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WAR AND SANCTIONS. SOME ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM MATERIALIST ANTHROPOLOGY

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ABSTRACT. The political field seems to prefer the intellectual resources offered by Political Sciences and Economic Sciences because they fit well into the habits created by the daily practice of power. Assuming that it is not just about self-censorship, the current perspective offered by these scientific fields has some blind spots, and risks legitimizing an unfounded optimism regarding the effectiveness of the means used in the crisis generated by the Russian-Ukrainian war. That is why I consider the perspective offered by materialist anthropology to be very useful for describing the complexity of the power relations, and for a fine-tuning of what-is-at-stake. This perspective, which looks at long-term trends, can highlight the differences between imagined power (given by habits, abstractions and the assumption of continuities) and real power (given by the technologies and resources that matter, real scarcity and international competition). I concluded that the imagined power relations of today are a *survival* of the real power relations from the near past (when the GDP in the Western world was correlated with powerful local manufacturing and a complete dominance in high-tech research). Our mindset, habits and biases created a blind-spot that made difficult to grasp the complexity of the situation and to react accordingly.

Keywords: materialist analysis, clean and dirty energy, sanctions, Russia, EU

Introduction

The article is written during the Russo-Ukrainian war and is intended for readers which are familiar with the context. It aims to show that the mainstream solutions are technically impossible and politically shortsighted, and to highlight

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the biases and blind-spots of European political actors involved in the conflict, using materialist analysis and structural analysis.

The materialist analysis carries more weight in the economy of this work. Following a neo-evolutionary approach, I anchored my analysis on official statistics and scholarly studies related to the relationship between economy and energy. I used this type of analysis because long-term trends could create a good framework for a fresh perspective, in order to better see the limitations of short-term orientation, with unclear developments, chaotic and incompletely formulated stakes. From this perspective, the article clarifies the cost of the risks taken and sheds light on what may be lost in the long run if the approach remains unchanged – I did not take into account an escalation of the situation.

The discourse analysis is based on the daily monitoring of YouTube channels from DW, BBC, France 24 and CNN, mirrored with Russian or pro-Russian sources, expelled by censorship on Telegram, Odyssey or Rumble. I didn't cite the source of the terms I mentioned, and I didn't do a quantitative analysis of the most common expressions, because I thought that everyone had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the folklore of the current war. I have only shown what the mainstream discourse does not say or what it shadows, and the consequences that should follow from this. Further analysis might be needed for historical purposes, highlighting the scale of enthusiasm in western media, or the most vocal political actors, and pin-pointing each singular discourse in the general series.

Energy. Who will survive after peak prosperity?

Following in the footsteps of the neo-evolutionary anthropologist Leslie White, I believe that any analysis of economic-technological progress must put in foreground the question of energy: What quantity of energy can any socio-cultural system extract from the natural environment in order to use it for satisfying needs? In this way we could better understand how each society is structured and organized, as well as how power is distributed – both real and imagined (beginning with the errors of perception resulting from *survivals* from a previous system).

Recapitulating White's narrative (1949, 371-374), we can find that the first two stages of evolution were based on modes of production that depended almost entirely on human energy, based on the consumption of plants and animals, and punctually augmented by what it could be extracted from fire, wind, water, etc. The only significant difference between the two stages is given by the more conscious control of these resources (agriculture, animal husbandry, etc.); but this difference, apparently minor, most often had dramatic consequences in the way society was structured, by the fact that it allowed differentiated accumulation.

With the third stage, which is based on *fossil fuels*, the evolution accelerates; that's why almost all graphs representing techno-economic progress look the same: exponential curve. At this stage, the logic of value structures *the relations between objects* through price (starting from the abstract labor crystallized in their production and from the rarity of the resources used), and *the relations between people* through income and property rights; blurring the boundary between social and material relations.

