

## Book Review

**Geiselberger, H. (2017). *The Great Regression*. Polity: Britain. 220 pp. Rs. 1232.**

"The Great Regression" is a book by Heinrich Geiselberger that explores the rise of populism and the decline of democracy in the 21st century. Geiselberger argues that globalization, the financial crisis of 2008, and the influx of refugees have created a sense of anxiety and insecurity in many people, leading to a rejection of the political establishment and a turn towards nationalist, authoritarian leaders.

Geiselberger examines this trend in countries such as the United States, Germany, France, and Hungary, and explores the common themes that underlie the rise of populism across the world. He argues that the erosion of social trust, the breakdown of traditional political parties, and the rise of social media have all contributed to the decline of democracy and the rise of populism. Geiselberger also examines the role of neoliberalism and the free market ideology in the current political climate, arguing that the pursuit of profit and individualism has led to a loss of collective values and a sense of community. Overall, "The Great Regression" offers a critical perspective on the current state of global politics and suggests that a new approach to governance and a renewed commitment to democratic values are necessary to address the challenges of the 21st century.

The Great Regression is a book that encompasses the regressive phases of the existing world order. The book focuses on the challenge to the liberal order and makes an effort to foresee these outcomes. The editor asserts that the growth of authoritarianism and scurrilous demagogues in the twenty-first century will result in a sharp increase in social disparity. Many developments, including Brexit, anti-immigration laws in European countries, nation-state securitization, genocide, rising terrorism, and the resurgence of the old identity, might be seen as a crisis of the liberal world order. According to the author, the perils of advancing globalization, neoliberal politics, and the greed of political players in the states could be the cause of the breakdown of the global order.

The worldwide decline of democracy is the protagonist factor that cracks the liberal wall of the global world. These days majority votes oppose the liberal values and elites. The emergence of Trump in the United States and Modi's second victory with a full fledged majority can be attributed to shifting voter perception, as pointed out by Arjun Appadurai in the first chapter. The political leaders who failed to ensure the country's economy played a culture and nationalism card to secure their position. However, voters now care more about preserving national sovereignty than the country's economic position.

However, there is a worldwide rise of voices against marketization and commodification to save and restore traditional guaranteed rights. The third chapter by Donatella Della Porta asserts that both the left and the right are a little uneasy about the relentless rise of neoliberal policies. The flourishing of the neoliberal world also helped create a social base to protest and counter the challenges of globalization. She argues that right-wing populism thrives among the middle class since this is where the left opposition's social base has already relocated from the working class. Zygmunt Bauman berates neoliberalism for creating a fluid society that obliterates the previous foundations for individual, social, and political identity due to forced migration and associated insecurity. The second leading event that pushes the regression of world order is the intolerance of European countries towards immigration. As highlighted by Zygmunt Bauman in the second chapter due to rising cultural heterogeneity, white people fear becoming a minority in their own nations. Similarly, Nancy Fraser also considers the rise of Trump in the US as a distortion of neoliberal influences. The deterioration of the paradox of liberation, as described by Eva Illouz, may also be attributed to the internal increase of radicalization, fundamentalism, religious and ethnic pluralism, and ruthless and aggressive leadership. Using the reference to Israelian politics, she also stated that somewhere the rise of the right wing took place because corporate capitalism destroyed and devolved the cultural progression of the world. Another critical point added by Ivan Krastev as the primary cause behind the crisis of liberal world order is the loss of trust and faith of people in democratic institutions, such as censorship, majoritarian representation, neglecting minority interests, and spreading obstructive conspiracy theories. He also considers the decline of the USSR in the 1990s and the lack of alternatives to capitalism as contributing factors that distorted the liberal world order. Liberal

democracy, which came as a tool to secure the interest of the minority, became a power of majoritarian rule, which created a drift between the principle of democratic majoritarianism and liberal constitutionalism. Forwarding the discussion, chapter seven of this book discusses the three major causes behind the current European crisis: globalization failure, climate change, and refugee settlement. The author believes these problems can help Europe reunite and restore its old heritage.

