

REVISTA DE ESTUDIOS GLOBALES

ANÁLISIS HISTÓRICO Y CAMBIO SOCIAL

1/2021 (1) LA CRISIS DEL CAPITALISMO GLOBAL

NOVIEMBRE – DICIEMBRE

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Periodicidad: Semestral
Diseño de Cubierta: Cliocultural
ISSN electrónico: 2697-0511
Universidad de Murcia



Into the Hottest Century and into Epochal Change

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Abstract: The 21st century will be the hottest century in thousands of years, and the world's social landscape is volcanic. Global politics and social relations will be dominated by two issues, the climate crisis and the US-China rivalry. This paper analyses their passage through the «inequality pandemic» of Covid-19, weakening some pertinent forces and strengthened others, and further the contexts and prospects of the climate crisis and the US-China conflict. Governmental response to the pandemic terminated the global regime of neoliberalism and untrammelled market globalization, which have been succeeded by geopolitical conflict and great power domestic mobilization. The profound technological and social transformations needed to meet the climate crisis are likely to remain in the hands of politics as usual, with messy but hardly apocalyptic results. The historical context of the US-China conflict is the half millennium of Western world domination, by a dynasty of states from Portugal to USA. The rise of China as an economic and technological superpower opens a third phase of the decline of the Western empire, after decolonization and the blowback from the failed attempts to westernize the non-Western world after the Cold War victory. The end of the Western empire will probably come in this century –short of nuclear war–, but what will succeed it is an open question.

Keywords: Globalization, Geopolitics, Pandemic, Inequality, Neoliberalism, Climate Crisis, Climate Politics, US-China Conflict, Decline of the West.

Hacia el Siglo más Caluroso y el Cambio de Época

Resumen: El siglo XXI será el siglo más caluroso en miles de años, y el paisaje social del mundo es volcánico. La política global y las relaciones sociales estarán dominadas por dos temas: la crisis climática y la rivalidad entre Estados Unidos y China. Este artículo analiza los efectos de la «pandemia de desigualdad» de Covid-19; efectos que han debilitado algunas fuerzas y han fortalecido otras. También profundiza en los contextos y perspectivas de la crisis climática y en el conflicto entre las dos superpotencias. Las respuestas gubernamentales a la pandemia pusieron fin al régimen global del neoliberalismo y la globalización de mercado sin fisuras, acontecimientos sucedidos por el conflicto geopolítico y la movilización interna de las grandes potencias. Es probable que las profundas transformaciones tecnológicas y sociales necesarias para hacer frente a la crisis climática sigan en manos de la política, como de costumbre, con resultados confusos pero difícilmente apocalípticos. El contexto histórico del conflicto entre Estados Unidos y China supone el principio del fin de medio milenio de dominación del mundo Occidental, por una dinastía de estados desde Portugal hasta Estados Unidos. El ascenso de China como superpotencia económica y tecnológica abre una tercera fase del declive del imperio Occidental, después de la descolonización y el retroceso de los intentos fallidos de occidentalizar el mundo no Occidental tras la victoria de la Guerra Fría. El fin del imperio Occidental probablemente llegará en este siglo, salvo que una guerra nuclear modifique el

curso de los acontecimientos de forma abrupta; en cualquier caso, las previsiones de futuro constituyen siempre una pregunta abierta.

Palabras clave: Globalización, Geopolítica, Pandemia, Desigualdad, Neoliberalismo, Crisis Climática, Política Climática, Conflicto entre Estados Unidos y China, Decadencia de Occidente.

The Hottest Century and Its Volcanic Social Landscape

We have now entered the hottest century for at least 12.000 years (Kaufman *et al.*, 2020:8), and at the fastest pace for the last 2000 years according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2021:7). A chart of warm season temperatures since 1900 in twelve countries on all continents shows a jump upwards from about 2000 for all them¹. Climate change is accelerating toward the edge of tipping-points, from which new natural processes will start, irreversibly for up to thousands of years. Some seems have already started, like the thawing of the Arctic ice and the permafrost. Each of the four last decades has been the warmest ever recorded according to the IPCC 2021 report. The Covid-19 pandemic and the recent extraordinary wildfires and floodings provide the proper scenography of the natural drama we are entering into.

The social temperature has also risen. In 2001, Islamists who had been groomed to fight against communism and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan saw their victory as the first stage of a global jihad, and moved on to attack symbolic buildings of US wealth and power. The direct aim of the attack was modest as well as fantastic, to rouse an American protest movement calling the US government to withdraw its military from Muslim countries (Lahoud, 2021). But the US leadership and its European followers saw it as an attack of «evil» against American freedom and responded with declaring «this crusade – this war on terrorism» (Bush) a longterm war (Bazinet 2001). They embarked on a largescale attempt to remake the Muslim world by force, invading and occupying Afghanistan and Iraq, bombing Somalia, fueling civil war in Syria and Libya, leaving a bi-continental swathe of devastation, violence, gigantic corruption, and the brutalization and fear of decades of war– but little of peaceful Americanization.

The Global Peace Index, put together by the Australian Institute for Economic and Pease, shows a deterioration of social peace in the second decade of this century, including a rise of «violent demonstrations» (IEP, 2021:30). The accumulated inequalities and polarizations have turned parts of the world into social volcanos, which may erupt any time. On

¹ The countries are, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Finland, France, Iran, Italy, Mexico, South Africa, Thailand, USA (Hassol *et al.*, 2021).

October 9 2019, the elected conservative president of Chile, the birthplace of neoliberalism as a governing practice, declared that the country was «a real oasis in a Latin America in convulsion». Nine days later, on October 18 a huge wave of social protest erupted, which prompted the president to declare a state of emergency and to call out the military. In the end the mass protests forced through an assembly to write a new constitution. In the election of members to the constitutional convention in 2021, the rightwing government parties got less than a fourth of the vote. The United States delivered the summer of 2020 its perhaps largest protest movement ever, under the banner of Black Lives Matter against the endemic racism of the country's police and judicial institutions. 15 to 26 million people are estimated to have participated in countrywide demonstrations, triggered by a Black man being choked to death on video by a White policeman (Buchanan *et al.*, 2020).