In the same third stage of evolution, the limits of economic reality seem to be quite clear: (1) the amount of work that can be extracted from the population; (2) the amount of resources at hand; (3) the amount of available energy; (3) the ability to recycle or to dispose the waste. The amount of work and recycling can be gradually improved by investments in research, development and automation. However, the situation of resources and energy is the most important puzzle to solve because they remain the mainstays and the weak-points of any sustainable development. Energy consumption is closely correlated with economic growth and decline, because it is involved in production, reproduction of workforce and consumption; and the use of mineral resources is a good indicator of the share that a state can occupy in the global GWP in the near future.

The acceleration and fragility of this mode of production is best reflected in the consumption of resources. Coal, which puts the Industrial Revolution into orbit, was mined for 800 years (Hubbert 1956, 8), but only in 1880 coal passed traditional biomass (Way et al. 2022, 1). After that, acceleration became visible for the naked eye. In 31 years (1925-1956) we consumed as much coal as in the previous 800 years. The story of oil and gas is similar, only it is more compressed, and the combined known reserves are three times smaller than in the case of coal, including shale and other costly and difficult to extract oil (Hubbert 1956, 26). As resources were more accurately estimated, energy began to look more and more like the Achilles' heel of Western civilization. The first alarm signal about peak-prosperity was raised by Marion King Hubbert, a researcher employed at the time by Shell Oil Company. This perspective occurs most often when hard sciences researchers begin to lean on economics. E.g:

> "Civilization inflation-adjusted wealth is sustained by global energy consumption and grows only as fast. (...) The GWP grows when energy consumption grows super-exponentially (at an accelerating rate), or when global energy reserve discovery exceeds depletion. If growth rates of wealth approach zero, civilization becomes fragile with respect to externally forced decay. This appears to be particularly true if prior growth was super-exponential." (Garrett 2014, 149).

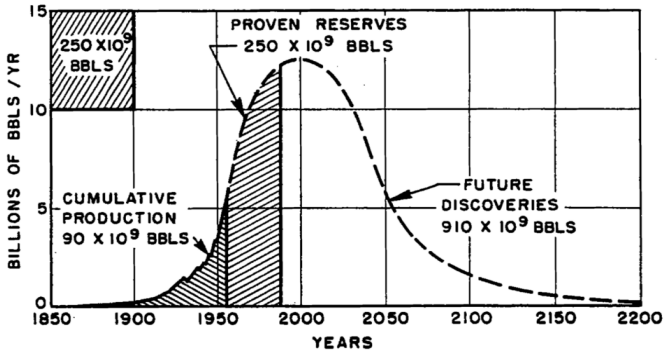

Fig. 1: World crude-oil production based upon initial reserves of 1250 B. barrels (Hubbert 1956, 23)

This slightly apocalyptic picture is often nuanced by financier economists. The most used concept of reassurance is "energy intensity", which explains that, due to the efficiency of production, distribution, urban infrastructure, living conditions and products intended for consumption (and also, probably due to the outsourcing of energy-intensive production to developing countries), in Western economies the GDP growth is increasingly decoupled from energy consumption; except for agriculture, which is 4-5 times more energy intensive than manufacturing (WB 2022, 84):

> "The oil intensity of GDP has fallen considerably since the 1970s. Similarly, prior to the price shock, consumer spending on energy as a share of total spending is also lower, especially in advanced economies, which means that consumers may respond less to energy price changes, at least in the short term, than in the 1970s." (WB 2022, 82)

