for the most part, they have been tried and found wanting. Now, at this juncture it is only fitting to unpack Liberalism in terms of its substantive contents and unearth what it offers that no other systems (do) can. For one, liberalism, according to scores of academics, has a universal appeal which legitimizes it as the ideal form of political arrangement. It is a political philosophy founded on the idea that an individual is the final unit of analysis as opposed to the state, as is not the case with realism, authoritarianism, and nationalism. It hinges on the ethical and philosophical foundational claims that the individual has inalienable rights and freedoms that the state ought to recognize and protect. These basic claims followed from the first principle and the concomitant universal acceptance that the individual has an intrinsic value regardless of the nation-state one belongs to, the ethnicity and culture that one identifies with, or for that regard the political orientation that one affiliates with. This, rather abstract theoretical concepts of the worldview are made alive and functions through various institutional machineries of the concerned states within a socio-political geography and cultural context that one inherits. Some of the worldview's fundamental characteristics range from the right to life, liberty, and happiness, to other significant features derivative of the former such as human rights, free speech, free market place of ideas, and freedom of religion so

on and so forth. One defining feature and yet a compelling philosophical argument underpinning this political ideology is that, the state does not presuppose a conception of the good life but rather leaves it to the individual's freewill and judgments to conceive one. The state at best attempts to provide the necessary conditions under which individuals can pursue what the individual deems as the ideal way of living. These distinctions offered by the paradigm makes it a system that has universal application which, perhaps, eventually made way for its wholesale endorsement across the board. This overarching principle of liberalism to instantiate its philosophical ideals of individual rights as established universal values or global public goods if you will, coupled with a strong emphasis towards safeguarding and protecting them if need arises, transcend all possible lines of division; religion, race, ethnicity, color, class, gender or even for that regard nationality.

REPORTS AND CONCLUSION

Freedom house reports

In the United States the constitutional guarantee of individual's rights and the inalienability thereof, still hold good, exemplified by observable institutional commitment to the protection of Judicial independence and the freedom of press under the first amendment. A benchmark component of the constitution such as Press freedom is well protected under the First Amendment; a component generally considered by the public as indispensable to US society and, as such should not be concluded as threatened by populism. Judicial independence, with its mechanisms of checks and balances, serving as key institution that regulates and limits the state remains largely unhindered by pressures coming from the white house administration (Dagny

Anderson; Isabella Brown; Daneil Crowley; Kai Frenay; Amanda Mayberry; Luqman Rusli; devon Stark; Kayla van Koooten; A.R.Y, 2018). The US, despite its current administration having lost a few points since its election, according to Freedom House, reportedly maintains its position among the world's safest countries with respect to freedom of speech and freedom of press. On the whole, the populist movements in the United States have moderate effect on the democratic institution.



CONCLUSION

The liberal international order is certainly under enormous risk today, as illustrated by the series of challenges among many documented in this project. One can only ruminate on the finding that domestic factors such as populism and nationalism are potential threat to the order than are revisionist powers Russia, China and the like. Implicit in this claim is the argument that external contenders to the order have never left the stage, and therefore, this factor is assumed to be held constant. However, what has changed in the equation and understanding of power is certainly the ever growing rise and influence of domestic factor (internal political issues) as relevant unit of

analysis. This is only in consonance with the paradigm of liberalism where the individual is the final unit of analysis. In so far as the individual angst, be it economic or cultural gets captured in the analysis, there is also great danger in the “collective angst” hijacking the political process, in effect, risking a reversal to realism. A case in point is this very ethno-centric rise of populist nationalism, best captured by the realist paradigm where states are the principal unit of analysis.