While volcanic eruptions remain unpredictable, an epochal geopolitical conflict is entering a decisive phase. In the escalating US-China conflict we can discern the beginning of the endgame of half a millennium of Western (or Euro-American) world domination. Short of a nuclear war, this domination is most likely to end in the course of this century, one way or the other, given the new economic dynamic and the demographic weight of Eastern and Southern Asia, of China, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, and others. The US has made it increasingly clear that it is not going to relinquish its world «leadership» voluntarily, and how the global geopolitical conflict will work out is anybody's guess. The risks of a hot, devastating war have increased drastically, not so much by one country deliberately attacking the other but rather by miscalculations. After all, that was the way the German challenge to the British Empire led to the First World War, the bloodiest of the two (Clark, 2013).

This means that a new social landscape and a new configuration of social conflicts are emerging. The legacies of the last decades of the 20th century have ebbed out, the neoliberal globalization and the US victory in the Cold War. What remains from the end of the past century are mainly the uneven advances of sex/gender equality, of class inequality, and the frustrations against the one or the other – plus the ravages of the US and Western wars, from Afghanistan to Libya and the Sahel. Two different issues will take the centre of the world stage for the next decades, climate politics and the US-China rivalry for world domination and hegemony, both in different ways connected with the persistent *problématique* of inequality. Diverse national and perhaps even regional social eruptions are likely to add to the heat.

The pandemic has constituted a threshold between the two eras, although the processes of the new were already on by the Corona outbreak. For the first time in the whole history of humankind of 100.000 years or more, humanity is facing a common species task, saving the ecology of the human habitat, the planet Earth. Human inequality and

division, which have increased over the last decades, make it unlikely that humanity will be fully up to its species task. The rehearsal of the Covid-19 pandemic revealed the fateful impact of state rivalry under crisis panic –even among allies in the European Union and NATO–, of irrationalist politicking, and of socio-economic inequalities between countries, ethnic groups, genders and classes.

Passages through the Inequality Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has, hitherto, not been the deadliest recent plague of the world, by far. With 4,8 million deaths registered by October 1st 2021, its death toll is only 13 percent of the cumulated HIV-AIDS mortality, estimated at around 36 million (UNAIDS, 2021). Reported Corona deaths are certainly below reality, but even accounting for underreporting the difference is huge. Two of the best experts on global excess mortality in 2020 estimate the real figure as being at least 1.4 times the reported one (Karlinsky and Kobak, 2021:2), which would mean somewhat less than 7 million Covid deaths. In spite of its enormous size, AIDS mortality has largely disappeared from public memory, because of its targeted populations, sexual minorities and drug addicts in the North and poor Africans in Southern and Eastern Africa. COVID-19, on the other hand, has been a planetary event on an unprecedented scale and simultaneity. For instance, by January 2021 93 percent of the world's workers were living in countries with some kind of workplace closure measures against the virus (ILO, 2021:1).

Covid-19 has hit all parts of the world, even the remote South Atlantic island Saint Helena, where Napoleon was held captive until his death (Worldometer, 2021), but very differently, in timing as well as in lethal force. Among world regions, Latin America and Eastern Europe have been hardest hit. Among the ten countries of the world with the largest spike of mortality in 2020 and the first half (or months) of 2021, seven are Eastern European and three Latin American. The list is headed by Peru, 590 excess deaths per 100.000 population, and Bulgaria, 460. Two G20 countries are included, Mexico with 360 and Russia with 340 deaths. The lowest on the bottom ten list, Albania and Czechia had 320 extra deaths per 100,000, which may be compared with South Africa 270, Brazil 240, the worst Western European countries Italy 210 and Spain 190, and with USA also 190 (Karlinsky and Kobak, 2021, Supplementary Data). For India, a preliminary estimate puts its excess deaths to 199 per 100.000, or 2,69 million, in absolute terms the largest of the world (Leffer *et al.*, 2021).

At the other end of the inequality of pandemic death is East Asia as a region, despite the fact that the epidemic started and first spread there. In Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan all causes mortality declined in 2020 and in the first half of 2021 (Karlinsky and Kobak, 2021), and life

expectancy increased (slightly) in 2020 (Woolf *et al.*, 2021:3; Mainichi, 2021, Statistics Singapore, 2021). Data from China and Vietnam are not in, but they, and particularly China, have reported relatively few deaths from COVID, 196 per million population in the case of Vietnam and 3 in China (Worldometer 1 October 2021). Comparative figures from India were 321, from Spain 1847, and from USA 2150.

There are also two small groups of countries successfully staving off the Corona contagion, creating somewhat lower mortality and longer life expectancy, the Antipodes of Australia and New Zealand, and the Nordics of Denmark, Iceland, Finland (almost), and Norway (Karlinsky and Kobak 2021; Aburto *et al.*, 2021; Woolf *et al.*, 2021). Among the latter, the absence of Sweden may be noticed, barely making it to the better half of the EU (Eurostat, 2021). Karlinsky's and Kobak's data also show a mortality decline in Mauritius. Africa north of South Africa has hitherto been lucky and reports very low registered COVID death figures, which besides suspected larger undercounting are generally held to indicate a reality of relatively low incidence.

The reasons for this pattern of death are many and intricate, only to be hinted here. Apart from the obvious significance of government foresight and resoluteness, insular and/or peripheral isolation seems to be an advantage, underlying the good record countries outside East Asia, and except for China all the East Asian star performers are islands or a peninsula. There is also an all-East Asian commonality across political regimes which may be pertinent, a collectivist kind of governance, by strong states, social cohesion, and civic discipline.

Social inequalities in life tend to transfer into inequalities of death. One among many US studies summarized, that disproportionate deaths during the pandemic occurred among people of «non-white race/ethnicity», with income below the median, and less than high school education (Seligman *et al.*, 2021), that is among people providing «essential services» during the pandemic (Rogers *et al.*, 2020). Hispanic men were hit hardest, their life expectancy shortened by 4,6 years in 2020, more than four times the impact on the lives of non-Hispanic White women (Woolf *et al.*, 2021: table 2). The life expectancy gap between USA and 16 other high income countries in Europe and Asia widened in 2020, from 1.5 year in 2010-18 to 3,4 years for men and from 0,8 to 2,1 years for women (Woolf *et al.*, 2021: fig. 3). The same kind of ethnic/racial division is also found in British public statistics (United Kingdom, 2021). Men come out as more mortal than women (See further Oxfam, 2021).