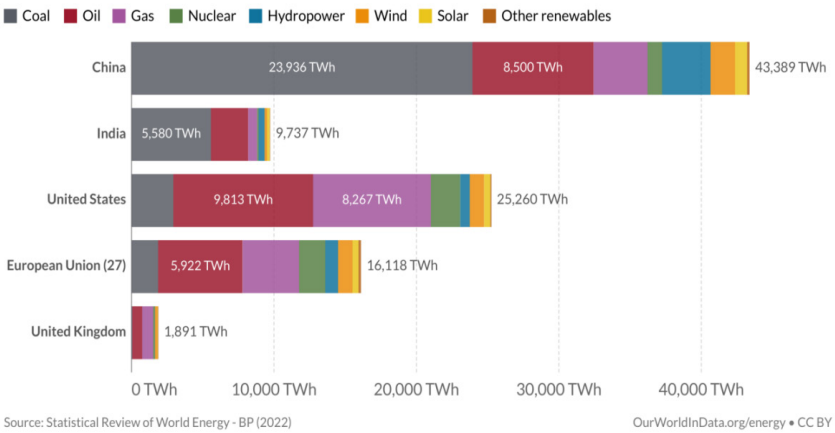

Fig. 2: Primary energy consumption by source (Ritchie 2021)

Technological optimism seems to be even more effective in the appeasement process. Researchers from the Institute for New Economic Thinking found that most of the earlier projections for green energies "have systematically underestimated deployment and overestimated costs" (Way et al. 2022, 7). In such scenario, the future, if correctly described and correctly managed by politicians, could reveal opportunities rather than dangers:

> "The combination of exponentially decreasing costs and rapid exponentially increasing deployment is different from anything observed in any other energy technologies in the past, and positions these key green technologies to challenge the dominance of fossil fuels within a decade." (Way et al. 2022, 2)

> "Rapid replacement of fossil fuel technologies by low-cost key green technologies—in power and transport in particular—causes the expected annual energy system cost in 2050 for the *Fast Transition scenario* to be $514 billion cheaper than that for the *No Transition scenario*." (Way et al. 2022, 13)

In the same optimistic logic, we can see the weaknesses of new technologies as strengths. It is known that, compared to fossil fuel use, power generation from wind and solar is characterized by a high degree of intermittency (Tashie-Lewisa & Nnabuife 2021, 1). This intermittency can make the electrolysis process needed to turn water into hydrogen economically viable: we have free energy from the sun or wind which, sometimes, it can't be sold anywhere:

> "For instance, it is reported that in a particular wind farm in north-western Spain, a sizable section of the farm has to be disconnected regularly from the power grid to maintain stability during the off-peak hours. According to the operators, this off-operation wastes a total of 13 GWh of electrical energy per year. This energy could conveniently be used to generate enough hydrogen to fuel a fleet of 728,000 cars for a year if each vehicle needs 2.5 kg of hydrogen of refueling per week." (Tashie-Lewisa & Nnabuife 2021, 3)

How could we reconcile the fears of geologists with the optimism of financiers and futurists? A first step would be to go back to White's model and see if things become clearer, by updating it and, in this way, we can see that everyone is both right and wrong. As I said in a previous paper (Butaru 2017, 87-95), there are quite clear signs that we are in a period of transition towards an evolutionary stage qualitatively different from the third stage described by evolutionists. Electricity and electronic products, which have initially been integrated without problems in the previous mode of production, managed to integrate the entire system in them, being embedded in almost any means of production or product.

The new type of automation enabled by these technologies has accelerated and generalized the old one, and it has the tendency to replace labor in most easily quantifiable activities. As a result, the price of many products and services is becoming increasingly detached from the amount of labor crystallized in that product or service. Also, in many fields, for copyright reasons or sometimes even for technical reasons, reverse-engineering cannot be done. This means that an overrated product cannot be brought down to earth by the competition, based on the resources which were consumed and the equivalent abstract work required to reproduce it. As a result, the price is mostly psychological, just as economics is becoming more and more psychology and statistics, and economy is becoming more and more casino. That would explain quite satisfactorily why we see a decoupling of GDP growth from a similar increase in energy consumption: beyond efficiency, we are dealing with inflation produced by artificially set and psychologically accepted prices.

