

**Politics at the
Gateway of
Nothingness:
Liminal Times**

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Abstract: What happens when the legitimate cultural frameworks with which societies organize in the mid or long term the imagined direction of their multiple daily activities are blurred or paralyzed? The predictive horizon with which people give meaning to their plans, to their life projects, collapses, and the present is shown as an endless maelstrom of events that never end and, worst of all, lead nowhere. This is a common occurrence around the world today.

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The symptoms of a time broken

For 40 years the moral and labor order of the planet was governed by a set of basic principles that supported an imagined and inevitable destiny of the course of societies, of personal and family efforts, with which people justified their daily efforts, their sacrifices, their daily strategies.

The free market appeared to be a "natural" way of allocating resources in which to find a "niche of opportunities" for family business or individual entrepreneurship; globalization as a universalized humanity that would allow that, sooner or later, the achievements and welfare of the world's rich would be spread to all, according to their efforts; the small and non-intrusive State that would liberate social energies and reduce taxes; the zero fiscal deficit that would manage to organize the country as an austere house without abhorrent collective rights, and auspicious in rewards for competent winners. All these guiding emblems played the role of an imperative destiny with which all governments, companies, journalists, opinion "leaders", renowned academics, social leaders and families adjusted their expectations of a happy future.

It was the dominant spirit of the world, which was not only imposed by the force of the dominant governments of the planet, by the imposition of the dominant fortunes of each country – but it was also validated by the desires of the subaltern classes themselves. The world had a direction. Societies had an inevitable future. Families a certainty of the times. People had a predictive horizon to organize their daily strategies. It did not matter how far away those goals might be; no matter how many failures and interruptions one could run into along the way or how discriminating

the opportunities for existence might be, it was not discouraging. They were strong ideas, a shared imagination, with the tacit certainty of common sense, which made it possible to organize the fragmentary pieces of daily life towards a destiny of success and greatness.

That was the way the world was and that was the way to be in it, asserted almost everyone. The arrow of time was rushing towards this optimistic future and no one, except those who were not in time or in the world, could affirm anything different.

But it now turns out that none of those narrative beliefs that prevailed for 40 years throughout the entire planet are observed by those who had promoted them, pontificated them, and consecrated them for years. None of those supreme guidelines solve the current suffocating anxieties that crowd in front of people and, what is worse, they currently lack the strength to capture the collective hopes able to overcome those adversities.

Nowadays, the so-called "universal laws of society" has begun to fade away.

In the first place, world trade, which between 1980-2010 grew twice as fast as world GDP, has, in the last decade, has fallen at rates similar to those of global GDP. In turn, the growth of global output has also declined to a half of its previous growth rate.¹

Secondly, the globalist exhaustion came from the movement of trans-frontier capital, the jewel in the crown of the free market. From a growth rate of about 11% of world GDP between 2000-2010, it has fallen to less than 7% in the last decade.²

This was followed by a series of setbacks to the sacred irreversibility of globalization. England left the European Union (EU), locking itself into a picturesque crowned sovereignty. The US, under President Trump, imposes tariffs of 5-25% over trade with China³ and 10-25% over steel and aluminum from Germany.⁴ The EU erects quasi-feudal walls to China's 5G⁵ phone technology, subsidizes fuel and energy,⁶ calls for building energy sovereignty⁷ and, together with the US, launches a campaign to retract its value chains to the national or regional level, to

1 <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/934031525380654860/pdf/125930-WP-v1-PUBLIC-14873-WB-GlobalTradeWatch-WEB.pdf>

2 <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2017/12/pdf/lund.pdf>

3 https://www.wto.org/spanish/tratop_s/dispu_s/543r_a_s.pdf

4 <https://www.dw.com/es/eeuu-y-la-ue-acuerdan-levantar-aranceles-al-acero-y-aluminio/a-59676162>

5 <https://www.ft.com/content/0566d63d-5ec2-42b6-acf8-2c84606ef5cf>

6 https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADDocuments/RW22_01/RW_Energy_taxation_ES.pdf

7 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/es/meetings/european-council/2022/03/24-25/>

stop depending on the Asian "systemic adversary".⁸

As if this were not enough, in the face of the "large-scale confinement" provoked by Covid-19 which caused the world product to fall by -3.1 points,⁹ the G-20 states invented 14 billion dollars to flood the financial systems with money and rescue the collapsing markets in 2020 alone.¹⁰ And to complete this gradual fragmentation of globalism, the United States and the European Union, by decree, confiscate Russian monetary reserves deposited in "Western" banks¹¹ and "de-globalize" it by disconnecting it from the SWIFT financial system.¹²

Certainly, none of this collapses neoliberalism, much less capitalism, but we are clearly facing an accelerated deterioration and vilification of the contemporary form of economic accumulation and political-cultural domination known as neoliberalism.

The markets require the states to survive thanks to the liquidity of treasury bonds. States can go into debt to resuscitate stock exchanges and zombie companies, pay salaries of private corporations and give money to the poor. Sovereignty, that "dead dog" on the sidewalk of triumphant globalism, is alive to protect inefficient telephone companies in rich countries. The free market must now bow to national imperialism engaged in a war against "authoritarian asianism". Nationalization is no longer an anachronism, if it is a question of expropriating money from Russian oligarchs, or if energy security, with nuclear energy, is demanded by companies.

These are certainly extraordinary measures in the face of extraordinary events, such as Covid-19, the "great confinement", or the war in Ukraine. But the same was said in 2010 when state-owned banks saved the markets.¹³ And now it turns out that violations of neoliberal orthodoxy are applied in response to the effects of a virus; against financial collapse; to prevent the closure of companies; facing a war; to expand imperial influences in the East; to face competition from telephone companies; against the rise in gas prices; as a response to China's growth; etc. And tomorrow there will surely be another "extraordinary" pretext that will make exceptionality the new normal.

8 https://www.vozdeamerica.com/a/estadosunidos_biden-firma-decreto-proteger-cadenas-de-distribucion/6071882.html and <https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20220809/biden-ley-impulsar-semiconductores-eeuu-millones/2395321.shtml>

9 <https://www.imf.org/es/Publications/WEO/Issues/2022/07/26/world-economic-outlook-update-july-2022>

10 <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-00540-6>

11 <https://elpais.com/internacional/2022-05-09/la-ue-promueve-la-confiscacion-de-bienes-rusos-para-pagar-la-reconstruccion-de-ucrania.html>

12 <https://www.dw.com/es/la-ue-excluye-del-sistema-swift-a-siete-bancos-rusos/a-60986562>

13 Tooze 2018.

In the end, it is not possible to bluff with impunity for so long and in the face of so much evidence of the fact that the guiding axes of the dominant order have entered into a frank historical decline. And the result is a cognitive derangement, a generalized social stupor due to the catastrophic mismatch between imagined certainties and practical evidence. The world to which people imagined their destiny tied to has been shattered, and no discursive artifice attempting to fit its pieces together will be able to restore the magic of captivating social enthusiasm and credulity.

Long cycles of accumulation-domination

This world scene becomes more complicated when, at the crepuscule of the form of domination and economic accumulation prevailing these 40 years, it intersects with other crises, such as the environmental crisis¹⁴ and the decline of the historical cycle of the North American hegemony,¹⁵ giving rise to an overlapping of descending phases that further increases global uncertainty. We have then, the intersection of the descending phase of a short cycle, corresponding to the cycle of neoliberal accumulation-domination, with the slow fall of the long cycle of the hegemonic dominance of the North American empire.

Short cycles of accumulation-domination last between 40 to 50 years, from the time they are born, reach their zenith, decline and are replaced by another model of accumulation-domination. In part, these cycles coincide with the "long waves" studied by Kondratiev for the price, production, consumption and value series.¹⁶

We had the liberal cycle from 1870 to 1915, when its decline began; the cycle of the "welfare state" or "state capitalism" at the beginning of the 1930s, which entered its downward phase at the end of the 1960s; the neoliberal cycle at the beginning of the 1980s, until showing signs of aging with the "great recession" of 2010 and the new recession emerging from the "great enclosure" of 2020 – with the additional difficulty that now, there is no plausible substitute in sight.

On the other hand, the cycle of the hegemonies of the great empires, studied by Arrighi and Dalio, last between 100 and 150 years. And in each long imperial cycle there are two or three short cycles of accumulation-domination.

This intersection of descending phases of the short cycle of accumulation-domination are coinciding with the long imperial cycle increases world entropy. It is not by chance that in view of the magnitude of the problems that the world power centers are going through, the

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14 <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-cycle/>

15 Arrighi 1999. Dalio 2022.

16 Kondratieff 1956. Schumpeter 2002.

director of the IMF, Kristalina Georgieva, has been announcing the risks of geo-economic fragmentation.¹⁷

Every phase transition in the regime of accumulation and domination brings with it at least four major structural modifications:

a) In the way of organizing production, allowing the beginning of a long period of rising business profitability in production, and then also in the rest of the economic sectors.

b) In the way of distributing wealth, generating a lasting period of economic expansion.

c) In the mode of legitimization of the social order, which efficiently assembles the emerging economic regime with the expectations of welfare of the subaltern classes.

d) In the mode of monopolizing the predictive horizon of society, which allows the economically dominant classes to direct the collective hopes and enthusiasms of society.

The current debates on platform economics,¹⁸ energy transition,¹⁹ geoengineering,²⁰ monetary expansion,²¹ tax reforms and ways to combat economic inequality²² are the primary symptom of an effort to glimpse components a and b of a new model of economic accumulation.

Let us focus on the last two components, c and d.

When the rules of imagined social destiny become disrupted, as they are now, there is a fracture in the "spirit of the age" or, in other words, in the predictive horizon of society, in the hopeful destiny of the order of the world of life, which allows societies, and individuals, to assign a strategic predictability to their actions. This is what guarantees the cohesion of the dominant interests of the ruling classes with the expectations and moral tolerances of the subaltern classes.

But if the powerful of the world proclaim themselves for a free market one day and the next day announce "America first", or a nationalism of vaccines, microchips or electric cars, then the known

17 <https://www.imf.org/es/Blogs/Articles/2022/05/22/blog-why-we-must-resist-geo-economic-fragmentation>

18 Parker et al 2017. Srnicek 2018.

19 Banco Mundial, Inclusive green growth: the Pathway to sustainable development, Banco Mundial, Washington, DC. 2012. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/TXT/?qid=1576150542719&uri=COM%3A2019%3A640%3AFIN>. <https://www.catf.us/es/2022/08/inflation-reduction-act-what-it-is-what-it-means-how-it-came-to-pass/>. Rifkin 2019

20 Committee on Science, Space, and Technology Subcommittee on Environment Subcommittee on Energy. House of representatives, "Geoengineering: Innovation, Research, and Technology", U.S. Government Publishing Office, Washington, 2018. <https://mx.boell.org/es/geoingenieria#:~:text=La%20geingenier%C3%ADa%2C%20o%20la%20geingenier%C3%ADa,%E2%80%9Cremediar%E2%80%9D%20el%20cambio%20clim%C3%A1tico>.

21 Mitchell et al 2019. Kelton 2021.

22 Piketty 2019. Milanovic 2017. Deaton 2015.

and expected world has lost its compass. If those who advocated fiscal austerity as a republican responsibility the very next day are indebting the State "without limit" to save the financial markets, then the imagined direction of history collapses.

If protectionism and well-mannered sovereignism is the answer to China's economic rise, and the de-globalization of a ten percent of the world²³ is the way to justify the expansion of a geriatric European melancholic empires, then the ideology of free trade and minimum standards vanishes leaving a trail of global perplexity, as is happening now.

We are facing a secularized variant of the "twilight of the gods" or, if you prefer, the dramatic experience of the mortality of certainties.

Dhurkheim spoke of the inevitable and recurrent aging of collective representations,²⁴ but he forgot to mention that this in turn brings with it a wave of disbelief and frustration as a global sign of the times.

Neither governments, nor business conglomerates, nor international institutions, nor paid ideologues can convincingly imagine what is in store for societies in the medium term. Nor can the popular classes.

It is as if the sense of history had vanished in the face of the immediacy of a world without destiny or promise, and all that remains is the burden of an infinite and dilated present that goes nowhere.