The President of the World Bank, David Malpass, has called Covid-19 «the inequality pandemic», something which is most visible in its economic impact. After a brief initial setback, key stock exchanges bounced back. *The Forbes* (2021) magazine list of the world's billionaires became 660 names longer from March 2020 to March 2021, to 2.755. Billionaire

wealth increased by \$ 5,1 trillion, to 13,1 trillion, a figure equal to the combined GDP in 2020 of Japan, Germany, India and Italy. A somewhat broader class of privilege, of «high net worth individuals», also had a very good pandemic, their numbers increasing by 1,2 million to 20,8 worldwide and their wealth by 7,6 percent (Capgemini, 2021).

At the other end of the world, the number of people living in extreme poverty increased by 97 million in 2020, to 732 million (Mahler *et al.*, 2021), i.e., as many as the combined population of USA and the EU23, i.e., the EU minus its four poorest member states, 733 million. Worldwide about 120 million more people were driven to hunger and undernourishment in 2020, to 768 million, the same-size population as the US and the EU (minus Bulgaria) (FAO, 2021: table 2). Charitable foodbanks had to feed people also in the US and the UK, especially after cancelled school lunches, but apart from the super-rich getting even super richer, the overall US income distribution remained basically unchanged in 2020, (US Bureau of the Census, 2021a: table A3). In spite of spells of economic distress over the year, the rate of official poverty actually fell in the US of 2020 after all the «stimulus» and special support programmes, from 11,8 to 9,1 percent. Total household income declined by 2,6 percent. (US Bureau of the Census, 2021b: figure 2).

The global loss of labour income in 2020 was \$3,7 trillion, or 8,3 percent. For the first two quarters of 2021 the loss amounted to 5,3 percent or \$1,7 trillion (ILO, 2021b). (These figures do not include temporary public support transfers).

Between the poles of extreme wealth and extreme poverty, the middle class shrank. In India a third of the middle class (earning between \$20 and \$50 a day) were pushed down into poverty, in the rest of South Asia a fourth (Donnan *et al.*, 2021). In the «advanced economies», the middle class population – having a «high income» by global standards – declined by about 45 million people (Kochhar, 2021).

The economic inequality operates also country-wise. According to World Bank analysts (Gill and Nishio, 2021), the recovery from the pandemic will largely pass by the 74 poorest countries, the countries eligible for the Bank's IDA assistance. In 2020 their miserable per capita income declined by 2,3 percent, and their growth in 2021-23 is estimated to lag behind that of advanced economies by 2 percentage points a year. The pandemic has also particularly damaged several «emergent economies», except for Turkey, which defied expectations with growth in 2020 and fast moving forward in 2021. «Being relegated from an upper to a lower middle income country has undone some of the progress Indonesia has made over the last two decades», noted the *Jakarta Post* on July 15, 2021, calling for another economic model. Argentina, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, and Mexico were dealt major blows, with Argentina projected to recover only beyond 2025, South Africa possibly by the end of 2024 (OECD, 2021). In terms of Covid deaths, we noticed above that Eastern

Europe and Latin America were the two regions worst hit. Economically, Latin America is at the bottom together with Western Europe, while Eastern Europe, faring better than southwestern Europe in 2020, is projected, in July 2021, to recover its losses in the course of 2021 (Wiener Institut für Wirtschaftsvergleiche, 2021; CEPAL, 2021).

TABLE 1: *The Economic Contraction of the World in 2020. GDP Change in 2020, percent*

World	-3,5
USA	-3,5
China	+2,3
Eurozone	-6,6
India	-7,3
Japan	-4,7
Russia	-3,0
Latin America	-6,5
Sub-Saharan Africa	-2,4

Source: World Bank, 2021a: table 1.1.

In GDP terms, the economic impact of the pandemic was strongest in India, the Eurozone (in EU as whole, -6,1 percent), and Latin America. While the heaviest blow fell on small tourist economy island nations, like Fiji (-19 percent), Barbados, and Mauritius, several rather big national economies were also severely hit, in Europe Spain -10,6, UK -9,8, Italy -8,9, France -8,1, in Latin America Peru -11,1, Argentina -9,9, Mexico -8,2, in Africa and Asia the outliers South Sudan -10,8, Iraq -10,4, Philippines -9,6 (World Bank, 2021a). The negative performance of most of Western Europe is striking and perhaps surprising. Explanations have yet to emerge, but the early arrival and mismanagement of the virus have probably weighed upon the dire economic outcome.

The pandemic has demonstrated the strength of China, the only G20 country, together with Turkey in second place, able to keep growing economically in 2020 and projected to grow faster than any advanced economy, including USA, in 2021². The US economy, although not its

² Actually, the Irish economy had the fastest growth among rich economies in 2020, preliminarily at 3,4 percent. Growth was wholly driven by exports. Computer services and outsourced pharmaceutical and medical goods played a major roles, but so did also «goods for processing», aka «contract manufacturing», which is no cross-border trade but refers to international transfers of ownership of the goods being processed. (O'Toole 2020:61). The export economies of Bangladesh and Vietnam also managed to keep positive though lowered economic growth. Bangladesh seems to have had the highest growth in the world – except for Guayana with its new oil windfall – 5,5 percent for the fiscal year of 2020-2021 (May to May) (Bangladesh Ministry of Finance, 2021: Appendix 1.2).

society and population, has proved itself more robust against the viral challenge than that of its allies Western Europe and Japan, largely due to more vigorous and generous public support of ordinary citizens as well as of capital, both driving down the poverty rate, as we noticed above, and overtaking Asia-Pacific in the number and the wealth of rich people (Capgemini, 2021).

Summing up geopolitically, the passages through the pandemic have shown the efficiency of East Asian governance in containing it, the continuing economic dynamic of China, the social dysfunctionality of the United States and the force of its post-neoliberal economics. The world economy is now bouncing back more rapidly and forcefully than economic institutions had first expected. This is mainly due to the strong performance of China and USA, which together account for about 40 percent of world output, and «contrasts with ongoing weakness in other parts of the world economy» (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2021).