And as far as techno-futuristic optimism is concerned, things are the same. Yes, the future is here, and electricity costs will continue to decrease. Their optimism may be more grounded than the optimism of the pessimist Marion King Hubbert, who saw atomic energy as the salvation. The only impediment is that the means of capturing green energies are built with current fossil energy; and the speed of transition depends on the price of dirty energies, which have passed peak-discovery in the 70s and peak-production in the 2000s (Martenson 2022). If we look at the evolution of the energy mix, we see that today's fragile balance is supported by dirty energy, and green energy cannot even support current processes, let alone an acceleration of the production of solar panels, wind turbines, dams, storage systems etc.:

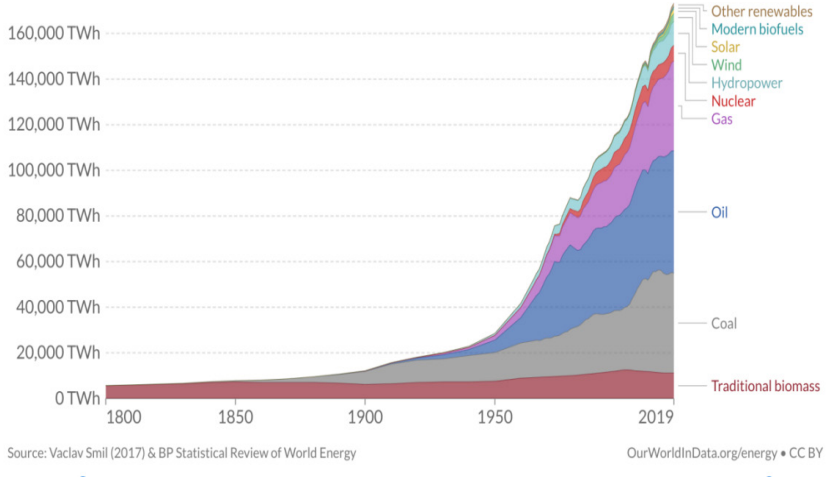

Fig. 3: Global primary energy consumption by source (Ritchie 2021)

The second step would be to clarify the stakes of the discussion. Oil and gas will be around for a long time, and coal even longer – long before running out of oil will trouble us, running out of cheap oil will mess us up. The new economic system will, in one way or another, feed back to the actual conditions of production to reflect the actual international consumption of resources, because real power cannot be grounded only in psychology – the only worry is whether it will be produced peacefully. And the transition to green energy requires more than political will – it requires the recognition and acceptance of limits. Beyond apocalyptic or optimistic visions, the real stake is how smooth the transition will be: will it be well thought out and consistently implemented, or will we get shock therapy?

Geopolitics. Who needs who?

The mainstream European discourse states that "Russia clearly depends more on the EU than vice versa" (Wagnsson 2008, 129). The story rings true if we look at GDP, the share of bilateral trade in each side's total trade, or other numbers-mediated realities. Some politicians even refer to the discrepancy between foreign direct investments in the EU-Russia relationship – 75% vs 1.9% (Siegfried Mureşan *apud* Grădinaru 2022). But if we pass this thin layer of abstraction, we see that this perspective is, at best, superficial; because not all products are equal, even if the price makes us think they are. While the lack of finished products only affects the convenience of consumers, accustomed by the advertising industry to prefer a certain brand, the lack of reasonably priced raw materials affects the competitiveness of the entire economy. That's why wars are fought for raw materials rather than branded products. In other words, some products are more strategic than others, dictating dependency relationships:

> "Strategic industries are defined by scarcity and their importance to socioeconomic development, which makes them pivotal to ensure autonomy and create dependencies by others. Natural resources can be considered strategic industries due to the imperative of reliable supply. Innovative and advanced technologies are also strategic industries as tools for an efficient economy and the limited ability to diversify." (Diesen 2021,13)

And of all strategic products, energy is the most important, because it dictates the pace of growth or decline. Given the fact that energy resources will eventually correlate with consumption, and the supply at reasonable prices is often below the level of demand, sanctions imposed on such products only

lengthen supply chains and inflate prices, at best. In this sector, the global economy works according to the principle of communicating vessels: what you don't sell in one part, you sell in another, filling the gap created by the reorientation of the old customer:

> "The outlook for world oil supply has been revised upward, with more limited declines in Russian supply than previously forecast. While Russia's exports of crude and oil products to Europe, the US, Japan and Korea have fallen by nearly 2.2 mb/d since the start of the war, the rerouting of flows to India, China, Turkey and others, along with seasonally higher Russian domestic demand has mitigated upstream losses. By July, Russian oil production was only 310 kb/d below pre-war levels while total oil exports were down just 580 kb/d." (IEA 2022).

