

POPULATION GROWTH AND GLOBAL SECURITY

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1. Security, order and disorder

That armed conflicts disrupt the demographic process is unquestionable. What seems less obvious is that population transformation could threaten societal security. The first problem, however, is how to define so vague a notion as “security,” whether personal or collective.

If Socrates is to be trusted, “definition is important to rid arguments of ambiguities, to focus clearly on the actual subject under discussion, so that opposing sides could avoid the trap of actually talking about different things, as so often happens.” In the case of “security”, this search proves chiefly to be a “wild goose chase.”

“Security” parallels “health” in that it is commonly defined as the absence of its negation, “illness”. In fact, the concept of security challenges any attempt to be objectively apprehended, except as an absence of insecurity. Illness, however, can be identified wherever and whenever by sets of visible symptoms that are indicators of regularities, usually bringing forth the same effects. This is not the case of “insecurity” which partakes to a feeling, and is a matter of subjective appreciation. The concept stands as an evaluation of conditions and not as unfailing conditions. These have probable results whose probability cannot be computed, as they change with the subject while depending on the context. As is the case, individuals, state or society, can perceive an occurrence or a situation as likely to endanger order and value. Talking, therefore, of security, is basically envisaging its antonym “insecurity”.

The cold war that during more than four decades expressed a status quo in the relationships between the USA and the USSR illustrates this point. Despite appearances, specific security demand in the United States did not match what USSR felt as essential for its own protection. In the former case, accessibility to steady supplies of raw materials, made more important by an increasing dependence of industrialized countries on mineral resources, could no longer be assumed (“*Out of thirty-six raw materials, the United States is now self-sufficient in only ten and is dependent upon foreign sources for increasing percentages of the other twenty-six....In addition, the importance of an uninterrupted supply of petroleum has become evident to all*”. A.W.Schmidt, in *The Other Side*, quoted by Stephen D. MUMFORD : *American*

Democracy & the Vatican : Population Growth and National Security, Humanist Press, Amherst, NY, 1984). Global economic prosperity was in need of new free markets that were at risk of falling into the orbit of Soviet interests and expansion. The creation of NATO, in 1949 “was a defensive gesture by the principal western powers based on fear of Russian aggression, revulsion against the fact and the nature of Russian domination in Eastern Europe, frustration . . . in German affairs . . . and the failure to internationalize the control of atomic energy.”

In the case of the USSR, security preoccupations had more than once switched over since 1917. To the rejection of the new state by the western powers and Stalin’s response in the term of an external policy of isolation, had succeeded, from Khrushchev, Russia’s readmission on the international scene, but not without the uncertainty the zigzag American world policy created. Meanwhile, manifold sense of insecurity affected the Russian authorities: the arms race to which they felt compelled to avoid being distanced by the United States and endangered by China, resulting in an unbearable cost that prevented at the same time equating the western technology and upgrading the consumption standards of their population.

As a rule, human organized groups, and therefore states, are concerned with order and the maintenance of a balanced situation. There is always an implicit reference to physical systems, where equilibrium, as alleged the most probable state, is reached when a multitude of events taking place simultaneously in the system compensate statistically for one another.

While concepts of equilibrium, order, status quo, are parent notions suggesting a static vision, change is the norm in human societies. A common conception of equilibrium in a social system, concerns “elements in mutual interrelations, which may be in a state of ‘equilibrium,’ such that any moderate changes in the elements or their interrelations away from the equilibrium position are counterbalanced by changes tending to restore it.” Stability comes, then, as a constant reestablishment of equilibrium, through an adaptive response to the process of repeated imbalances the social system undergoes. All depends, therefore, on the nature and strength of the perturbation as well as on the capacity of the system to self-defense. Whether equilibrium is a permanent regime or an impossible status quo, it is nonetheless the major requirement pursued by humankind.