Another central argument Mason makes in the eight chapters of this book is the cause of accepting the crisis. Mason pointed out a trend of cultural resistance across the global world. Instead of facing globalization and financial deregulation risks, people are ready to tolerate racism, xenophobia, and extremist nationalism. There is also a narrative failure of Neoliberalism which leads to a false promise of social mobility and further results in the collapse of social democracy. Pankaj Mishra differs from Mason in that he speaks from a level of analysis known as the individual level. His principal criticisms are directed at the liberal assumption that people are rational actors acting on their material interests and the modernist conception of reason. For him, enlightenment is insufficient to comprehend the world today. Furthermore, he thinks it is false to characterize authoritarian impulses as illogical. As a result, he believes that the only way to achieve new progressivism is to do away with these outdated notions.

"The anti-politics and drift between masses expectations and professional politicians is also a vital cause behind the worldwide rise of authoritarianism" Robert Misik. In his chapter, he calls for three distinct changes to reduce the dominance of the neoliberal program. The first is the need for vibrant national parties of the left wing, which has the potential to win elections; the second is to expand the hegemony of progressive actions, and the third is to rewind left-wing government at the European level. According to him, the left-wing flourished in the world with democratic values and liberal principles and represented the working class and middle class. The left should revise itself and should fulfill the gap.

The stepping of the world towards de-civilization led to the spread of uncontrolled rage, hatred, dangerous feelings and fantasies of violence, which are the primary factor that pushed the demise of the liberal world order. Oliver Nachtwey analyzed the phenomenon that civilization

created democratic institutions and people's faith in these institutions. Giving the reference to US politics, Oliver made a point that now the liberal institutions is occupied by xenophobia, a misogynic and paranoid property developer. To overcome the current decline of world order, we need to analyze the grounded and social cause behind the de-civilization. Another argument made by César Rendueles in the twelfth chapter is that somewhere financial crisis in 2008 worked as fuel to the rise of the great regression. The economic crisis led to the decomposition of the political structure, which gave birth to inequality and poverty. Instead of handling this crisis efficiently, neoliberals developed aggressive strategies to manage the sufferings, including the degradation of public institutions, increased social fragility, cultural deterioration, and political polarization. These also gave a push to counter movements such as identitarian movements, xenophobia, religious fundamentalism, and reactionary populism. These movements started believing that, as a political system, democracy is volatile. It cannot be a way of life and cannot bring harmony and peace. But Wolfgang Streeck sees the beginning of the great regression with the rise of neoliberalism itself. The consequences of the neoliberal world, such as tight labor markets, stagnant productivity, falling profits, and increasing ambitious demands of unions and state capitalism, are all reasons behind the rise of the regressive age.

In his contributed letter, "Dear President Juncker," David Van Reybrouck problematizes democracy on a different level. He criticizes the EU and sees it as an abandoned project with flaws and limitations related to representative democracy. He challenges liberal representative democracy and its institutions on behalf of the EU. In the last chapter, Slavoj Žižek began the discussion by pointing out that two false generalizations are now being spread regarding today's culture. The first is that since fascism was militarily defeated, anti-Semitism has become pervasive in our time. The second generalization is that many new walls were built after the fall of the Berlin Wall to keep us out of danger. He sees the potential in the left to tackle the current chaos of the world order. He also considers the current chaos as a reaction of the right wing against the neoliberal.

Overall, the Great Regression provides a holistic view of the rise of regressive politics and a decline of democracy and questions the neoliberal age. The motive of this book is to make its readers understand

that the different causes that push forward the ideology of the rise of authoritarianism are quite clear and understandable. Some authors blame structural change behind the demise of the liberal world order, whereas scholars such as Arjun Appadurai affirmed voters' perception behind the current chaos in the global world. The book is an in-depth analysis of the current transition of the world order and why we are witnessing it. Scholars pointed out different views and perspectives towards current global problems, i.e., climate change, poverty, democracy, inequality, and xenophobia nationalism. This book's insight may help readers develop or predict the future strategies of popular world leaders. It can also help policymakers tackle the mentioned problems and cause behind the demise of world peace and how we can step towards a world that overcomes the failure of globalization. The book enlarged the ongoing debate among academics, journalists, governmental officials, and other intellectuals over what factors led to the decline of the liberal age.

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