However, there is a risk that the sanctions will limit the global supply because refineries around the globe are quite tuned for specific grades of oil, and because gas pipelines and LNG terminals are adapted to trading habits, redundancy being quite uneconomical; therefore shutting down wells that run out of bluffing customers has long-term effects given the fact that the reopening process takes longer than the time when strategic reserves can make up for the void (Martenson 2022).

Another aspect, which has not been taken into account, although it has been quite obvious for several decades, is the fact that BRICS countries are starting to become the main market for their own producers, becoming less and less dependent on advanced economies. The role of the United States and Europe as final markets for emerging economies has steadily declined, the share of emerging markets' trade with advanced economies shrank from 83% to 50% (Beausang 2012, 56).

From this perspective, the sanctions imposed on Russia are more like magical thinking than strategic decisions. Russia wants, but doesn't needs Europe. The reverse is true for Europe. However, Russia has its share of blame for maintaining the illusion that it is dependent on Europe, as it invested little in pipelines to Asia, being reluctant to feed the raising dragon, and courted Europe in every possible way, because it was as worried as the rest of the world about the meteoric rise of China, "even though Russia never names China directly as one of the reasons for its pursuit of Greater Europe" (Menkiszak 2013, 36).

Unfortunately, the EU, following the example of the USA, often confuses internal politics with foreign relations, consolidating over time an identity of 'normative power' (Wagnsson 2008, 128), which increasingly irritated Russia, as the statements were doubled by actions, which did not always seem to be consistent. Already in 2004, after the EU supported the Orange Revolution in

Ukraine, Putin began to have an aversion to European's export of norms, principles and good practices (Wagnsson 2008, 142), which reminded him of the disaster suffered by the USSR following the reforms dictated by the Westerners:

> "The relationship between the European Union and Russia has reached a level of misunderstanding not seen since the end of the Cold War and is in danger of going 'badly wrong'" (Peter Mandelson *apud* Wagnsson 2008, 142).

Relations deteriorated further after the bloodless annexation of Crimea in 2014; and, after the bloody invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, the rift became irreparable. However, Russia did not directly abuse the energy dependence relation with Europe, but acted gradually: Russia complied with long-term contracts, but, in contrast to normal practice, Gazprom delivered no additional volumes via their Electronic Sales Platform (Halser & Paraschiv 2022, 8). In a way, Putin was using Canadian sanctions against Europe's interest when some gas turbines needed repair, and encouraged Europeans to tighten the noose around their own necks for symbolic stakes, such as paying for gas in rubles; and governments have done it with dignity, to save face, despite warnings from the business community:

> "Many German manufacturers are warning that they will have to close down production completely if energy inputs dry up. Petr Cingr, the chief executive of Germany's largest ammonia producing company, and a key supplier of fertilizers and exhaust fluids for diesel engines, warned of the devastating consequences of the ending of Russian gas supplies. "We have to stop [production] immediately", he said, "from 100 to zero." According to UBS analysts, no gas for the winter will result in a "deep recession" with GDP contracting 6 percent by the end of next year. Germany's Bundesbank has warned that the effects on global supply chains of any Russian cut-off would increase the original shock effect by two and a half times. Thyssen Krupp, Germany's largest steelmaker, has said that without natural gas to run its furnaces "shutdowns and technical damage to our facilities cannot be ruled out." (Roberts 2022)

The Western response was unexpectedly simple and sharp for such a complex and delicate situation.