As a coercion-wielding organization that exercises clear priority in some respects over all other organizations within a substantial territory, a state, more than mere equilibrium, requires order. While the former may be due to a contingency, the latter depend on the state’s own volition. Any state is holistic, i.e., regards the society as a whole. It sees accordingly order into social integration which could be defined as a process of inserting peoples into a social system and of strengthening the interdependence among all members, in order to tighten global cohesion under the national authority. National history as retold to the children becomes a mythic itinerary subordinated to the present attainment of the nation-state. A general agreement among integrated people on the adoption of major values determines a conformism, “essentially a set of habits and attitudes that” induces “people to reproduce the existing structure of rewards and authority.” (*The definition of “conformism” proposed here is practically the definition that Charles Tilly gives of “integration”*: “essentially a set of

*habits and attitudes that encouraged people to reproduce the existing structure of rewards and authority.” Reasons for this change are dual. First, the cohesion of a group by securing interdependence among its members emphasizes the state volition for building an entity to its image, while allowing individualities to be preserved. Second, the opposition between conformism and differentiation susceptible to generate disorder, takes into account a further discrepancy between a static, conservative attitude and a dynamic deviation from the norm. See Charles TILLY : *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*, Russel Sage Foundation, New York, 1984) The conformism is more than often challenged by individual deviations leading to cluster differentiation. Whenever differentiation overcomes the conformism, unsettling a delicate balance between both, social order is endangered. As a result, the collective disorder may surge as a protest, a riot, a rebellion against the authority. The deeper breach in social stability occurs with mutation.*

The same way circumstantial events affect equilibrium; revolutions equating mutation disrupt the state. According to Theda Skocpol, “social revolutions are rapid, basic transformations of a society’s state and class-based structure; and they are accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below.”

Revolution cannot develop, however, without prerequisites. First, the state must be in a situation of crisis, where some imbalance, either political or economic, emphasizes basic deficiencies in the social structure. The assessment of the situation should not exclude transnational structures that create interdependence in the world economic capitalism, nor the relative position of the state in the international military and ideological context, both factors prone to influence the domestic system. This set of conditions addresses but one main actor of the national conflict. The opponent party, for violent it may be, needs more to transform a simple rebellion into a revolution striving to achieve a structural change.

The state may objectively reflect a social stratification and its integration, expressing in accordance with the political system and its institutions, the resulting views of a concerted representation of the various strata or those of the dominating social class. In either case, a balance built on a consensus or on coercion must exist among the various forces whose weight depends on how specific the classes are. The latent tension that may exist between two structural opponents is transferred to the state, regarded by the dissent class as the guardian of an unjust order since it supports the dominating class, or so is it assumed by the protestors.

Some violent issue should eventually be expected, whenever the political games of representation or the one-sidedness of the state coincide with the developing strain among classes. While the social stratification is a functional view of a society that does not take into consideration the situation of potential conflict among strata, the notion of class, as a social subsystem, embodies a latent conflict. The nation-state, however, is more than an arena where social formations, out of their contradictions antagonize each other, or than the simple instrument of dominant classes. It preserves its relative autonomy i.a., in ruling class relations and selecting its own strategy to legitimate the ruling bourgeoisie. For instance, when the state intervenes to correct the distortions brought by private interests in order to preserve free-market economy.

Revolution usually erupts as an overt movement of violence. Although, nowadays, the context of its emergence has been affected by the current development of technology and organization— which benefits both sides in terms of intercommunication fluidity and strategy, by increasing the efficacy of the action as well as the reaction, though, at a higher cost— the revolutionary process remains practically unchanged. Starting by what appears to be a spontaneous movement of protest, binding people into a mounting desire of vehemence, revolution, is definitely distinct from a rebellion. An analogy can be seen in the difference between war which implies its own rationale, determining a system of its own, and a circumstantial fight that may occur either in isolation or in accordance with the logic of war. Revolution involves social class structure. Rebellion implicates a physical mass of people. Class, however, is more than an abstract concept. It implies also real peoples that correspond to a self-defined category. This means that people participate with all the individual characteristics they mutually share in an integrated way of which they are well aware. By similarity with nationalism, awareness and feeling of sharing common values and life conditions generate a binding ideology based on unsatisfied elementary needs and on moral principles. In this case cultural values are derived values from imposed externalities as well as the way classes regard themselves mutually. This ideology, being the representation a group is willing to give of itself, determines a scheme of attitude and of long term action. Cultural likenesses are in this case a consequence and not a factor of integration. National and social revolutions usually follow an identical process and more than often may be confused into the same outburst. The passage from rebellion to revolution, from an emotional issue of a subterranean rationale to a significant set of action operates through organization and a shift in time perspective. Leaders and theorization are then essential ingredients to embody the rebellion into a revolutionary movement aimed at changing the social structure. The emergence of new regimes relies on the classes' relation change. That is what Lenin had expressed as “The Fundamental Law of Revolution”, by asserting that “only when the ‘lower classes’ *do not want* the old way and when the ‘upper class’ *cannot carry on in the old way* can revolution win.”