In retrospect, populist and nationalist discourses are not new. They have been the mainstay of politics since, at least, the dawn of civilization. And people are not becoming on average more intolerant, xenophobic, anti-democratic, or for that regard anti-elite. In fact, in some domains, attitudinally there is a trend towards more open-mindedness and inclusiveness across the board. However, what is changing then, which enables these forms of politics today, is the changing resonance. The degree to which preexisting attitudes and preexisting discursive claims, all of a sudden, start resonating is what enables the political mobilization of certain segments of the populace for political ends. What explains this sudden change in resonance, we argue, is a combination of cultural, economic, demographic and security shocks that are potentially perceived as threats to white majority in the US, and by extension to Western democracies (Bonikowksi, 2018). This feeling of insecurity and fear often gets exploited by political actors who then turn them into resentment. In the end, these fears get directed towards a particular out-group — racial minorities, religious minorities and immigrants — who are often on the receiving end of this discontentment.

This is telling of the rejuvenescence of “ideas” in our socio-political affairs. The existing framework of the concerned political philosophy, considers ideas to be the substantive content of discourse that

exist at three levels; policies, programs and philosophy. However, should one propose an alternative that accounts the current state of affairs, it may very well be the case that, ideas also do manifest at the most 'primordial level' (instinctive) of states, and it logically follows that intent is prior to content. In light of this alternative proposition the arrangement, therefore, shall be as follows; ideas exist at the level of policies, programs, philosophy and might I add, they also exist at the level of the 'psyche' (the state's). This begs the question of what the state is, If not which group comprises the state, out of which this very psyche emerges. One has to unpack liberalism in order to deliberate on this question.

There are three main bedrock assumptions according to John Mearsheimer, a realist scholar . The first is, liberalism is individualistic at its core — rights, freedom, liberty, pursuit of happiness so on and so forth. The second is there are limits to our critical faculties, in terms of reaching agreements about first principles or for that regard, questions about the good life. In other words, we cannot trust our critical faculties or use reason to arrive at the truths about first principles. This is the very reason why we cannot get universal agreement on issues like abortion, affirmative action, or Catholicism is superior to Protestantism, Hinduism over Islam, or whether Atheism is superior to all of them. People kill each other today because they can't agree on whether Shiaism or Sunnism is the correct interpretation for Islam, or communists versus liberals. They can't agree on first principles. And when people can't agree on first principles, each group feels very strong about their version and hence there is potential for violence. Now, this further begs the central question "how should politics be arranged in order to deal with this potential for violence? This is where the state comes in — the third element of the equation. The state exists as a night

watchman that makes sure that people who want to live as theists or conservatives don't attack those people who are atheist or liberals who embrace LGBTQ and multiculturalism . This is the solution that liberalism offers and this is what America is all about.

Now, a contender to this political philosophy is nationalism. Nationalism, according to Mearsheimer, is based on the assumption that human beings are social animals, born, and heavily socialized into tribes. He goes on to stress that we are not individuals born and left alone in the woods. We are born into groups and very tribal from the get-go. This is in direct contradiction with the bedrock assumption of liberalism in that individualism takes a backseat to group loyalty. For example, somebody around the world kills an American, or ISIS kills an American. It's fundamentally different than killing a Saudi, or killing an Indian, because they're killing one of "us" This is the tribe, right of the bat. Nationalism is a set of political beliefs which holds that a nation comprising of a body of individuals with characteristics that distinguish them from other groups, should have their own state .

With that said, there is an important question one has to wrestle with. Are human beings social animals who carve out room for their individuality or are human beings individuals who make social contract? Nationalism assumes the former. And this is the defining characteristics of our time.

Further research agenda

The limitation of our research is the technology factor, which has been conspicuously missing in our analysis. The rise of technology in the information space, implementation of automation in the manufacturing sector and the application of Big data by internet giants, are and will remain serious causes for concern going forward. It is what explains

much of the job displacement in the labor market today. It is what facilitates the amplification of information resulting in increased polarization across the board. And not in the least, the ethical concerns with respect to the use of technology for gathering large-scale personalized information about citizens to harness corporate benefits and political dividends, policy-makers have yet to come to terms with.