Other regions than East Asia and North America have been weakened relatively. Europe has become a lesser union, cracking under the viral onslaught, and overtaken economically by the US. The rise of India was set back by the Modi government's mismanagement of the pandemic, but its economy is projected to rebound vigorously. Biden has signalled that the US will fight against China under the rallying banner of liberal democracy. The handling of the pandemic by the governments of USA, India, and the European Union has hardly convinced skeptical populations and politicians in the non-Western world of the superiority of liberal democracy. In the spring of 2021 even a slight plurality of Americans, 43 to 42 percent, thought China had done a better job on the pandemic, and a median of 17 rich countries, evaluated 49 to 37 percent in favour of China's performance as compared to USA's (Pew, 2021a). Russia did better economically than southwestern Europe, but failed to mass produce and mass use its early and effective vaccine. Africa, except its most developed country, South Africa, has been spared the worst viral and national economy impact, but its masses of poor have become even poorer. The continent has been even more embroiled in violent conflicts and become further marginalized economically, while keeping its large and long demographic shadow. Latin America has been the main loser, with high losses of jobs and consumption as well as of human lives.

Latin America is the world region with the most articulated political left, in a broad sense. Sociopolitically, then, the travail of Latin America means a weakening of leftwing politics, underlined by pandemic underperformance –economically as well as medically– by the two major social reform governments in Argentina and Mexico. Three other countries are rather close to get progressive government, Brazil, Chile, and Colombia. If a left-of-centre government should get into power there this or next year, its space of action is likely to be circumscribed.

By and large, the pandemic has favoured big capital and the very rich, while weakening workers, above all «informal» workers -60 percent of the world's workforce (ILO, 2021b), farmers, women, and youth, through economic disruption, unemployment, and health risks. On the other hand, democratic and egalitarian protest against the «inequality pandemic» was simmering on all continents before the pandemic, which certainly gave it no satisfaction. Will its growing anger overcome its shrinking resource base? The question remains open.

On the climate crisis, the immediate effect of the pandemic was substantial, the largest annual decline of CO₂ emissions since World War II, globally 6,4 percent, and almost 10 per cent in advanced economies, driven by a decrease of road transport and, secondly, of aviation. The largest emissions decline was in the US, 12,9, and the smallest among major countries in China, -1,4, mirroring the unique non-decline of the Chinese economy (Tollefson, 2021). But the reduction of emissions was temporary, and the concentration of greenhouse gases continued to increase in 2020 and the first half of 2021 (World Meteorological Association, 2021). In December 2020 global emissions from the large energy sector were 2 per cent higher than in December 2019 (IEA 2021a). With the economic recovery emissions are expected to rise again, to only about 1 percent below the record level of 2019 (IEA 2021b). Only the transport sector has not yet returned to pre-pandemic emissions (WMO, 2021). UNCTAD (2021) found to its explicit surprise, that in its survey of pandemic policy responses by 20 countries plus the EU that renewable energy packages were more common in 2008 than in 2020.

The pandemic opinion effect is still to be assessed properly, but in a large poll of the G20 countries (of the world's biggest economies) three positive effects and one negative of the pandemic experience stand out. Majorities in all countries agreed that, it had shown how quickly people can change their behaviour in a crisis, secondly it had connected people of the world, and, thirdly, that Covid-19 was a unique moment to transform societies to be better able to deal with shocks and extreme events in the future (Global Commons Alliance, 2021). Together with other extraordinary disasters in the same period, of flooding and wildfires, an increased awareness of the fragility of our planetary civilization and of the self-destructive human role in endangering that fragility may be expected. But the social rules deployed to handle the pandemic also created a polarization between believers in and deniers of science, which could add to the already existing polarization around the climate issue. In general, Covid 19 and the response to it divided societies. That is the preponderant opinion of the populations of advanced economies polled by the Pew Research Center. Division is most felt in USA, where 88 percent of the population thought in spring 2021 that their society had become more divided (Pew, 2021a).

The End of Neoliberalism: Prospects of Its Post Era

The main socio-political effect of the pandemic, however, has been its ending of the neoliberal regime of capitalism, initiated by the Chilean military dictatorship in 1975, –under the guidance of Chicago economics and its connections with economists at the Catholic university in Chile– and capturing the commanding heights of the world economy in 1979-80 with the reign of Thatcher and Reagan and the «structural adjustment» programs of the IMF. As an ideological and political force, neoliberalism was a reaction against the advances of the propertyless in the 1960s-1970s, «overloading» democracies with their demands (Cf. Hay, 2007; Mudge, 2016; Slobodian, 2018). Out of the world of economic turbulence in the second half of the 1970s by crises and socioeconomic restructuring, neoliberalism could get into power also through electoral channels.

In a nutshell, neoliberalism meant that the state should concentrate on order and repression, while keeping out of the economic and social relations, to be left to global markets forces. Ronald Reagan, «the great communicator», summed up the message: ‘I’ve always felt the nine most terrifying words in the English language are: I’m from the government, and I’m here to help’. He was talking about to the plight of US farmers, and then went on calling for the Senate to vote for «assistance» to the «freedom fighters» of Nicaragua (i.e. the counter-revolutionary armed force, the Contras) (*Washington Post*, 13 August 1986). During the 2020 pandemic there was full two-party support in the US Congress for massive government help, not just to bail out banks as in 2008, but to support the population as a whole, including distributing cash cheques to 160 million households³. Upon US initiative the G20 countries have agreed on a global corporate tax, ending the tax haven market, concretized by the OECD, on October 8 announcing a deal with 136 countries. The globalization promotion of free trade and of free flows of capital has been succeeded by geopolitics and «national security» concerns overriding interests of private business.

The pandemic sealed the fate of neoliberalism, but the latter’s final demise, after surviving the financial crashes of Southeast Asia and of Latin America at the end of the 1990s, and of the West in 2008, had better be seen as part of a broad reconfiguration of the world. Planetary crises, like the pandemic and climate warming cannot be left to the markets. After the successful rise of China neoliberals can no longer claim that theirs is the only viable growth model, and neoliberalism has produced recurrent financial crashes and destabilizing inequality, while delivering growth rates

³ Available in: <https://new.america.org/pit/reports/cares-act-stimulus-payments>. (Retrieved 2 July 2020).

below the post-war Keynesian period. Neoliberal marketeering is also unfit for geopolitical popular mobilizations.

The neoliberal was a cruel form of capitalism. However, in global history it may also be remembered for something else. It was under its regnum that inter-national economic inequality in the world began to bend down, having risen inexorably in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, then stalling at a high plateau with decolonization, when the economies of India and China started to grow again. Inter-national inequality is what the leading researcher on world inequality, Branko Milanovic, refers to as Concept 2 inequality, i.e., population-weighted GDP per capita, measured from national accounts. From around 1980 this inequality starts to decline, wholly driven by Chinese development. Excluding China, inter-national inequality drops from about 2000, and counting out both China and India the inter-national inequality curve bends somewhat later, in the first decade of this century (Milanovic, 2014; 2016). Without China and India, the convergence process petered out in the years before the pandemic. Outsourcing production to low-wage, low-tax countries was a crucial part of neoliberal globalization, and Asian countries, particularly China and Southeast Asia, and in Europe Ireland above all, took this as an opportunity, which has then begun to unfold according to the capital-labour dialectic once discovered by Marx, with (slowly) rising labour strength and demands.

