

IS LIBERALISM ON WAY UP OR WAY DOWN?

For this essay, I am going to discuss the future of the liberalism based on a chapter of Homo Deus written by Yuval Noah Harari: Electricity, Genetics and Radical Islam from 7th part: Humanist Revolution. In this chapter, Harari discusses three main philosophies liberalism, fundamentalist religious system and the socialism of Marx & Lenin and why liberalism eventually has outperformed then the rest.

As Harari defines, liberalism corresponds to a package of individualism, human rights, democracy, and a free market. It is founded on the belief in human liberty which makes human feelings and human choices the ultimate moral and political authority in the world. Even social protests in the last decade against liberalist governments have absolutely nothing against these four major determinants of liberalism. Just the opposite, they wanted the governments, corporations do not control and manipulate the market, instead, serve the goals to help ordinary citizens can benefit. All these support the idea of there is still no better alternative for liberalism.

Before liberalism comes up and changes the societies, there were many trials to define how the states should be structured. For instance, the religion rooted in deep cultures of states and has major effects on the history. When we go back to the 18th century, hundred of millions let the religions shape their lives. Harrari considers the religion as a necessary process in the past people supposed to live but it is never able to threat liberalism since they are on different boulevards and the religion already missed the exit to get into liberalisms' highway.

Radical Islam, Christianity, messianic Judaism or Revivalist Hinduism couldn't improve the society in a technological way since prophets have nothing too relevant to say about novel dangers and opportunities about the future. It has created another big question while Qur'an or Bible order many moral values to define right level of lifestyle, why they are lack of insights for the inevitable future in technological terms. Of course, maybe shaping the question in a basic structure like this is not fear, still, Radical Islam can't promise any insight about computer, genetics or nanotechnology rather than anchoring. It causes to see the religious leadership as "backward-looking masses" rather than "forward-looking innovators".

On the other hand, there have been times when technology and religion harmonized delicately with each other. The technology was dependent on religion since the engineers needed the spiritual leaders for societies to make crucial choices and point toward a required destination, and religious lifestyle easily introduced the requirements and problems of the time which technology has already an answer. Yet, technology and religion didn't move forward proportionally all the time, because religions lost their manta with the technological realities of the day forfeit their ability even to understand the questions being asked. For all these reasons, it is not hard to see why religion was inescapable to give rein to the next philosophy by then: to socialism.

In the 1850s, the movement of socialism gathered the momentum and changed the world in far more profound ways than the self-proclaimed messiahs. To the Harari, one of the most important reasons for successful achievement of the socialist system is that Marx and Lenin grasped the context of that there could be no communism without electricity, without railroads, without the radio. That's why they devoted themselves more to understand the technological and economic realities of their time, instead of ancient texts to satisfy a new class of urban proletariats, since it was different than biblical peasants. Socialist have created a brave new religion for a brave new world.

On the contrary of Marx and Lenin, the socialist leaders in 1950s like Fidel Castro and Leonid Brezhnev failed to keep up technology, they couldn't understand the power of computers and biotechnology. They were busy with defending the ideas from the Das Kapital, so were not aware of how the world has been changed since its written by Karl Marx. Thus, this was the end of the story of socialism before it handed the world over to liberalism.

As we see, these both alteration processes are clear examples of how systems fail if they don't catch up the speed of technology. Religion was not able to respond to the French Revolution and the industrialization, and socialism didn't want to adapt itself into internalization trade. All these phases in the history did not only bring the liberalism, also changed the center of political power, from the Middle East to the West. But, the world we are living in has started to change tremendously, again, which has also strong effects on the evaluation of the liberate system. If we are going to talk about the future of liberalism, we should also take into account this political power together with technology.

First of all, countries have started to be presented by more conservative leaders who picked by the folks in the democratic countries. Changing the global ideology through right-wing makes harder to live the liberalism in a way how Harari define. Because, while liberalism is relying more on science, and education, as a means to solve problems, conservative world view mostly keeps itself in religious borders. The root of liberalism is a moderate left tendency and usually is secular, a strong faction of conservatives are anti-secularist and want religion to be incorporated into government. Currently, for most of the countries which couldn't hold secularism well, they had to give the control of all branches on the same person eventually legally or not, and it ends with the renouncing of freedom on the behalf of the members of society.

The other socio-cultural consequence of conservative world view as a threat to liberalism is creating the ideology of protectionism -protection of the national economy-. This ideology seems like the favorite tool of leaders to have an experiment on societies these days.

Increase in nationalist economies are getting growing year by year. The election of Trump 2 years ago shows that people may tend to accept a nationalist economy system to feel themselves in safe. Or the same thing with Erdogan presidency in Turkey.

Turkish soul or “blood” comes from our roots in Ottoman Empire which conquer Europe and the Middle East in the past deserves more than the world of 21st century offers us, so let's be against the unions full with the odds. For me, the funny fact is that people really want to believe that they have a unique power and this concept enables us to drive the psychological conclusion out. People don't have prosperity or in other terms couldn't benefit the wealth of liberalism (Harari also called it as “economically useless people”) needs to something hold on and keep themselves hopeful. Both Trump and Erdogan are good examples of the leaders who got successful on supporting or “exploit” the people pushed away in a liberal system to achieve a local economic system which is one of the biggest threats to liberalism by creating the “one” as a country.

Secondly, post-humanist technologies have a huge impact on liberalism to make it fail on the individual level in the future. In the other chapter of Homo Deus, Harari discusses all individuals are going to become “In- Dividual” which implies that the true self is a holistic entity as a result of developed life science experiments and it is going to make the science enable to consider and control human body in parts.

Since its beginning as an ideology, personal liberty defends that humans have free will. It believes in the highest value of freedom and allows people to think for themselves to make their own decisions to follow their heart and so forth. The people are of course influenced by the other sources or opinions from outside, still, at the end of the day, each can decide things for themselves at least until now. Nevertheless, in the hypothetical context of the future, technology can create new lives where it takes power over humanity. Highly-developed life science is going to let the people think about themselves or what they want because there will be something who decide for them instead. Twenty-first-century technology may enable to know people better than they know themselves. Once it happens individualism will collapse and the authority will shift from individuality to networked algorithm. There are many examples also to provide the fact that humanity has already gotten into the algorithm world. In 2014, Yale University tried successfully first artificial pancreas controlled with iPhone. Even though defining the thin line between technology and personal privacy is the other strong debatable topic, some people are going to lose the power of self-decision over tech for sure - at least as much as they allow.

Briefly, from the personal point of view, world liberal order is currently in a full retreat because of the way of the evolvement of the world. As I mentioned above, the great power rivalry is returning and the “era of convergence” is turning into the “era of the clash of liberalism and neo-authorism”. For instance, in the 1990s and 2000s, American leaders believed that Russia and China were converging with the West on basic questions of world order. But, in the end, Russian and Chinese leaders have realized that the liberal order would pose an existential threat to their regimes. Also, nationalism is becoming a tool increasingly used by leaders since they failed to adapt to new power balances and technologies on a global level. Furthermore, the developed technology may make the people lack the power to use their willings.

All personal arguments above I have discussed on Harari's opinions are absolutely relative facts, yet, I would explain the liberalism not as "best one so far", but "the one chosen for now". The liberalism has created the modern world, and now the modern world changing through another direction in a transitional way which also makes the alteration of the world order is inevitable. The liberalism and its all essential parts individualism, human rights, democracy, and a free market already under attack.

Sources:

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