

The Crisis of the Social Dialogue or the Crisis of Democracy? On the System of Hegemonic Party or Coalition

Włodzimirz Pańków*

Abstract

The paper attempts to prove that the current, widespread crisis in social dialogue is only one of many features of the overall crisis of democratic structures, mechanisms and procedures visible in the countries of various democratic traditions and culture. The author claims that the overall crisis has been, on the one hand, produced by the supremacy of market mechanisms (which is the most significant effect of the 'third capitalist globalisation'), but, on the other hand, may be seen as a result of numerous residuals of the former 'communist globalisation' and their anti-democratic influence still present in the post-communist countries.

Keywords: social dialogue, democracy, globalization, marketization, national state, system of hegemonic party (coalition)

* Kozminski University; wpankow@kozminski.edu.pl

1. The Evolution of the Political Systems of the World: Towards the System of Hegemonic Party of Coalition. The Reasons, Essence, Symptoms and Examples

For obvious reasons, I consider that the phenomenon of the crisis of social dialogue cannot be separated from a more fundamental and equally common phenomenon of the crisis in the present world - whether the Western, the Eastern or the Arab world - the crisis of modern political systems with the crisis of democracy development on various levels in particular as well as difficulties and limitations of democratization process in the majority of Eastern and Western countries.

The great transformation which took place and the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s (1989–1993), encompassed most of the post-communist countries including the post-Soviet states. It happened under the fundamental banners of independence for countries and nations which had belonged to the Eastern Bloc or even to the so-called Soviet Union; and of democratization of those countries as well as employment of free market in place of the previously existing system of administrative command economy. That economy was hierarchical and strongly centralized in general. For the last twenty last of its existence, several attempts of international integration were made, as exemplified by the formation of the so-called The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), as well as the introduction of something like a common currency for settlement between ‘integrated countries’ – the transferable ruble.

In the first phase of the Great Transformation, aspirations for independence turned out to be the most important as seen from the perspective of the quarter of century. They were proclaimed by the leaders of Russia itself, which wanted not only to cease to supervise the Eastern Bloc for some time, but even to leave the USSR and transform themselves into the Russian Federation, i.e., a fully independent, pluralistic and even, as much as possible, decentralized state. As it turned out, that state did not last for long, even less than a decade.

As far as the other ‘prisoners’ of the Eastern Bloc are concerned, they backed out both from the Bloc and the USSR quite eagerly since their elites had developed a taste for ruling and had aspired to widen the margin of freedom as the communist (Marxist) ideology in the name of which smaller or bigger ‘internationals’ had been

created mainly by military conquest or ideological indoctrination, became more and more ossified and died and out at that time.

I think that in some decades, the internationals reached such a scale that one can even talk about the communist globalization parallel to the western globalization, especially in the period when relations between two communist superpowers i.e. The nuclear atomic USSR and the People's Republic of China were of acceptable character.

One way or another, in the 1990s, a substantial number of middle and small sized countries of the Eastern Bloc, the Soviet Union and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia gained = independence. At the beginning of the above-mentioned decade, even the Czech Republic and Slovakia have separated and started their independent sovereignty.

As far as the proclaimed banner of marketization is concerned, not without the inspiration of the Western leaders, experts and financial economics institutions at the turn of the 1980s and the 1990s., the previously administrative command economies underwent relatively fast changes in this dimension as well, as being perceived from the historic perspective. In some countries, such as Poland, Hungary, the German Democratic Republic or the Baltic states transformations was more of shock character, in the other states, the transformation underwent or are still ongoing at relatively slower pace.

The restoration of markets in the states that would later be called as 'emerging market economies' was relatively easy and most often produced some a peculiar forms , lest be called degenerated but they had been existing even in the most totalitarian countries such as Russia, Kazakhstan, or Belarus not to mention 'remote', countries as the German Democratic Republic, the Baltic States, Hungary, Poland or the South Caucasus states. In these countries free market functioned illicitly for decades on the outskirts of official economy and was often strengthened by the presence of the affluent military bases and the Soviet Army units.

Almost everywhere, blockades and limitations on the process of economy marketization were interrelated with the phenomenon of monopolization and excessive concentration of economic activities and aspiration of people in power of various orientations, but post communists in general, who wanted to retain the state control over the processes of creation and distribution of goods and services. In a constant battle of market and state, the winner has not become clear yet, and where the two mentioned powers (mechanisms) fight each other, local oligarchs or/and international mighty corporations usually win.