Neoliberalism was finally cast away. It was not defeated, its most frontal opponents in the central economies were, Occupy Wall Street, the Corbyn and Sanders campaigns, France Insoumise, Greek Syriza, and so on, while leaving their cracks and fissures. The pandemic did not issue into a profound re-start moment like 1945 after the defeat of Fascism, or into a door open to new social forces and change, as happened in USA and Scandinavia in 1933. Neoliberalism was first discarded (before the pandemic) by rightwing nationalist governments, first in Eastern Europe, e.g. in Hungary and Poland, followed, partly, by the Trump administration. Then decisively during the pandemic by centrist forces, a temporary bipartisan US Congress coalition installing a generous public support policy, and the European Commission with the crucial support of Germany, driving through the «Next Generation» recovery plan. The largest fiscal stimulus packages in the world were all (except centre-left New Zealand) launched by centre-right or centrist governments, headed, well above the others by USA, followed by New Zealand, Singapore, Australia, Japan, Britain, and Canada (IMF, 2021). Post-neoliberalism is likely to set out with a pragmatic agenda shaped by diverse particular interests within the parameters of climate change challenges and geopolitical rivalry. An agenda of state-modified capitalism may very well include some reduction of the national inequalities generated by neoliberalism.

Climate Politics, Hopes, Despair and Social Justice

About 250 years ago the Industrial Revolution began to open the door to humanity's escape from nature's confinement, an exit from the so-called Malthusian trap, by increasing production with help of fossil fuels. Two centuries later, humanity began to discover that there were limits to human efforts at mastering nature, giving rise to concerns about «the limits of growth». With the 21st century humanity has brought itself into a new planetary ecology, of heat and of nature in uproar, forcing it to confront the ecological effects of the industrial revolution.

The encounter between the human species and the planet is forcing through a completely new configuration of political issues, which largely has to be played with the old instruments of class, gender, state, and religion politics, in which new environmentalist forces also have remained embedded. The new politics is veering between despair and hope, between, on the one hand, existential dread and apocalyptic images of species and planet catastrophe, and, on the other, glimmers of hope of profound social transformations taking us beyond existing capitalism into some kind of panhuman wellbeing. Both sides fetching arguments from climate science, from prophecies of doom to calls for radical social change, e.g., «We need nothing less than a societal transformation», Patrick Devine-Wright, one of the lead authors of the 2021 IPCC report (*The Guardian*, 10 August 2021).

The climate crisis has become a concern of world population, not only of experts, activists, and many politicians. In the G20 countries poll cited above, a country average of 58 per cent (unweighted by population size) were «very» or «extremely» worried about the current state of nature. Opinion was divided internationally in an interesting manner. Most worried were the Turks (79 per cent), the Mexicans (77 per cent), the Brazilians (74 per cent), and the Indians (70 per cent). Least worried were the Saudis (26 per cent), the Japanese (44), and the Anglo-Saxons, USA, UK, Australia (45-46 per cent). Less people were worried about the state of nature in France and Germany (57 per cent) than in South Africa (66 per cent) and Indonesia (68 per cent) (Global Commons Alliance, 2021). The pupils movement, Fridays for Future, started in Stockholm in September 2018 by Greta Thunberg, has become a global mass movement, claiming to have mobilized 14 million youths in school strikes in 65 countries, with particular strength in Germany, USA, and Sweden, but a presence on all continents⁴.

Ecological politics started already in the early 1970s, with party launches in the Antipodes of Tasmania and New Zealand, and emerged as a significant political opposition out of the European elections in 1979.

⁴ Available in: fridaysforfuture.org (Retrieved 2 July 2020).

Though not gaining any seat in the European parliament, the German list scored well enough to qualify for public economic support, which provided the funding for the founding of the Green Party in Germany in 1980. Green parties have since then become a non-negligible minority force in most parts of Western Europe, and above all in Germany, France, Netherlands, and Belgium. There is also global network of Green parties, founded in 2001, with 80 member parties and some organizational structure and a common Global Greens Charter. Outside Western Europe, these parties are mostly marginal or local, although member parties were once, around 2010, represented in the (hardly powerful, true) parliaments of DR Congo and Sierra Leone⁵.

There is a widespread global concern about the climate crisis, stronger among women than among men, by people under than 35, by people with a tertiary education, and with a high income (Global Commons Alliance, 2021). There is a global movement, and a global ecological party politics, albeit mainly Western European the latter and North Atlantic the former. But there is no major worldwide movement of climate-required societal transformation, nor a major social force fighting for climate justice, although indigenous peoples' movements are becoming non-negligible in several countries. This means that, whatever the urgency of radical change, climate politics is most likely having to operate through existing political systems and global geopolitics and more often than not through the political elites in existence, even though driven from outside, by pressures from scientific enlightenment and popular movements.

Politics as usual for unusual change is the most likely prospect, including, vested particularistic interests, social lenses from selected memories of a world long gone, power games, horse-trading, corruption, etc. The situation of political mess raises the requirements of climate movements and climate scientists to develop their understanding of and their addressing the socio-political complexity of the climate issue, on national as well as global level, a task which cannot be safely left to the elites in power.

The movement and the scientists have to think through what it entails to speak for humanity as whole and its planetary habitat. First of all it means to speak for a species hugely and deeply divided, not only by cultures and opinions but also, and above all, by conditions of life. The most articulate and active climate opinion is concentrated in what the World Bank calls high income countries, which, without the oil emirates, house about 15 percent of world population. A program for world change cannot be properly developed from a perspective of an affluent upper middle class minority within the fifteen percent, such as «prosperity for all will destroy the planet» and «de-growth». Such ideas are circulating

⁵ Available in: www.wikiwand.com/en/Global_Greens (Retrieved 2 July 2020).

widely among the committed, and they are counter-productive to political change. But they are certainly not alone, and may very well be a minority within a minority. The program advocated by Chomsky and Pollin (2020), e.g., is very explicit on global climate justice, and so are Greta Thunberg and the pupils' movement: «We will not allow the industrialized countries to duck responsibility for the suffering of children in other parts of the world» (Thunberg *et al.*, 2021:11). The UN organizations in the field are also committed to global equity. Democratic climate politics will have to aim for: «Save our planet. Common well-being for all». People's per capita purchasing power in the high income countries is currently 53 times that of the 665 million living in low income countries, and 20 times higher than the purchasing power of the 3,3 billion in lower middle income nations. (World Bank, 2021) The right to development is a human right.