The world is going through what in the 1840s Marx called a "spirit of the epoch without spirit"²⁵ and, eighty years later, Gramsci called the "interregnum".²⁶

It is a strange gateway of historical time in which everyone knows where they come from, but no one has the slightest shared idea of what is to come. It is a liminal epoch that plays a sort of threshold that separates a tired historical time, without active consensus of society; surviving by inertia, almost like a zombie; and a historical time that paradoxically does not arrive, that is not announced either, that is not known how it will be nor does it promise anything. A historical time that does not seem to exist, leaving the world in the solitude of an abyss without name or limit.

Liminal time

The liminal event accompanies the transitional moments of cycles of accumulation-domination. It signals the closing of an epoch and the beginning of a new one, but not as a gradual transition or a peaceful amphibious mixture, but instead as an emptiness; a desperate intimate absence. Liminal time is an abrupt cut in the experience of social time

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23 <https://es.rbth.com/cultura/82628-cual-tamano-rusia-realmente>

24 Durkheim 2017, p. 438.

25 <https://www.marxists.org/espanol/m-e/1844/intro-hegel.htm>

26 Gramsci 1981, p. 37.

and leaves people without substitute or plausible premonition for a long time – years; perhaps decades. Until, in the midst of social outbursts, the new historical time awakens, capturing the hope of societies. But, until that comes, the liminal epoch is precisely the in-between, the lack, the anguishing void, the suspension of time.

These social moments have at least five interdependent processes.

1. The paralysis or blockage of the predictive horizon with which societies oriented, real or imaginary, their future over time. Tactical uncertainty, in the midst of strategic certainty, so typical of modernity and post-modernity, are replaced by the tactical certainty of a desperate strategic uncertainty. The road to the future does not exist, because there is no future to cling to and to hope for.

2. As the neoliberal predictive horizon vanishes, the future disappears; there is no destiny in which to place mobilizing hopes. And since there is no tomorrow that imaginatively improves the present, there is also no path, straight or tortuous, fragmented or uninterrupted, by means of which the dilemmas of the present can be shortened regarding the imagined wellbeing. Then social time disappears, for it supposes a turbulent and discontinuous flow, but oriented towards a horizon, a goal, a destination. And then, society is submerged in the corporeal experience of a suspended time, lacking flow with respect to ends; navigating in a present without sense and dilated to infinity, as if time had been lost.

And if, as Aristotle affirms, time is the measure of movement,²⁷ that is, of the continuous comparison with a from-where or into-a-where; with the crumbling of the predictive horizon of societies, social time loses its direction, its shared social intentionality.

Therefore, there is no longer an arrow of historical time and it is as if time stopped and the only thing that remains is an oppressive present with no redeeming future.

The suspension of time does not annul the experience of the "lack of time" so characteristic of modernity. Instead, it is about the lack of physical time to fulfil routines, duties, daily, inertial commitments. The frozen time is that of the imagined course of collective history; that which is measured in relation to the desired future. This time is interrupted. And it is not about the religious "end of time" either, since this apocalypse is, nevertheless, a destiny, however devastating it may be. Although a catastrophic drift of the suspension of time is possible, which would explain the recent revival of religious and mystical attachments in social segments.

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²⁷ Aristóteles 1995, pp. 156, 152.

The acceleration of events, of which Hartmut Rosa²⁸ or Mark Fisher²⁹ have spoken to us, has now, in fact, ceased to be an acceleration of time because, having lost the arrow of historical time (economic growth, in the first author; post-capitalism, in the second), the accumulation of events has nothing upon which to be "measured", to compare with. They happen without a hopeful future. They are avalanches of events with no direction or destiny shared by society. Physical time is compressed in a vortex of events and demands, but historical time is stopped because there is no horizon to animate and move it. After all, the existence of historical time is also a symptom and a measure of the great political hegemonies within societies.

Global anxiety expresses the weariness of the hegemony that mobilized the enthusiasm and commitments of a large part of societies with their businessmen in coalition with their political leaders. Today that hegemony is passive, almost melancholic, lacking the vitality to monopolize the arrow of historical time, that is to say, the active leadership of politics.

But neither are we today only facing a fragmented and discontinuous time, as proposed by Byung-Chul Han.³⁰ In reality, the architecture of neoliberal time, from its beginnings over forty years ago, at the same time as its acceleration, has also been atomized, as atomization is the new labor condition that has fragmented labor centers into an infinity of small outsourced factories; and just as fragmented is the life trajectory of all wage-earners, submerged in a perpetual labor nomadism.³¹ The fractured logic and lack of continuous narrative of today's music video-clips are the visual and aesthetic expression of this generalized fragmentation of personal experiences of the world. However, this pulverized experience of social things, was unfolded in all these 40 years, within an imagined course of historical horizon articulated around the gratification of individual effort, the global market, competitiveness and economic accumulation. No matter how chaotic and discontinuous personal events have been, the shared belief that there is a satisfactory destiny behind which to run and glue the scattered pieces of life, was an epochal certainty. This was well illustrated by Bauman when, years ago, he pointed out that the fragmentation of life experiences, which inhibits long-term planning, provokes the permanent sensation of "missing the train" or being thrown out of the window of a car that is going "at full speed".³² The uncertainty that neoliberal modernity produced on a regular

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28 Rosa 2016

29 Fisher 2017.

30 Han 2021.

31 Garcia Linera 2014. Beaud & Pialoux 1999.

32 Bauman 2009, p.21.

basis, was not of the future, because there was a "train" or a "vehicle" that, in spite of everything, was going at full speed to some destination. The concern of the time was to know the place that each person would occupy in that train, or outside of it.

But today, there is no certainty of time or train going anywhere. It is as if it has stopped while everyone is running chaotically inside it, while outside frantic images are reflected in the windows.

The shared predictive horizon that used to direct the daily fragments is empty. The future appears inscrutable, and the pieces of personal life appear as folds without any cohesion. The future has been extinguished; the present has become unhinged. The course of social life has been hijacked.

3. Cognitive perplexity. As the predictive horizon is diluted, society as a whole, its political leaders, its intellectuals, cannot outline possible courses of action with sufficient credibility and verification to arouse collective enthusiasm. The old belief system shows itself impotent to give verisimilitude to its paradigms – and also to the critical enunciations, which cannot displace or replace the predominant ones. The social mood is one of discredit and generalized disaffection. Politics is devalued. Enthusiasms are segmented and ephemeral.

It is a moment of cognitive collapse about the imminent social future that engenders a collective stupor, and drowns people in the reiteration of a present that never ends. Politics as a dispute for the hopes of societies is discredited. If there is no hope that moves time, then there is no future and no politics of transformation of the present. This not only gives rise to "anti-politics", which is in fact a politics against political elites, whatever they may be. What also arises is "a-politics", the detachment from the ways of managing the commons, of producing the future. That in the midst of this desolate panorama, theories about the "end of politics", the "end of humanity" and other collapsist discourses reverberate, is predictable. These are epiphenomena of the liminal time that turns frustration and the hopeless state of mind into a theoretical edifice of paralyzing social impotence.

And the fact is that "a-politics" is a temporary quality of society. It is transitory and, as we shall see later, the prelude to outbursts of politicization of society in multiple directions, until its homogenization and stabilization, as the new cycle of accumulation-domination imposes itself. But, in addition, this abandonment of politics clearly leaves the management of the common affairs of society to the old dominant elites, who will be able to act with greater arbitrariness in the absence of observance and interest. But their monopolies in this period of transit are fragile; they do not mobilize the active adhesions of the dominated and, like everything else, they have also lost credibility and trust. It is as if everything floated in a sea of apathy and generalized discredit. It is the symbol that the model of political-cultural domination of the last four decades is getting irreversibly old.

As the planetary system of institutions and authorities, which monopolize the symbolic power of enunciation of the promising future, contradict themselves, diverge or fail in the plausibility of their proposals, their monopoly also weakens and, with it, their power of performative enunciation of plausible horizons (conservative politics), also begins to corrode, with no replacement or visible alternative.

Uncertainty, with its terrifying sensation of not knowing yet in which way tomorrow will be different from this confusing and distressing present, restores to the future its random and contingent quality. In reality, history is always contingent, but people usually hold on to the immediate past as the only feasible horizon to bite the future, making the future a fatal determination. But not now. In liminal times, the past stops in fear of the future. For an instant everything is a brutal incertitude.

And in the global hopelessness a relative equalization arises in the social capacities of enunciation of the future; although for now this equalization is only in discredit and marginality, since, after all, the dominant ideologies, even if they no longer seduce, can still saturate the discursive space with fleeting spectacles of emotion and individual motivation. These are the death throes of a tired hegemony.

4. The divergence of elites. As the shared social horizon is fading into the void, the great globalist consensus that united the political elites is beginning to crumble.

If before, political center, right and left were mere personalized variants of the same project (state capitalism between 1930-1960; neoliberalism between 1980-2010), as the hopeful project fades away, nothing unites the elites but strategic distrust. And then, the traditional elites fragment with schismatic projects; and new elites emerge with proposals that are distanced from each other. Faced with the hegemonic decline, the center-right is drifting to the extreme right. The center left splits into leftist wings and new proposals that distance themselves from the traditional left. So-called "populisms" emerge, which more than a definition, are, in general, an exclamation of ignorance in the face of the unknown. Each political faction is radically different from the others. Nothing makes them concur towards a common space, they all diverge. From multi- or bipartisan center-right political systems (1985-2015), we move to a polarized multi- or bipartisan system (2015...).

Each of these forces disputes the vote of an apathetic electorate and, there where other social circumstances converge, politicized segments of society, not yet majorities, concentrate on more radical political projects that achieve ephemeral adhesions of electoral majorities, which then return to abulia.

One of the first political forces to emerge is the extreme right. Seeing how the old political consensuses are dissolving, the right is seeking to return to the old order, but now instead of seduction, it will seek sanctions, punishment or revenge against those it considers

responsible for this disorder: "greedy" trade unions, migrants who "snatch" jobs, women who "exaggerate" their rights, "egalitarian" indigenous people, etc. Without understanding that the weakening of the conservative project is the result of its own limits, they will seek refuge in the disciplining of the rebellious, the key to return society to the order of the old moral values. These are authoritarian and increasingly antidemocratic right-wings, which seek to redirect social fear regarding the lack of future, towards vengeance and punishment, replacing conviction with imposition, typical of decadent projects. The orthopedic implantation of "sovereignist" variants in the neoliberal body (Trump, Orban, Bolsonaro, Meloni...), or essays of a type of "statist neoliberalism", like Biden, more than a corruption of the regime, point out the contradictions of a model of economy, State and society that has become moldy.

The Left is also undergoing a centrifugal renaissance. From the multiple Latin American national-popular variants, to the new European lefts (Podemos, Nupes, Syriza...) and socialist factions of the Democrats in the USA and Labor in England, they break with the globalist felony of world social democracy, and leave behind the mourning for the failed experiences of State socialism in the 20th century. All of them claim justice and equality, but they do not propose convergent paths or common horizons. They propose ways of correcting the present, but do not have a name for the future. They achieve political visibility and sometimes electoral victories, but they are temporary and cannot yet irradiate.

Even the academic left lacks contemporary referents that add ideological allegiances. They all cling to their specialties, their departments of study and their small sects of intellectual adhesion. And the older the better: it can be Foucault or Gramsci, or Marx; better yet: Machiavelli or Plato. Critical thinking cannot jump over a world that lacks a future. And, therefore, it is better to immerse oneself in the past to forget this disconcerting world that has misplaced its future. A liminal time everywhere.

All these political proposals from the left and the right, all of them diverging from each other, are part of the general chaos. They are not yet the solution. None of them manages to consolidate an expansive political-cultural project. They win victories here, only to lose there, or to be replaced in the next election. This is the quality of liminal time. For the moment, there will be a succession of short victories and short defeats of the different projects that struggle to emerge. There are no long hegemonies for the moment. For a while, there will not be. However, in these battles of modest temporalities, the authoritarian rightists are having more success, especially in the countries of the North. Not only because it is easier for them to harmonize with the conservative common sense built up over the 40 years of neoliberalism, but also because they offer certainty and, in this, they are bolder and more determined

than the modest lefts, which have not yet managed to shed the liberal-cosmopolitan, pacifist and ambiguous cultural environment that made them the party of the educated middle classes.

5. Cognitive openness. No society can live indefinitely in strategic uncertainty. It is a matter of necessary social cohesion in the face of history, of methods of legitimizing any form of government and, also, of drastic effects on the economy. The IMF has calculated that only in 2019, the uncertainty about the future of trade policies has caused a 1-point drop in global GDP growth.³³ The human being is, above all, a being of shared beliefs. It is its social quality. That is the social matter that produces life and institutions in society. Therefore, sooner or later it has to stick to something, to some organizing principles of the imagined future, whatever they are, on the condition that they return the certainty to some destiny in order to hold on with all its forces, and thus to give back the sense to the collective, familiar and personal history.

Therefore, in the following decade, the stupor and uneasiness must be followed, abruptly, by a moment of cognitive availability to revoke old beliefs and to cling to new ones where it is considered feasible to find solutions to anxieties and needs. It will be the moment of crystallization of a new system of beliefs that restores a new meaning to historical time. And that relaunches the passing of social time.

Durkheim spoke 100 years ago of moments of "creative effervescence" of new ideals that would guide humanity. Basically, it is a question of the formation of a new model of legitimization of domination, which would have to be accompanied, or riding on the back of, a new model of economic accumulation.

This time of collective desire for new organizing certainties of the predictive horizon is brief and profound. Historically, they arise contingently, due to some grievance, the loss of some right, a break in the moral order of the world, an aggression or perceived loss; an imminent fear or risk of death, etc. It is a moment of mobilized collective discomfort, but as a result of which all the old accumulated uncertainties, the perplexities experienced, the added anxieties, explode and people feel compelled to modify the organization of their lives, to rush into a new destiny that restores the certainties of a better future, regardless of the temporary sacrifices that have to be made. It is in that temporary space where the imagined certainty of the future will be settled; and with it, the monopoly of the conduction of the social hopes that will govern the following four or five decades. Not all societies may have the same intense and revealing course. There may be more active and influential ones than others; but these, in the end, will be coupled to the epochal movement.

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33 <https://www.imf.org/es/Blogs/Articles/2022/05/22/blog-why-we-must-resist-geoeconomic-fragmentation>

Even though, the new axes or strong ideas capable of organizing the imagined social expectations of the population, will replace the old, flagging paradigms, they won't emerge out from nowhere, nor do they will abolish completely the pre-existing ones. They will work on sediments; they will rearticulate fragments to create new mobilizing imaginaries. They will produce a new epochal common sense, leaving in place other multiple previous common senses. That proposal of society that manages to mobilize new expectations, plausible of gradual practical validation, with the framing of certain sediments of old common sense, will have greater chances of imposing itself. Therefore, those will be intense moments of social politicization, conservative or revolutionary; or both simultaneously, but politicization that replaces pretentious political beliefs, erects new ones, defends them in a practical way until, after several years of waves and counter-waves of expansive politicization, they are consolidated, allowing society to withdraw to its everyday life.

These are times when politics rises from the ashes of its lethargy; people get involved, collectives trust and mobilize for their beliefs. If they are authoritarian and hierarchical beliefs, they will trust in providence and force to subdue the infidels. If they are beliefs of equality and justice, they will deploy practical democratizations in the management of material resources, in decision making, in the distribution of material wealth. And perhaps both happen simultaneously.

The cognitive opening of society has no pre-established course. It is an eruptive moment of creation of modes of future sociality. It can take conservative directions, e.g., reformist or revolutionary post-fascist variants. The political struggle of that moment, concerning how, and with what elements, the political forces have concurred to that cognitive availability of society, will define the nature of the new cycle of legitimization-accumulation.

In fact, although in a local, peripheral, partial and ephemeral manner, the symptoms of this great coming battle are already being experienced today. In the economic sphere, with the trials of hybrid forms of free trade and protectionism, tested during the pandemic, and now with the energy crisis following the deglobalization of one of the world's main suppliers of gas and oil, Russia, or the regional contraction of strategic product value chains in order to stop depending on China; or the revival of state economic policies to reorganize the economy, etc.

The experience is also registered politically, with the emergence of progressivism, on the one hand, and governmental post-fascism, on the other.

Each of these proposals, even with their temporal limits and current impossibilities of installing lasting and irradiating hegemonies, are laboratories of possible courses of action which, together with other options that may emerge in time, overcoming these initial limits, will have to dispute on a global scale, the monopoly of the new ideas, of the new

global common sense, capable of captivating the hopes and imaginaries of societies for the following decades.

This global battle for the monopoly of people's predictive horizon will not be a merely discursive fact, even if it is discursively effective. There are always material conditions that create the space of possibility for the success a discourse, and of its own performative efficacy. In a certain way, the conditions of success of the new system of legitimization will, on the one hand, depend on an optimal articulation between the collective availability to substitute strategic predictive horizons of human action and on the other hand, the discursive architecture capable of recognizing and channelling, in some way, the social afflictions and discomforts around a future; and, finally, the coupling with a new economic order that makes these expectations sustainable in time.

Cognitive openness is a bifurcation in legitimate social imaginaries, an inflection in the social order, which will give rise to a new cycle of legitimization-domination. And these virtuous couplings can be approached from different societal projects, even antagonistic and with equally antagonistic results. These are, therefore, the times of politics in its purest state.

Inflation could be considered here as a good example. As it is known, it is an imbalance between the production and the demand of a product that leads to an increase in the price of that merchandise which, if generalized to many other products and maintained over time, dissolves the daily order with which each person organizes own expenses, the fulfilment of our material needs, the planning of savings and bets for the immediate future. For the majority of the population that sees the organization of their livelihoods affected, it is a daily cataclysm.

A liberal solution to this problem is the opening of markets so that the most efficient country in the production of these consumer goods can supply them at a lower price, thus reducing inflation. In the case of energy in Europe, that would mean buying cheap gas from Russia, regardless of the moral repudiation of the invasion of Ukraine. That is a clear market solution. A progressive solution is the state subvention to popular consumption to reduce inflationary pressures; in this case, gas from US and Qatar. A revolutionary alternative would be state control of prices at the expense of the profits of private producers – in the case of electricity, to the private generating companies. There is no single technical solution to a problem. There are multiple technical solutions corresponding to multiple interests and political stakes. The market solution is the profit interests of the exporting companies. The subsidy is the protection of popular consumption, but balancing it with the protection of private accumulation; or, again, only the fear to social discontent that could eventually affect the markets; as in the case of the decision of the conservative British government to subsidize the price of electricity for

two years.³⁴ In the case of affecting corporate profits, it is a public will to structurally reduce economic inequalities. Every governmental economic decision is a condensation and authoritarian hierarchization of the interests of the different social classes.

I mention inflation because, together with recession, they are one of the privileged scenarios of the moments of transition of the economic and political-cultural cycle. They accompanied the transition from the liberal cycle to State capitalism in the 20-30s of the 20th century.³⁵ They were also present in the transition from state capitalism to neo-liberalism.³⁶ And it seems that they will accompany this new transition of cycles.

In synthesis, the liminal time, in its initial disorder and subsequent effervescence, is an exceptional epoch for the creation of the new temporal order of economy and domination. It is, therefore, the privileged moment for the politics of transformation.

Because of this; because the liminal time is only repeated every half century; because it brings to light problems, limits and social possibilities that did not exist in times of social stability, it is the exclusive space for understanding the internal dynamics of the decline and formation of the political, economic and subjective order of societies. But also, of course, for renewed ethical-political commitments with the society under study.

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34 <https://elpais.com/internacional/2022-09-08/liz-truss-destinara-mas-de-115000-millones-de-dinero-publico-a-congelar-la-factura-del-gas-y-la-electricidad-en-el-reino-unido.html>

35 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/when-americans-took-to-the-streets-over-inflation-11623412801>, Tooze 2016.

36 Merrill, K. *The oil crisis of 1972.1974: a brief history with documents*, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007.

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