First of all, the roots of the conflict were left out of the discussion, and the various ways of solving the situation were not weighed. And, although the economic impact could be calculated, the various official or scholarly studies were left in the shadow, fragmented and hidden in technical jargon under the Internet's avalanche of information.

Second, the discourse of European leaders, amplified by the mass media, operated with a very limited selection of terms. The most used terms were: freedom, independence, European values, solidarity, sacrifice, etc.; and Putin's Russia was described with their opposite, reviving the cold war dichotomies and some older russophobic clichés. Also, the censorship, marginalization and disciplining of dissenting voices exceeded the limits we were used to in previous conflicts (Noam Chomsky *apud* Brand 2022). The most hilarious form of censorship occurred in the area of describing the military operations, as if how the actions were performed depended in any way on how they were described.

The terms our leaders choose for playing the game forced them to ignore the possible economic and electoral cost (Baerbock 2022). Captive of their discourse logic, which is more appropriate for a crusade than for a geopolitical game, European politicians were going deeper and deeper into the fantasy land, creating the impression that if the Ukrainians defeat the Russians, gas will become cheaper again and the looming stagflation will vanish.

Politicians and mass-media created the illusion that European citizens have the power to neutralize Putin's energy weapon by reducing the home temperature by few degrees in the winter, and by taking fewer, shorter and, why not, group showers. But, in absolute terms, European households consume just about 29 bcm of gas – of which just 63.6 % is used for heating our homes (Eurostat 2020, 23); meanwhile industry sector consumes 34,7 bcm – and we could ad 11,9 bcm by the trade and commerce sector (Halser & Paraschiv 2022, 5-6). Besides its use for providing electricity and heating to industrial facilities, natural gas is one of the most important source of energy in the European manufacturing sector, especially in Germany: producers of chemicals, basic metals, non-metallic minerals (glass, cement, ceramics, etc.), food etc. (ECB 2022).

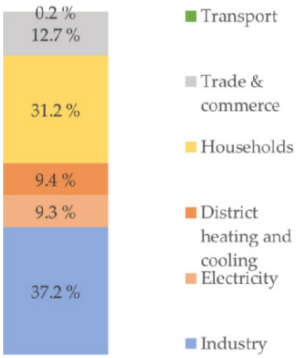

Fig. 4: Supply sources of natural gas consumption in Germany in 2021 (Halser & Paraschiv 2022, 6)

Regarding the estimates on the impact of the sanctions, we can say that it is impossible to completely replace Russian gas in Europe, no matter how cold it would be in our homes:

> "Even for optimistic estimates, however, our findings indicate a natural gas import gap of about 9 bcm in the coming year. A more conservative assessment of the import gap is 22 bcm" (Halser & Paraschiv 2022, 20).

And if the electoral cost will be seen a little later, the economic cost can already be seen on the horizon. Long before the energy crisis, European producers had difficulties in competing on international markets because of the high cost of the workforce. Beside prestige, only the cheap energy made our manufacturing competitive, keeping the last producers in Europe, mainly in Germany and its dependencies. Now, industrial producer prices are raising alarmingly high. As an economic indicator it may foreshadow subsequent price changes for businesses and consumers (Eurostat 2022).

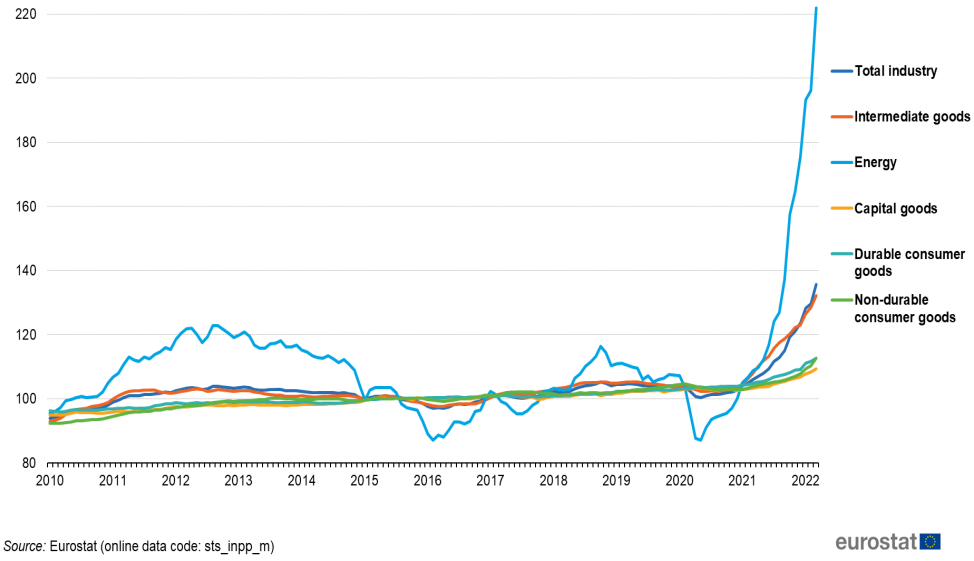

Fig. 5: EU Industrial Producer Prices 2010-2022 (Eurostat 2022)

Moreover, the global disruption created by the lengthening of distribution chains risks producing a global collapse, similar or worse to the Great Recession. International organizations like WB and IMF have a rather optimistic estimate in this regard, but optimism fades away as the time goes by and "storm clouds gather" (IMF 2022, xiii):

> "On net, model simulations suggest that the upward revisions to energy prices, including to oil, natural gas and coal, could reduce global output growth by 0.9 percentage point in 2022 and 1.1 percentage points in 2023, resulting in a 2 percent reduction in global output by 2023" (WB 2022, 86-87).
>
> „Global economic activity is experiencing a broad-based and sharper-than-expected slowdown, with inflation higher than seen in several decades. The cost-of-living crisis, tightening financial conditions in most regions, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the lingering COVID-19 pandemic all weigh heavily on the outlook. Global growth is forecast to slow from 6.0 percent in 2021 to 3.2 percent in 2022 and 2.7 percent in 2023. This is the weakest growth profile since 2001 except for the global financial crisis and the acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic." (IMF 2022, abstract)

Also, if we think about the future, what we cannot gain on long term is more important than what we will certainly lose next year. Russia is more than just a gas station with atomic bombs: it has vast surface, mineral resources, water resources, arable land and highly educated population – and it is pretty fascinated by European symbols. In many ways, Russia is the only asset that Europe would have in its relations with China and other rapid-developing countries. More important, Russia could provide to Europe a very safe buffer for the possible shocks of the future, caused by climate change or other foreseeable crisis. Siberia is our best assurance policy for agriculture and population in case that climate change will have the outcomes that scientists predict. And, as I said before, the transition to green energy cannot be done at an acceptable pace without the contribution of cheap traditional fuels.

It is also very likely that the intermittency of solar and wind energy cannot be sufficiently compensated by batteries, hydrogen and upstream dams. A good solution to this problem would be the intercontinental connection of electricity transmission lines. The most practical way to overcome the barriers given by the number of limited hours in which the sun provides us energy is the interconnection of solar energy producers along the time zone: from Lisbon to Vladivostok. The solution seems technically feasible, the current can be transmitted (in the DC version, which is a match made in heaven for solar panel) over distances of up to 20,000 Km (Nexans 2022), but requires massive investment and high consumption of conductive metals. For a smooth transition we need to accelerate mining of copper and other mineral resources needed for the future increased demand for electricity.

Of course, that would increase interdependence and require even more skills on the part of politicians; plus an abandonment of current dominance stakes in favor of very long-term common stakes. In the long run, we can also do away with tyrants or inconvenient rulers, because no one can cheat death, for now. And if we don't maintain a belligerent atmosphere, there's a good chance they won't reproduce, like an antidote to a toxic relationship.