The losers on those deformed markets turned out to be consumers in general, since the goods galore on the emerging markets was accompanied by the limitations

of availability and quality. The limits of availability is linked to the financial marginalisation of scores, if not hundreds, of millions of former employees of various state owned enterprises which were liquidated or rationalised merely on the basis of the pure economic criteria of economic rationalism. The present impoverished consumers can afford only to buy cheap goods of low quality, commonly known as ‘gimcrack’ and produced by Asian manufacturers (China, Vietnam) whose quality is close to shoddy goods commonly known from the communism era.

It is worth to mention one of old anecdotes from the series of the Radio Yerevan jokes, though it not the place for banter. The radio Yerevan was asked: ‘What was the communism?’ The radio Yerevan replied: It was the most social-wise expensive transition from capitalism to capitalism’. There is some irony in the fact that the new capitalists most often comprised of communists.

Picking up the main thread of our dissertation, it seems to me that for the last 25 years of the Great Transformation, the banner of the ‘democracy development’ has been fulfilled the least, although, along with independence, it had the biggest social-wise capacity for the so-called masses who in the early years of the Great Transformation participated or tried to participate in it – even in Russia, not to mention Poland, the Czech Republic or Hungary. One can even said in the time of social and economic crisis lasting almost six years in particular that democracy became the biggest loser of the occurring changes.

What are the symptoms and reasons of the blockade or the crisis of the real mechanisms of democracy, while all procedures are officially universally applied both in Eastern Europe countries – post communist and post-Soviet in particular, as well as in Western Countries?

The first, and most obvious, reason is related to the political heritage in all dimensions: legal, lifestyle, culture, institutional, intellectual and psychological, *etc.* In case of striving for independence, it can be said that such movements drew and still are drawing their fuel on a centuries old tradition of nations temporarily deformed and suppressed by force and lies but existing in the form of nations of the Eastern Bloc and the Union. Whereas the adopted political solutions - laws, institutions, procedures and standards, including those of democratic nature, were mainly influenced by the ‘actors’ of the former political formation and were often supported by more or less competent ‘experts’ or simply swindlers from the so-called West who were literate in solutions of certain problems and issues in the so-called ‘the whole world’.

In spite of the fact that the solutions in the Western world differed considerably, according to the macro regions and even individual countries which run into scores,

but in that time, the most fashionable and the most heavily recommended were the solutions originated in Anglo-Saxon countries and were associated with Margaret Thatcher called the 'Iron Lady' and Ronald Reagan known as the cowboy 'Iron hand'. Their prevailing features were voluntarism and arbitrary of the power instead of excessive empowerment of the society (does such thing exist?) and any serious forms of dialogue!

The above-mentioned philosophy of power was very close to almost all the 'transformers' and 'reformers' from the post-communist countries and their advisers. Even such Polish integral democrats and supporters of social empowerment as Jacek Kuroń or Ryszard Bugaj temporarily put their beliefs on hold their beliefs and succumbed to the philosophy of Reaganomics, Thatcherism.

Another group of factors conduced considerably to such choices and the factors can be described briefly as requirements and conditions of system transformation which we to some extend codified in the so-called The Washington Consensus. Its contents and principles got through the interested actors slowly and with delay, especially in case of social actors. Since in the process of transformation and implementation of indispensable (as the authors of this agreement had claimed) reforms such as privatization and marketization etc., time and pace of transformation were crucial, both the character of this agreement as well as the conditions of its accomplishment conducted to the introduction of more imperative than interactive model of system transformations – both in terms of politics and economy. Little space was left for negotiations and dialogue. The point was to act 'out of surprise' and apply a kind of 'shock therapy' in conditions of 'social amnesia'.

Such 'original sins' were committed by emerging democracies at the beginning of pro-democracy transformations when trade barriers had been lowered or taken down, a well-developed western propaganda industry started drumfire and the effect of market ramming became evident. Then, a real, not idealised by economists and columnists, globalization of the Western kind started with very serious consequences both for the shape of reappearing or arising democracies as well as to the processes of the social dialogue. I will refer to this topic in the further parts of this text.

In addition, what was at the beginning, remained for good and financial crisis which erupted in the West at the end of the second decade of freedom in 2008 enriched the set of factors hampering and limiting pro-democracy aspirations aiming at social empowerment in the countries of the post-communist East.