There are three possible ways an order can be altered. The first is a cataclysmic failure; one that can potentially wipe out lives by millions and decimate existing artificial infrastructures as well natural resources. The second is world wars; the last two were good evidence of how the international political system came to be. The third is economic depression; the great depression of the 1930s was in many ways what led to the Second World War. The recent change in politics across the board can be largely attributed to the financial crisis of 2008. However, what's peculiar about this crisis was the preceding sophistication of the financial system enabled by the technological novelty that produced a set of complex financial instruments. This essentially brings us to the fourth possibility if you will of how an order can be altered, and perhaps one that conspicuous in its absence is technological change. The previous episodes of industrialization dramatically changed the nature of jobs, altered how commerce was conducted. Nonetheless, the changes previous revolutions brought about didn't have significant impact on how politics was conducted. For the most part, politics was business as usual, as it were. However, the latest revolution the world has witnessed, and is still witnessing, has serious ramifications on the social landscape — a potential to alter the matrix of politics. Technology in many ways relates to power dynamics.

The conventional approach to power, acknowledges the existence of a

seemingly top-down approach of knowledge and idea (translates to power) generation, drawing from a body of literature that relies on the notion of “how elites are able to shape the public opinion of the masses”, with intermittent attempts to offer the possibility of a bottom-up process of policy formation (power) by presupposing the discursive interaction processes that begin with the grassroots non-state actors right up to the helm of the policy-making mechanism.

However, a more foucaultian analysis of power would beg to differ with respect to such theorization of power that heavily relies on the conception that, power flows from one central source to another peripheral end and vice-versa. This notion of power (ideas/knowledge) largely undermines the scope and overlooks the prospects of power to have ever come from any other source, as Foucault would have it. According to a French poststructuralist like Michel Foucault, power is not centralized and does not only flow from one central authority to another but that it is diffused, “power is everywhere and comes from everywhere” His thesis on power marks a radical departure from previous modes of conceiving power that readily accepted popular conceptions that explain away with power as centralized, possessed and concentrated rather than diffused, pervasive and dispersed. This line of thinking, quite gels, with the current dispensation of Globalization 4.0 — an era characterized by the proliferation of information and data from out of nowhere, and more relevantly, the quantum and speed with which information and data get dispersed and disseminated that is too intimidating for the general masses to comprehend so as to have a verified opinion on. More importantly, information and data that do not always lend themselves to rapid unpacking into a verified statement is subject to misinterpretation, which can then

potentially result in political polarization across the board .

As the current world increasingly adapts with newer technologies and evolves with the change in the ways businesses, economics and cultures are organized, it is imperative for policy makers to contemplate a structural reconfiguration to consider the moral and philosophical implications of the new paradigm and ensure the ethical responsibility with which our economic activities need to be conducted. 'Big data' is the elephant in the room as we embark on the dawn of the next industrialization. And the existing legal frameworks and laws at our disposal fall flat when it comes to the regulation and de-regulation of the flow of information, data monetization, and customers/citizen's privacy protection (personal data) . And the conventional law enforcement agency and regulating institutions is no longer the police of the Internet and gone are the days when corporations were able to account for data protection and fair competition practices as just another legal compliance obligation. So, in the face of this "digital disruption" of unparalleled proportions of which internet giants and tech-corporations are the vanguard, where do state actors, regulating authorities, and policymakers fit in? How do they assert their significance and exercise their agency?

These are some of the daunting challenges of our time questioning the very raison d'être of the institutions of liberalism. This essentially necessitates one to juxtapose the foucaultian conception of power and Yuval Noah's (the author of the book *Sapiens*) conceptualization of the "Data centric world" A critical thinking disposition that may be forthcoming in at best coming to grips with the challenges and nuances that confront the current world order today.

In conclusion, it may be noted from this exercise of inductive inquiry that there

seems to be more utility in confronting questions that don't have easy answers, albeit constantly pondered upon and deliberated on, than there is in readily accepting answers and solutions that are dare not questioned, contested or debated.

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