Climate politics will involve games of crisis responsibility allocation, and besides lies and flat denials there are several different ways of measuring to take into account. Two-thirds of the world's total fossil emissions are produced in just six countries or block of countries. But their rank order depends whether you count total or per capita emissions, and there is also an argument for a historical responsibility. Today's climate crisis derives from a historical accumulation of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions since the Industrial Revolution, an accumulation accelerating from 1950. The old developed countries of Europe, USA, and Japan – who laid the basis for the current crisis - have reduced their emissions somewhat since 2015, whereas developing countries have increased theirs, Indonesia by 6,2 percent annually, Turkey by 3,5 percent, India 3,0 percent and China by 2,0. However, the historical pollutions of the Industrial Revolution still hang over the planet.

All the three different ways of counting in table 2 are true, within their statistical margins of error, and relevant. Their three competing messages need to be taken into account.

TABLE 2: *Three Ways of Identifying the World's Largest CO₂ Emitters, in 2019, by Production*

Share of total 2019		Per capita share 2019		Cumulated historical share 2013	
China	30	USA	15,5	North America	27
USA	13	Russia	12,5	EU	20
EU+UK	9	Japan	9	Russia/C Asia	15
India	7	China	8	China	12
Russia	5	EU+UK	6,5	South Asia	7

Sources: Shares in 2019: EDGAR, 2020; cumulated historical shares: Chancel and Piketty, 2015:14.

Emission can also be seen as driven by consumption demand, for goods (cars for instance) and services (e.g., flights). They can then be allocated to consumers' accounts via household expenditure and income distribution data. Chancel and Piketty calculated the pattern of consumption-based emissions with data from 2013.

TABLE 3: *World shares of CO₂ consumption-driver emissions: Top 10 percent of emitters by country and class of consumption. Percent of total emissions*

Affluent North Americans	18
Affluent EU citizens	9
Affluent Chinese	4,5
All top ten percent emitters	45

Source: Chancel and Piketty 2015: Figure 7.

Given stark economic inequalities, consumption-based emissions calculations may be better analysed on a class basis. By 2013, the curves of between- and within-country inequality of emissions were about to cross, with the latter rising (Chancel and Piketty, 2015:33). According to the UN Environment Programme, the world's richest 1 percent would need to reduce their consumption at least thirty times by 2030 for the Paris Agreement goal of maximum 1.5 degree planetary warming (UNEP, 2020: XV).

The UN Development Program has developed another measure, «planetary pressure», combining carbon emissions and «material footprint», «the amount of material extracted (biomass, fossil fuels, ores...) to meet domestic final demand for goods and services» (UNDP 2020: 235). The «pressure» values are then indexed into UNDP Human Development Index. Through the size of the reduction of the pre-ecological index by the «planetary pressure-adjusted index» you get a measure of the ecological damage or risk to the planet that a country produces. The privileged of the US sit heavily on the rest of the world.

TABLE 4: *Reduction of Human Development through Planetary Pressure. Percent of development index reduced by planetary pressure-adjusted Human Development Index*

USA	22,5
Countries of very high development	15,4
China	11,8
Developing countries	5,5
World	7,3

Source: UNDP, 2020.

Climate justice of class, gender, and country, and rights of the disadvantaged to grow and develop, as well as inter-national understanding and cooperation are controversial but inescapable issues in climate politics. Outcomes are uncertain. Opinions and mainstream politicians are moving forward, but are still walking behind the dynamics of the climate system. Under policies in place or announced, we are most probably heading for a disastrous 2,7 degrees temperature rise by the end of the century. Assuming that all declared national net zero pledges are achieved in time and in full, warming will climb to 2,1 degrees above the per-industrial level (IEA, 2021c). If the pandemic experience – of cutthroat competition for protective gear, national border closures, vaccine patent exclusivity, hoarding, and politicking -is anything to go by, the prospects are pretty bleak, particularly at the global level. But hardly hopeless. Apocalyptic scenarios are ignoring the evolving impact of institutional commitments, at a global as well as a national level – including the high courts in some countries, the technological drive of profit prospects in a post-fossil economy, and the capacity and potential of 21st century politics, manifested during the pandemic. Confronted with an acute crisis shock, several governments were jolted into action.

The Last Decades of the Western Empire

The intensifying US-China conflict has to be seen in its historical context. For half a millennium the world has been an imperium of a Western dynasty of North Atlantic states, succeeding each other, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, Britain, and USA. The competitive Christian European imperial family has also included other members in secondary historical roles, like France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, and Russia. The US is the last of this dynasty, and it has no heir. The end of the dynasty is approaching. When and how it will end is unpredictable. As is who or what will follow, China is the main pretender, but its succession is by no means guaranteed. The worldwide Western empire may, for instance, break up into regional powers, as the vast Mongol empire once did, or world domination may mutate into some kind of fluid post-imperial equilibration as the Roman empire did. The decline and termination of empires can be a long and protracted non-linear process, as we know from the Mughals and the Qing as well as from Rome. However, there can be no doubt that the decline has set in, and from the look-out of 2021 it seems probable that the 21st century will be decisive.

The basis of the decline is global economic development, which took a new turn after 1950 and had got its new clear direction around 2000.

TABLE 5: *The Rise and Decline of the West. Shares of World GDP, 1820-2003, percent*

	1820	1870	1913	1950	1973	2003
West (a)	25	43	54	56	51	43
Asia	59	38	25	19	24	41
Lat. Am.	2	3	4	8	9	8
Africa	7	5	3	4	3	3
Non-West (b)	68	45	32	30	35	51

Notes: a) The West is Western Europe and what the author called «Western offshoots», i.e. USA and other non-Iberian European settler countries; b) The Non-West here is the sum of Asia, Latin America and Africa. Because of rounding of decimals, the sum sometimes differs from simple additions of the rows above. *Source*: Maddison, 2007:381.