What I presented above on the topic of 'exporting' or even imposing certain system solution on close or distant 'sovereign' political subjects which deserve more or less the name of state takes place not only in case of 'Western-style globalisation'.

Beside such exporters of their own political solutions as the USA, Great Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany, Russia became the generator of sovereign or controlled democracy which is being imposed on the countries of Central Asia, the Caucasus and, of course, Ukraine. The last one attempted to accomplish the project of real politics, pluralistic democracy which imperilled it with second severe military conflict with her big neighbour and patron. In the recent years, in several countries such as Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan those Russian aspirations to foist own models and system solutions triggered reactions similar to the Ukrainian.

Anyway, chances of pluralistic western style democracy in the sphere of Russian influence are rather meagre or at least limited which can be illustrated with the example of Belarus.

It is typical that the directions of influence and transfers of political system borrowing are not so obvious. Impressive economic achievements of still the People's Republic of China which transformed its communist system into neo-fascist regime in the style of the Third Reich of Hitler induced Russia to curb on excessive democracy or even decentralization of its country. On the other hand, a relative stability of political system of the Russian federation and Belarus becomes attractive for some leaders of the Central Europe: Germany, Hungary, Poland.

All these systems have been strengthening its stability by limiting pluralistic democracy which has real and functioning in normal conditions opposition, by building of a system which I call: 'the system of hegemonic party or coalition' which functions according to the totalitarian principle: power once seized is not to be given to anyone.

Such system lacks space for serious social dialogue – forthright and conducted according to the clear-cut rules with serious consequences for the so-called masses; the process of passing a bill on raising the retirement age in Poland just goes to show that millions of signatures on the petition against this operation was completely ignored. Another solutions pertaining to the pensions system where handled in a quite similar way, in the form of so-called open pension fund which have been practically liquidated without having taken into account the interest of millions of customers, and all was made in the name of financial necessities of Poland.

The system of hegemonic party or coalition constitutes a tempered version or relatively positive mutation of the single polymorphous party system¹, that is totalitarianism of the communist type. That system differs from the previous one in a

¹ Prototypes of this kind of system can be found in short and long term future. This kind of system was formed a long time ago in Mexico ruled for decades by the Institutional Revolutionary

way that the current one allows the opposition to exist both in the terms of formality and reality, although its existence in the form of party or the other form of origin of democracy is not so obvious and necessary. The point is to deprive the potential opposition of any chances and conditions to take over the power from the hegemonic party or coalition currently ruling or having ruled the country for a long time

This aim can be attained by dint of appropriate structural, institutional or procedural solutions imposed by the hegemonic party or coalition: commercialization of the mechanisms of election where the elites of power chooses money, not people, as well as certain mental attitudes prevailing among the 'opposition', the 'outraged' or the 'disadvantaged', which eliminate any aspiration of taking over the power in a certain country.

While the structures and procedures of the single 'polymorphous' party served control over all spheres of the people's existence through their central institutionalization, the system of hegemonic party or coalition mainly aims at blocking canals and processes of articulations of interests of wider social groups as proletariat, salariat, precariat, youth and ageing groups etc. which are in some way disadvantaged

Having adopted the imperative instead of the interactive model of transformation or overcoming financial and economic crisis, the system of hegemonic party or coalition can be accepted by the politician with authoritarian inclinations, who comprise the majority of among politicians, as the most suitable for solving problems related to these processes or phenomena. Such tendency and inclination seem to be dominant among the majority of leaders of countries and societies facing with this kind of problems to be solved. Their common feature is rather ignoring that shaping of public opinion including the opposition whose opinion is not being taken into account in any broader scope. The hegemony means, most of all, domination in the dimension of culture, information and education, somehow according to the philosophy and recommendation of Gramsci – the Machiavelli of our times.

It is obvious that within such system, any serious social dialogue in any possible forms is substituted with the monologue of authorities at any level: national, regional, entrepreneurial or institutional.

Party, it also lasted for a long time in other verison in Chile ruled by Pinochet and as far as Europe is concerned, S. Berlusconi created a pioneer system based on private media and television in particular.