As constitutive of the social structure, a social class could be defined as a factual group of individuals whose acknowledged respective postures in regard of the socioeconomic system are determined by their position and interest within the process of production, whether this is industrial or agricultural; a class is an integrated semi-open system which seeks its cohesion by stressing its life style, as evidenced by the repartition of the household expenditures, and by emphasizing its differences both from other classes and from the social stratified body as a whole, in order to build in a cultural cohesion among its scattered members (*Although Marx broke off the last chapter of Capital, Volume Three, after asking “What constitutes a class?”, there is little doubts about the major role played by the industrial production relations, rather than by wealth and income, in the formation of a class (see i.a. The Communist Manifesto (1848), Class Struggles in France (1848-1850), The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (1852), Civil War in France (1871), for various interpretations. Non Marxist definition relying distinctively on occupation, status, prestige,... can be found in :*

SCHUMPETER, Joseph : Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1942; GURVITCH, Georges : La vocation actuelle de la sociologie, T.I (vers la sociologie différentielle), P.U.F., Paris, 1963; also ARON, Raymond : La lutte des

classes, Editions Gallimard, Paris, 1964. See also about peasant's relations to social order : WOLF, Eric : Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century, Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., New York, 1969; Peasants, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1966 and Europe and the People Without History, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1982 (ed. 1997). The growth of class differentiation and peasantry are also discussed in DOBB, Maurice : Studies in the Development of Capitalism, International Publishers, New York, 1963. It should also be reminded that "social Class" is a transitory concept affected across time by historical conditions and across space by the diversity of social systems. Even within the Western societies, huge differences exist between Europe and the United States, let alone within Europe among its various economic systems.).

By contrast with revolution, but as a necessary detonator, rebellion is a mass-wielding event. It stands as the emotional issue of a subterranean rationale figured by the classes' tension. Contrary to the organized way revolution operates, rebellion sets the masses in motion. There is a striking difference between classes and masses. Classes are strengthened with interdependence among their constituent individuals whereas mass achieves unity when this interdependence vanishes. While behaving as a micro society systematically increasing its structures, through families, which strive to perpetuate their class identity across successive generations, incorporating time and duration to their most salient characters, classes augment their density through a higher organization. Social classes gradually assert themselves and gain the social status that eventually will institutionalize their struggle and return them into the legitimacy of social stratification and of its hierarchy. The confrontation that put face to face Marx and Bakunin expressed this opposition between "social classes", pertaining to the capitalist system and the "masses" that only insurrection could free.

Opposite the consolidated class, stands the transitory mass, building up stability through an entropic process of people equalization around an elementary protest that figures the hidden order and inner rhythm of the chaos. As the mass tends to grow, its only limitation comes from the hardening of the environment. Accumulating power and ready to release it in a sudden outburst of violence, the crowd is awaiting directives and direction.

Referring to the "mob" as a pre political phenomenon, Hobsbaum defines it "as the movement of all the classes of the urban poor for the achievement of economic or political changes by direct action -that is by riot or rebellion- but as a movement which was as yet inspired by no specific ideology." Angry hordes of peasants are no less harmful than urban mobs. Between 1826 and 1861, there were 1,186 Russian serf uprisings, a permanent agitation that the abolition of serfdom did not appease, the peasant out of poverty resenting more the alienation from the land than the lack of freedom. A core of the insurrection, the mass dissolves individual consciousness into irrational violence until taking order from a leader, always a deviant, who will condense the discontent into a simple unifying slogan. Depending on the balance of opposing forces, rebellion may generate or not a revolution.

Calling for immediate and irrational response from the legitimate authority, it disrupts order in many ways. No wonder that the simple allusion to the mass and its

instantaneous power, threatens the sense of security. The idea of unleashed multitude is scaring. Further the more, when this multitude seems to swell out of forcefulness, as a natural process.

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