These figures, drawn from one of the greatest of modern economic historians, have, of course, their (unknown) margins of error, but with their margins they do show world trajectories of economic development, the pre-industrial inheritance of Asia and North Africa, the rise of the industrializing West, peaking in 1950 with USA accounting for a good fourth of world production and Asia driven down to the bottom by colonialism, wars in China, and the smashing of Japan. With decolonization and the Chinese Revolution, India and China started to grow again, Japan recovered, and its former colonies successfully industrialized. By early 21st century, the economies of the non-West were again larger than the Western ones. The 20th century had ended, the gravity of the world is tilting back to Asia.

Several Asian countries have since 1950 produced impressive rates of economic growth, unrivalled by any country in the West, but the Chinese development after 1980 is stunning and unique. The ex-neoliberal development economist Jeffrey Sachs has called it «the most successful development story in world history» (here quoted from Zakaria, 2011: 102). In forty years from 1980 to 2020, the Chinese share of world GDP increased tenfold, from 1,7 to 17 percent (World Bank data, 2021). By comparison, in the eighty years from 1870 to 1950, the US share tripled, from 9 to 27 percent (Maddison, 2007:381). In 2020 the US share was still 25 percent, while the Chinese gains have been at the expense of Europe, East and West.

So far, the decline of the Western dynasty of world domination has gone through three major phases, one ended, one just ending, and a third just beginning.

Decolonization was the first phase, starting after World War II, and peaking in the two Vietnam wars, the French and the American, and

basically finished in the 1990s, with South Africa's transformation from a colonial settler state to a democratic post-colonial one⁶. Inter-imperialist rivalries in the two devastating World Wars, to which masses of colonial soldiers and auxiliaries were enlisted, had undermined colonial authority and the dialectic of colonial modernization had generated generations of anti-colonial nationalists. Decolonization in turn has created a post-colonial «non-aligned» world opinion, i.e., regularly voting against the US blockade of Cuba and the settler occupation of Palestine, and demanding a Western recognition of and compensation for its historical responsibility for today's climate threats.

The second phase has taken place in this century, and appears to be ending as I am writing. It derived from Western hubris, brutality, and incompetence after its Cold War victory. The US and its faithful followers embarked on three ambitious projects with a view to remaking the non-Western world into their own self-image. One lay near at hand, transforming the former Soviet Union and former Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe. The second was to remake the Middle-Eastern Muslim world by force. This decision was contingent and followed upon al-Qaeda's attack on New York and Washington, but it contained a logic from the Cold War. Islamic traditionalist reaction was weaponized into international militant Islamism as an anti-communist strike force in Afghanistan, strategically conceived by Carter's security adviser Brzezinski, bankrolled and provided with religious fervour by the Saudis, militarily trained by the Pakistanis, and armed by the US under Carter and Reagan⁷. Out of this came the Islamist hubris of global jihad. The Bush administration then started a «war on terror», which became also a war of terror, stretching from Afghanistan to Libya, and with its hells of horror from Bamyan via Abu Ghraib to Guantánamo. The third project was changing China, which could hardly be done by dictation, as in Eastern Europe nor by force as, it was believed, in the Middle East. China should be acculturated, at least economically and politically, by integration into the Western economy and Western-controlled institutions like the WTO.

Of the three brazen grand projects of, two and a half were fiascos, and their blowback constituted the second phase of Western decline. One and a half of them demanded huge human cost, not to the Western consortia starting and running them, but from the targets of the projects. The attempts to reshape the Muslim world cost 800.000 lives, 335.000 of whom civilians (Watson Institute, 2021). The half success was in Eastern Europe west of Russia –which was culturally hardly non-Western–,

⁶ The Israeli occupation of Palestine may be seen as a minor leftover from the colonial era.

⁷ In the triumphalist late 1990s Brzezinski boasted of how he lured the Soviets to intervene in Afghanistan by getting the CIA to support the traditionalist Afghan resistance to the communist modernizers, in an interview to the *Le Nouvel Observateur* (January 15- 21 1998).

creating a clientele even more loyal to the US than Western Europe (which had been a crucial helper in the success), the «New Europe» as the US Minister of the Iraq invasion Donald Rumsfeld put it. The Eastern European project reached its utter limit in 2000, with the demise of the Yeltsin satrapy and the regeneration of Russia in a non-Western direction by Putin. By then, the Western neoliberal tutelage had brought the gap between the Russian national income and that of Western Europe down to levels before the Russian Revolution, and had allocated the richest 10 percent a larger share and the bottom half of the population a smaller one than Tsarism in 1905 (Alvaredo *et al.*, 2018, figs. 2.8.2 and 2.8.5).

As a compensation for the failed Westernization of Russia, EU and US politicians contrived to bring the Ukraine into the Western orbit, cutting its ancient links to Russia (Sakwa, 2016). The US invested \$5 billion in its interference in the politics of Ukraine, according to assistant Secretary of State Nuland. It finally succeeded in 2014, but at the cost of dividing the country in bloodshed⁸, and creating a regime not that much different from the now fallen government in Afghanistan. To what extent the permanently escalated conflict with Russia is regarded as a cost or a gain in Brussels and Washington seems unknown.

The fiascos in the Muslim world, after those of Iraq, Somalia, Libya, Syria, with their wars of destruction and failed reconstructions, came to a dramatic end in August 2021, with the proconsulate US embassy in Kabul evacuated by helicopters in the smoke of burning documents.

The realization that China was not growing into a second UK or defeated Japan, but was becoming a big power of its own has been gradual, starting from China's very successful avoidance of the Western financial crash of 2008. From the Trump Presidency on, the idea of assimilating China has been replaced by fighting it and «keeping it in its proper place» as Trump's second Foreign Minister put it (Zakaria, 2020:202). The defeat of these grand post-Cold War attempts to westernize the non-Western world, left most non-Westerners less subdued and more adverse than before, eroding Western world hegemony.

A third phase is just starting, by a non-Western country challenging the economic and technological superiority of the Western emperor, symbolized by the 5G telecommunications infrastructure developed by the Chinese company Huawei. Unable (for the time being) to compete with it, the US has banned it, pressuring its followers to do the same, which many of them have. A non-Western country successfully launched (in 2015) global initiatives of its own, such as the Asia Infrastructure Investment

⁸ The Ukraine is culturally deeply divided, East-West, and opinion on associating with the EU or with Russia was extremely polarized. In November 2013 a poll showed that in the East 64 percent were in favour of a customs union with Russia and 16 percent for an EU association, whereas in Western Ukraine 66% were for an EU orientation and 18 percent for a Russian (Figes, 2014:70), first published in *Foreign Affairs*, 16 December 2013.