2. Increasing Advantages of Capital over Labour and of Power over the Society

The transformation of the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s of the 20th century constituted a significant step in the process of real globalisation. In the next steps, the marketization of Muslim states was initiated by military invasion from the West, chiefly the United States, into Iraq and Afghanistan of course, with the banner of democratisation and then, a series of anti-authoritarian revolutions in these countries which was initiated with Tunisia in the lead where the revolution had been on. The revolution encompassed such big and affluent countries as Egypt or Libya and has been on in Syria. Some of its symptoms can be observed also in Turkey which has been open for long time for processes of political and economic globalisation.

I use the word 'globalisation' with the emphasis on 'real' since there is no point in some idealistic economic or even of civilization process described during numerous lectures, in the plethora of academic or quasi-academic publication or even during chit-chats of ideologists and enthusiasts of this process which affected also the most populous and dynamic countries of the world as China, India, Brazil or Russia and brought about devastating economic and social results to the present and at least the next generation of hundreds of millions of citizens.

I do not believe that anyone was able to draw up a real balance sheet of this phase of the globalisation. Some consider this stage as the third globalisation but I think that the communist globalisation should be also included since it affected in its time – from the 1950s to the beginning of the 1990s – almost half of the humankind with China, the Soviet Union, Vietnam, North Korea and dozens of countries – not only Europeans but African and Latin American with Cuba in the lead.

I would like to draw attention only to some aspects and consequences of the last and the biggest wave of the globalisation which is currently embracing almost all the world as seen from the perspective not only of its centres and beneficiaries but also from the point of view of inhabitants of the countries on the outskirts and various categories of its victims mainly of 'plebeian' or 'proletariat' status, whatever these terms mean. As for a 'wave' as the 'wave' – those who are equipped with appropriate means, even a surfing board, can be carried atop and head of the others who can be simply flooded as a sudden and unexpected tsunami can do that.

For understating of the real consequences and sense of this real globalisation, it is necessary to take into account a description of the main phenomenon which accompanied the process by so-called escalations and so typical for capitalism

and markets of commodity, services, finance, intellectual and the market of labour: mobility without barriers of all significant market resources, processes and phenomenon interrelated with it such as flexibility, variability and nomadicity. The globalisation has been transforming the world in such a way that it has become one huge ocean with various floating objects, which only temporarily, dock at ports or lie at anchor or stabilise indispensable resources at their disposal for carrying out one or another type of activity such as production, services, research, exploration etc.

Aboard of those objects are located human resources (a phrase as catchy as those from the military jargon: theatre of military operations) which are expected in the state of globalisation to be available, mobile and flexible (also in various dimensions) in other words: a characteristic which requires scarification of important human values such as attachment to family, faithfulness and solidarity with the peers and individual loyalty to colleagues and co-workers from the headquarter of one or another company.

A common 'strategic outsourcing', so fashionable in the condition of globalisation, often means dislocation of a company and its employees which conduces to waning of social ties which are developed in the all forms of cooperation in production, services, science, research, or marketing. Those intentional 'operations' can effectively hinder processes of integration of various categories of employees not only among the blue collars which aim at articulation of their interests, but also processes of social mobilisation whose certain level is indispensable for its realisation. Experienced and wise capitalists as well as other employers have been aware of its effectiveness for decades since such operations are elementary in the strategy of regulating and strategic playing of conflicts pertaining to the conditions of work and wages.

Furthermore, in many corporations and institutions a tendency of articulating individual interests has been intensifying according to the principles applied commonly in military institutions i.e. by the hierarchical levels which guarantee the immediate or intermediate management advantage in case of confrontation with individual claim of separated lonesome employees. We found the commonness of this kind of practice of articulation as early as in 1998 and described it in a book published by the Institute of Public Affairs (Gardawski, Gąciarz, Mokrzyzewski, Pańków 1999).

The globalisation and the processes triggered by it as well as created conditions ruin on the global scale social actors whose actions and pressing not so long ago – about 40 of 50 years prevented social and economic crises or helped to remove the effects of them. Alain Touraine, a French sociologist, writes about it very aptly in his just published book (Touraine 2013).