Conclusions

Assuming that the European politicians are neither more misinformed than us, nor more informed (having a hidden agenda, well tracked, based on data inaccessible to the public), the only conclusion that can be drawn is that we are dealing with a socially constructed blind-spot.

On the one hand, we are dealing with a trap created by *the terms with which they operate* in international politics, starting from the habit of exporting norms, created by frequent humanitarian interventions and the continuous redefinition of the limits of sovereignty in relation to the sphere of interventionism, promoted in the name of common values. When you start a symbolic battle in moral terms it is much harder to back down, because image costs can end political careers. Also, if a critical mass of speakers using this type of speech is reached, the pressure to conform is almost impossible to stop. Censorship and sanctions initially applied to dissonant speakers helped, to some extent, in creating conformity. Afterwards, things went by themselves. Also, as Gonzalo Lira[2] observed, the European political and technocratic field is dominated by a meritocracy which is accustomed with impression management, by acquiring the correct set of dispositions (Georgakakis 2017, 77-91), rather than problem management.

This habitus of the European chancelleries is based on recruitment and promotion practices that favor conformity and not taking risks which can affect one's career (Lira 2022). The political field has become so autonomous in recent decades – through professionalization and exclusion of 'irresponsible' populist interests (Bourdieu 2012, 82-98) – that we see enough examples of politicians staying in the field even if they lose popularity, provided they have not disturbed their colleagues; and, conversely, we have enough examples of popular politicians who had to abandon the fight or to start from scratch after opposing the mainstream. Usually, the rejection from the political field is followed by another

[2] Gonzalo Lira Lopez is a pro-Russian Chilean writer living in Ukraine.

one from the mainstream media, leaving them outside the sanitized political space, in some sort of political pornographic territory.

On the other hand, we are dealing with a trap created by *the economic practices*. Europeans have become accustomed to the natural decoupling of the salaries and the price of a product from the effort and resources consumed by its production. Subsidies, cheap money (on credit) or free money (on projects), jobs that seem important although it is impossible to calculate their contribution to the overall economic activities, the arbitrariness of the rise or fall of shares on the stock exchange and, more recently, the absolute arbitrariness of the value of cryptocurrencies have created the impression that anything is possible if you can make others believe it. Hence the attention to the dissonances in the mainstream discourse. Although their intuition is good (economics has always had a strong psychological component and many illusionists have had their merits and contribution in the field), the habit of such expectations can be harmful. Bullshit jobs might lead to bullshit politics, because widely shared illusions cannot cut through situations where we are dealing with real scarcity.

The final and the most insidious trap is created by *a specific mindset*, which cannot be revealed unless we use the evolutionist concept of *survivals*. The imagined power relations of today are a survival of the real power relations from the near past. When we think in terms of power, most of us are trapped in the mindset of the last century; when the GDP in the Western world was correlated with advanced and auto-sufficient agriculture, powerful local manufacturing and a complete dominance in high-tech research; when coal, hydro and atom could cover a significant part of the energy requirement for an economy and a population which were significantly smaller than today; and when the climate change and soil depletion appeared only in the footnotes of scientific literature.

These *survivals* still produce real effects because non-westerners are sharing the same mindset, because the transition and the shift of real power was slow, and the interdependence is still high. Although this mindset is a soft form of symbolic violence, it is still an effective one. We can go on like this for a long time, in the same way the British monarchy has kept its prestige, but we cannot act like absolute monarchs anymore – only soft power is left for us. Unfortunately, our mindset, habits and biases created a blind-spot that made difficult to grasp the complexity of the situation. Therefore, it might be difficult to get over the small stakes of passing leaders (with temporary mono-manias resulting from the logic of positioning), and even more difficult to conceive that Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok is the same as vice-versa. Sometimes it is easier to burn the world, than to adapt to the new realities, or, at least, to have a shift in perspective.

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