Bank, and the Belt and Roads Initiative, both taking off despite US opposition. China has become the world's largest manufacturer, with a share of output almost twice as that of USA (28 to 16 percent in 2018) (World Economic Forum, 2020), the world's largest exporter and second largest importer (World Integrated Trade Solution Data, 2020). It has sent 40.000 enterprises out into the world (Brown *et al.*, 2021:153). The landscape of economic globalization has been redrawn.

To meet the economic-technological challenge to its supremacy, the US is striving to broaden the «strategic competition» into a wider conflict of geopolitical power positions and ideology or «values». A bugle call to battle was sounded by the State Department in the last months of the Trump regime: «the Chinese Communist Party has triggered a new era of great-power competition. In the face of the China challenge, the United States must secure freedom» (US State Department, 2020). President Biden's top China adviser earned his appointment by arguing for a broad regime confrontation: «Both rivalries [that between Germany and Britain in the 19th and the current China-US one] feature a rising autocracy with a state-protected economic system challenging an established democracy with a free-market economic system» (Doshi, 2018). Biden (2021) himself is also putting the competition with China into a highly charged ideological frame: «American leadership must meet this new moment of advancing authoritarianism, including the growing ambitions of China to rival the United States, and the determination of Russia to damage and disrupt our democracy». He has revived a mutation of an old idea of the late Senator McCain and others on the US right, to substitute or marginalize the UN by creating a League of Democracies⁹, in calling for annual «Summits for Democracy», «defending against authoritarianism, fighting corruption, and promoting respect for human rights».

An aggressive foreign policy has large bipartisan support in the US Congress, but there is a wide-ranging professional debate going on in the journal *Foreign Affairs*, and public opinion is divided. Among Republican voters the three most important foreign policy goals were (in February 2021), protecting the jobs of American workers, protecting the US from terrorism, and maintaining the US military advantage over all other countries. Democrats listed reducing the spread of infectious diseases, dealing with climate change, and protecting American jobs. «Limiting the power and influence of China» ranked fifth among Republicans (63 percent support), but only 12th among Democrats (36 percent support) (Pew Research Center, 2021). As for the Chinese, the official line so far is mainly defensive, denying US accusations and continuing the outward

⁹ There was a plan, announced by Boris Johnson as the host and almost certainly with US support, to turn the rich economies club G7 into a Democratic 10, including India, Australia and South Korea at the club summit in June 2021. It did not come off, apparently due to European scepticism of escalating world polarization (Sergeant, 2021).

economic policy, which hitherto is paying off. The main economic flows keep running, and US high finance, headed by JP Morgan Chase, is availing itself of new licenses for wholly foreign-owned financial operations in China (Kimberley, 2021). Organized US business is trying to put brakes on the anti-China offensive of the bipartisan political elite (Bade, 2021).

In this post-neoliberal era of geopolitics and ideological mobilizations there is a little noticed Sino-American convergence on a new attention to social and egalitarian concerns.

In his State Department speech (on February 4th 2021) on America's Place in the World, President Biden also emphasized domestic social issues, taking «steps to acknowledge and address systematic racism and the scourge of white supremacy in our own country». «Every action we take in our conduct abroad we must take with American working families in mind. Advancing a foreign policy for the middle class demands urgent focus on our economic revival». The steadfastly free trade liberal Economist magazine notes with disapproval that recent supply chains reports by the administration do not only deal with national security but «also enforces union representation, social justice and pretty much everything else» (Editorial, 17 July 2021).

Deng Xiaoping's economic development strategy from 1978 did not follow the examples of post-war Japan and South Korea, of egalitarian export orientation with national economies protected from foreign capital. Instead, like Singapore, China has integrated its economy in the global flows and let inequality soar. However, extreme poverty, at the lowest level of World Bank-defined poverty, \$ 1,90 a day at 2011 in purchasing power parities, has been eradicated in 2020, from about two thirds of the population in 1990 (World Bank, 2021a). This was largely an effect of a minimally inclusive pattern of development, but in 2013 Xi Jinping made the eradication of extreme poverty by the end of 2020 a public commitment, and under his reign expenditure on poverty alleviation had by 2019 increased to 6,4 times that of 2009 (Li, 2021:44). Xi and the party leadership have recently become increasingly preoccupied with existing inequality and calling for «common prosperity for all» as a key political goal. Among a number of measures taken or planned are better protection of gig-workers and a provincial experiment in raising the labour share of income, as well as cut-downs of several corporate tycoons and business practices (*The Economist*, 24 August 2021). This should probably be seen in connection with Xi's speech to the centenary of the Communist party and its strong re-affirmation of socialism and Marxism: «the capability of our Party and the strength of socialism with Chinese characteristics are attributable to the fact that Marxism works» (Xi, 2021).

As these common inequality concerns are part of national mobilizations, they are not likely to move the two national leaderships closer to each other.

The outcome in the coming decades of the just started battle for world leadership between USA and China is unforeseeable, and the battle not necessarily the last one. But the demographic weight and the unleashed economic vigour of Asia make it likely that, short of nuclear war, the decline of the Western empire of the world will continue until its end. The demographic size of China and India, each four times larger than the US, means that with a half of the US per capita economy, their total economic resources would be twice as large as the American, as the historian of great powers, Paul Kennedy (2021), has pointed out. In the century of climate crisis, the largest Western asset in the Cold War, its level of private consumption (cf. de Grazia, 2005), is being devalued, and might even be seen as a liability. «By many economic measures, China will become a dominant force, whatever America does», says an editorial of the British liberal magazine *The Economist* (17 July 2021).

The «strategic competition» between the two superpowers is inevitable, reflecting a seismic shift of the world economy. As the stakes are high, the parties, particularly the champion challenged, are tempted to use all conceivable weapons save deliberate full-scale military war. But a hot fervour confrontation will easily jeopardize the difficult but necessary planetary cooperation required to master the climate crisis. The fatal timing, of the end-game of the Western empire coinciding with the decisive decades for ensuring the liveability of the planet may lead to tragedies of civilizational dimensions. The hottest century beyond human memories will need a global politics of cool.

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