Undoubtedly, those phenomena does not refer to the same extend, to the owners and managers of huge worldwide corporation who in the conditions created by the processes of globalisation are more capable of increasing own and their capitals ,natural' mobility and creating of various network systems with participation of chiefs of the other companies and state leaders and officers of international financial or economic institutions. They integrate more easily on the international scale, as they did in the times of existence of various borders, utilising more effectively modern technologies for transfer of information and dislocation of capital. In this way, they gain undeniable advantage over the labour. whose particular segments are forced to compete in the conditions of excess of hands for work displacing possible cooperation on the international scale

The phenomenon signalled by the author cannot be fully explained since the costs of collective vindicating actions have distinctively decreased by dint of extensive, yet unequal liberalisation of political systems in the West, and also, nevertheless, in the East and in the South which coincided with extensive development of communication techniques (mobile telephones, Internet, traditional landlines, etc.) facilitating processes of integration and mobilisation of individual actors. Nevertheless, empirical and historical facts, even taken from such revolutionising countries as Greece or Spain reveal real difficulties in forming of effective ,social actors' capable of accomplishing their collective aims and interests. Also our last quarter of century of pro-market and pro-democracy changes and formed in the course of actions structures, mechanisms and procedures has been signalling similar tendencies which enable various units of power to ignore sometimes mass actions of protests and demands supported in large numbers.

3. The Formation of Anti-dialogue Culture of Stronger and More Resourceful Actors' Dictate

The styles of ruling in hegemonic party or coalition systems substitute social dialog for something which can be ironically called 'democratic dictatorship' or 'dictate of authority' which in case of European Union member countries are justified by so-called norms or standards of the Union which are beyond the competencies of institutions of individual states. Of course, the requirements can also originate in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Bank, etc. and can justify such

historical necessities as raising the retirement age or lowering the compulsory school age.

Opportunity of each and every government to appeal to higher institutions, or common legal norms or standards in effect deprive social actors – who still operate mainly on the level of individual states – of their arguments which creates a well preserved effect of helplessness affecting mental and psychological state. The actors, despite their common indignation, do not aspire to take over the power, since they are aware of the possibility of finding themselves in position of people currently ruling their country.

It may stem from the fact that such protesting and revolting people can remain in the state of indignation for months or even years before they take up any form of dialogue with the authorities in order to articulate their demands. In general, they stop at the stage of institutionalisation of their action as Polish workers did in the course of rebels preceded the Revolution of Solidarity which managed to cross the stage after the recognition of ineffectiveness of not structuralized and not institutionalized actions.

On the contrary to the Fordist era which, under the influence of dramatic examples and experience related to overthrowing of democratic capitalism by totalitarian systems and movements, by strived to institutionalise industrial and social conflicts through maintaining relative balance of interests and dangers by the means of dialogue and negotiations between the employer and employees, the current wave of globalisation created an anti-dialogue and asymmetrical culture of dictate according to which, stronger and more resourceful 'social actors' deepen and strengthen their advantage of power, influence and resources over their 'partners' as the aforementioned processes and mechanisms generated by the globalisation conduce to the situation.

Once common collective actions of re-vindication as an effective form of fight for workers' and peoples' interests were substituted for individual or individualistic strategies in the contemporary world. Social mobility – mainly horizontal, forced and enabled by the processes of globalisation – became its fundamental element which can be proved by Poland's and its neighbours' (Lithuania and Ukraine) experiences. 'Self-employment and micro and small enterprises which are common in the countries of Southern Europe, as well as Poland and Ireland, can be an example of the popularity of such strategies. Unfortunately, this do not always conduce to good conditions of economies of those countries or to an effective integration of their people which is usually left unsaid. On the other hand, there are positive examples of the results of commonness of this kind of strategy like Israel or Vietnam.

Frankly speaking, I cannot see any prospects for stopping the aforementioned tendencies. As long as the communist bloc also called 'socialist' existed, so called 'voracious capitalism' strived to limit social imbalances and regulate interrelated conflicts in a civilized, 'humanitarian' manner – by dialogue and negotiations with the aim of keeping their countries off the road taken by the tsarist Russia, then by the republics of the Soviet Union, Italy, Hitler's Germany, China, Vietnam, North Korea or in parallel countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Cuba.

If more or less voracious or savage capitalism were reintroduced, and capitalism is rather savage, then reasons because of which capitalists should control their appetite and share limited goods with hundreds of millions of less and less capable of fighting and exerting pressure on employers representatives of salariat, proletariat and precariat or even the middle class which was supposed to constitute a social foundation for democratic capitalism.

References

- Gardawski, J., Gąciarz, B., Mokrzyzewski, A., Pańków, W. (1999), *Rozpad bastionu, Związki zawodowe w prywatyzowanej gospodarce*, Warszawa: ISP
- Touraine, A. (2013), *Po kryzysie*, Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa