Institut d'Etudes Européennes
et Internationales du Luxembourg

Luxembourg Institute for European
and International Studies

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Summer School

Ideas for a Viable Society in the 21st Century

24-30 August 2008

Vama Veche, Romania

Introduction

In association with the Black Sea University Foundation and the European Cultural Centre of Bucharest, the Luxembourg Institute for European and International Studies (LIEIS) organised a seminar on 'Ideas for a Viable Society in the 21st Century' from 24 to 30 August 2008 in Vama Veche, Romania.

This seminar is part of a long-term project of summer courses involving students from the wider Black Sea area and from neighbouring countries. Past topics in this series have included the nature of conflicts in the international system, conceptual and practical issues in relation to European and world security problems as well as, more recently, the question of mentalities (2005), the quest for European values (2006), *telos*, *ethos* and *demos* in the European Union (2007).

The goal of this seminar was to have an open and frank debate about the meaning of the theme of viability and society. The objective was to think collectively about core topics and key issues in relation to this theme, without any *a priori* assumptions, prejudice or stereotypes. Rather than having long presentations, this was a free-wheeling debate and a brain-storming exercise with a clear focus on interdisciplinary concepts and theories, as well as attention to some empirical evidence. The ambition of the organisers was to develop new insights and ideas beyond the conventional thinking in the European capitals, where the ruling elites are all too often unaware of the real problems which confront ordinary people and countries in the European periphery.

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As in previous years, the seminar brought together a number of lecturers from across Europe and about 20 students from the Black Sea area. The group of lecturers was as follows: Dr Armand Clesse, Director of the LIEIS; Professor Mircea Malitza, Founder and President of the Black Sea University and Vice-President of the European Cultural Centre; Professor Gerhard Michael Ambrosi, Jean Monnet Chair in European Economic Policy at the University of Trier. The group of students included a wide range of different levels and profiles: some final-year undergraduates, others doing Masters degrees, yet others PhD candidates and several who have studied abroad and with professional experience. Mostly they originated from Romania, but there were also participants from Armenia, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria and Albania.

The seminar was divided into 12 sessions, on conceptual issues such as definitions of viability and on empirical questions like factors shaping the international system. This report does not outline in a chronological order the presentations given by the lecturers or the questions posed by the students. Rather, it seeks to provide an overview of the discussions and to highlight the main questions and conclusions that emerged from the lively exchange of ideas. In addition to the 10 plenary sessions, the students debated in two separate working groups during two sessions. The results of these debates are summarised in two reports drawn up by the students themselves which can be found in the Appendix.

I. Viability and vital challenges

In his introductory reflections, Armand Clesse began by explaining his own approach to the theme of viable societies. First of all, this theme requires a clear diagnosis of the various problems that characterise contemporary societies, notably those problems that have an adverse impact on a society's viability. Secondly and more importantly, it is indispensable to come up with possible solutions and even to develop models for a viable future. As such, a proper treatment of the theme involves both conceptual issues and empirical evidence.

The issue of poverty is a phenomenon that exemplifies this approach. There are different categories and types of poverty within a wide spectrum, ranging from bare physical survival to relative lack or want of material wealth and also differing across continents, nations, regions and even cities. Some experts say that poverty worldwide is diminishing, others say that it is rising and yet others that it is stagnating. What is clear is that poverty is growing in the USA, rising faster in Central and Eastern Europe than in Western Europe and higher in the UK, Germany and France than in Scandinavia.

According to A. Clesse's own research and experience in countries around the world (especially Africa and Latin America), extreme poverty is on the rise – something like a 'slumisation' of the globe. Some slums shelter up to 3 or 4 million people. The conditions are unspeakable, with no hygiene and many lethal diseases. Most slums are growing and even when (especially authoritarian) governments raze existing slums to the ground, this achieves nothing but to transfer the problem of abject poverty to another part of a city or a region. A real solution would require a totally different idea of urbanisation, social organisation and ultimately a new ethical approach.

Before exploring the key problems that undermine viability, one prerequisite is to define and explain the term 'viable'. At its most basic, this term refers to something like 'capability to survive' – a minimum requirement and ambition. Unlike the English word 'viability' which has a narrow practical connotation, it is preferable to link 'viable' with the idea 'worth living' ('*lebenswert*' in German). In short, viability is about life itself and the idea of value or worth in relation to life – the ontological and social conditions of a life worth living.

The issue of poverty raises the question of a possible hierarchy of social and other problems that threaten viable societies. Nowadays many people in the West believe that terrorism is the greatest danger to free societies. However, this can be questioned from a variety of angles. First of all, what is terrorism and what is freedom or liberty? Second, has not the so-called 'global war against terror' further reduced the freedom of and in Western societies and reinforced already existing fascist and totalitarian tendencies? Third, are there not many so-called terrorists who are in reality freedom fighters, struggling to liberate their people from foreign oppression and colonialism? Fourth, how are demographic trends shaping the perception of Europeans that they are encircled by millions of migrants who want to join this 'island of peace and prosperity'? Is the idea of a 'Fortress Europe' gaining currency? Fifth, are we seeing the inexorable – and perhaps even – inevitable rise of a surveillance society or even a police state in the West? Are European and American societies condemned, perhaps even doomed to become less libertarian (rather than free) and more authoritarian (not just controlled)?

In turn, this raises questions about phenomena like fear of the other, the feeling that nations are losing their identity and are withdrawing, thus triggering a whole narrowing and shrinking of the collective or individual cognitive worlds. It also sheds light on the shared Marxist and liberal belief that the state would wither away and on the interconnection between war and happiness, peace and happiness – or, in the words of the American neo-conservative commentator Robert Kagan, Mars (USA) *vs*. Venus (Europe).

Four preliminary conclusions can be drawn from A. Clesse's reflections. First of all, complex phenomena like poverty or liberty are multi-faceted and require inter-disciplinary analysis because they cut across the largely artificial boundaries of disciplines and transcend the narrow confines of both academic research and ideological discourse. Second, societal problems like poverty, the destruction of the environment, xenophobia, totalitarianism, demographic decline and a growing shortage of water are all interrelated and often mutually reinforcing. For example, environmental degradation (including the loss of land and lack of drinkable water) can and perhaps will lead to mass migration, conflict, repression, resulting in more migration, conflict and repression – a vicious circle and an upward spiral that further divide societies and exacerbate tensions (also between man and nature).

Third, what underpins such and similar phenomena is the issue of viability and the question of life – not just so-called 'human' and 'animal' but life in itself and as such. Fourth, historical experience and biological discoveries – taken together – raise the question of the future of society and the pillars of co-existence, in particular the complex phenomenon of trust, both self-trust and trust in others. Even the school of critical theory as pioneered by Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin or Jürgen Habermas and Herbert Marcuse did not address this issue of trust and mistrust (and the related, fashionable concept of 'social capital' in the work of Robert Putnam, Francis Fukuyama and also Alain Peyrefitte).

In the discussion following A. Clesse's remarks, a number of students talked about the high levels of mistrust during the Communist era, saying that the presence of secret police and the policy of recruiting informants among the population left a deep mark on Communist societies. In turn, this seems to exacerbate social divisions and competition – striving for one's own goals as opposed to the goals of the community. Another factor that explains low levels of trust and social capital is the pervasiveness of corruption.

A. Clesse sought to re-direct reflections and discussions towards more conceptual issues such as solidarity, commitment and engagement but also indifference (e.g. the religious idea of *acedia*) and a sort of existential sadness (*tristitia* in the work of St. Augustine and others). Is it not the case that Central and Eastern European societies, in particular Bulgaria and Romania, are afflicted by an extreme sort of indifference to suffering?

Various students mentioned that solidarity is still much more developed in rural contexts than in urban environments and that up to 40% of the population in a typical Central and Eastern European country lives on the countryside. This is in part the result of mistrust in state institutions. Other factors include the presence of religion and the possible difference between Catholicism, which promotes solidarity and Orthodoxy which does not seem to be able to foster a sense of mutual help and assistance. On this question, A. Clesse argued that religious minorities tend to have stronger practices of solidarity than religious majorities because minority groups are often faced with opposition, discrimination and even persecution, all of which induces a strong sense of individual and communal self-preservation.

II. The key forces shaping the future and crucial values for societies

A. Clesse began sessions two and three by making some introductory remarks on key forces and crucial values. Broadly speaking, the 20th century was dominated by an intense rivalry between different ideologies, not just 19th-century nationalism and patriotism but also new ideologies like Communism, Fascism and National Socialism. Will the 21st century be religious and see a revival of both Islam and Christianity (Protestant as well as Catholic)? Will societies focus exclusively on materialistic benefits and economic factors or will they (re)turn to spiritual and religious matters? In this setting, what will be the role of rising powers such as China and India?

More fundamentally, the theme of viability raises the question of values for the future. Since the Enlightenment, the dominant values have been reason and individual autonomy. According to the German Enlightenment from Kant via Fichte to Schelling, the individual who is guided by reason is autonomous, i.e. self-determined and self-legislating – getting laws from himself rather than from the outside (heteronomy). Other important Enlightenment figures include Voltaire, Diderot and Rousseau as well as Scottish and English thinkers such as David Hume, John Locke and Adam Smith. In spite of important differences, what Enlightenment philosophers share in common seems to be the primacy of the individual over the community, reason over faith, philosophy over theology and a human-centred worldview over a divinely regulated cosmos. By contrast, religious traditions – including monotheism and other world religions like Confucianism – tend to emphasise communities, especially the most intimate communal bonds of the family. In turn, this raises the twin question of whether there are universal values (transcending the divide between the purely religious and the

exclusively secular) and whether it is preferable to speak of a future world society or many future national societies. Put differently, one of the key questions that emerges from reflections on viability is the relation between universalism and pluralism.

Among potentially universal values, there is, first of all, tolerance. Indeed, intolerance and fanaticism seem to produce a closing of the mind which stifles reason and precludes free, critical thinking – tendencies that are inimical to viable societies. Genuine tolerance requires freedom to believe. However, many 20th-century regimes sought to eliminate religion from the public sphere and even ban private worship. This also applies to the Turkish leader Kemal Atatürk who prohibited Islam in the name of tolerance but enforced authoritarian rule which replaced worship of God with a personality cult of the leader, a sort of *ersatz* God. Communism and socialism also prevented a peaceful coexistence with religion as a result of their commitment to historical, material and scientific atheism, as well as personality cults (e.g. Stalin and Ceauşescu).

Second, respect for life could also be seen as a universal value, but in reality it means respect for human life – a case of specism or privileging one species over others. Empathy might be a better way of fostering true tolerance because it helps promote understanding among suffering and helps prevent the dangerous tendencies of viewing other creatures as inferior (the Nazi idea of *Untermensch* applied to the Jews, the Roma and other so-called racially inferior groups). These and other instances of racism and xenophobia go back to the deluded idea of purity of blood, an ideology that can be traced to 15th-century Spain where in Toledo laws on *limpieza de sangre* were adopted in order to persecute and expel or kill Jews who henceforth could no longer convert to Catholicism.

A third universal is freedom, but this and related values like freedom are profoundly ambivalent. As the history of the USA shows, the value of freedom can be used to abolish slavery without solving the endemic problem of racism. It can be invoked to promote the civil rights movements but equally to justify the so-called global war on terror. In turn, this raises questions about the values and preferences of populations, elites and intellectuals, as well as hierarchy of values and the consistency and coherence of the value system, e.g. the complicit collusion of altruism and egoism.

In the course of the discussion, one student referred to the founding fathers of the USA who said that there is no trade-off between liberty and security. Any trade-off will diminish both. Another student argued that human rights are universal and that they need to be defended and renewed against new threats. It was also said that inequality and poverty undermine the key value of solidarity and that more is needed to make universal value real for individuals. A. Clesse cautioned against vague language, reminding the participants that human rights are not the same as values and that it is important to distinguish different levels of conceptual analysis whereby solidarity could be described as altruism in action or practised altruism.

III. How to respond to the most important challenges?

This session was divided into two distinct yet closely related issues. First of all, what is the most appropriate level of addressing challenges – local, regional, national or global? Second, with what kind of means – material and/or non-material?

In relation to the first, A. Clesse argued that there are two different approaches. Either one chooses to devise recipes at the macro- or global level (say the UN) and applies these to all the countries, areas and regions. Or else one attempts to solve problems at the micro- or local level and then draws lessons for other, higher levels. The post-Enlightenment phase of history has tended to follow the first approach by trying to making all the forces work in favour of general progress. This raises questions about the relation between the various levels and also the composition and constitution of society, notably the role of the family as the smallest communal entity or level. In Western Europe, many young people in general and many men aged approximately 18-29 in particular reject any kind of commitment to a stable relationship – never mind the idea of a family with children – because they feel that they are discriminated against in terms of family law (e.g. divorce, parental rights, etc.) and that having family will reinforce this growing inequality between men and women.

Moreover, the post-Enlightenment focus on progress and the increasing use of science and technology in public policy-making raise fundamental questions about the limits of human will, power and the foundations for societal decisions. What limits could or should society impose upon the state and the market? Can societies strive for justice and equality based on purely human conceptions of happiness and the good or is something else required – perhaps even some notion of the transcendent or the divine?

In his remarks, M. Malitza agreed with A. Clesse that viability is a useful conceptual framework because it encompasses both natural scientific and cultural social aspects of life. At its most basic, a viable society is, first of all, a society with the capacity to resist all those forces that threaten the continuous existence of life. So it is about survival and resistance against the threat of death and extinction. Second, viability requires the discovery of sources of energy in the widest sense of the word in order to ensure survival. Third, a viable society involves reproduction, both the natural reproduction of its members and also the social reproduction of culture. Demography is so important because it re-directs our attention from the short- to the long-term and forces us to think about the time spans of nature – hundreds and thousands and perhaps millions of years, not just now and next week.

Fourth, science and technology are indispensable to the continuous viability of societies because they make miracles real. They open up unprecedented opportunities beyond the wildest dreams of human beings. Since science and technology concern all levels of reality from particles all the way to the universe, they are truly universal and produce knowledge that is rational, verifiable and objective. By contrast, religion and ideology are particular and specific: they are based on knowledge that is irrational, unverifiable and subjective. Civilisations might be based on knowledge, but cultures are based on beliefs. We have to respect all cultures; you cannot say that one culture is superior and the other backward. They all have their own beliefs, their own tradition, with their respective merits. The trouble is that cultures produce wars, whereas science produces knowledge, progress and peace.

In fact, the hallmark of science is not just that it succeeded in formalising, mathematising and uniformising the laws of logic but also that it is rehabilitating intuition and experience where religion and other forces have rejected both rational insight and empirical evidence. The fantastic capacity of the brain is to assimilate certain things more rapidly than a computer, to make associations, to combine names with people, with experiences, with feelings, which is a kind of great synthesis. This is a kind of force and will of the society and of people. However,

this by itself is not sufficient for viable lives and societies. The term 'dignity' is useful in trying to express that which makes life worth living – to have a dignified existence, to have some merits and some sense of self-worth, to feel you are somebody and that your particular identity is respected.

In response, A. Clesse wondered whether the current economic, political, social, demographic and cultural crisis is unprecedented and whether we need an intellectual revolution and perhaps a new moral or ethical paradigm. Is mankind able to come to a completely new paradigm? Can there be a scientific revolution in this sense, a paradigmatic revolution? This fundamental question leads to further questions about awareness at the local, the regional and the global level. Only if there is awareness can we develop anything like a common *ethos* and then a common plan of action to tackle what you have recognized as being so crucial. One key problem is that there is an irreducible diversity of interests which do not converge but instead tend to clash. Coupled with extreme and growing levels of poverty and inequality, this diversity of contradictory interests represents a basic *aporia* which we confront – the inability or impossibility to define common goals shared by all.

IV. The future of freedom and the looming temptation of totalitarianism

At the start of the session on the future of freedom, A. Clesse explained that it is also possible to address the question of viability in a sense in a negative way by asking *a contrario* when is a society not longer viable. Is there a clear-cut and clearly defined threshold below which one could say this society is no longer viable? One definition is to say that a society is non-viable if and when it is no longer able to take care or provide for the elementary needs of its members. Perhaps it makes sense to talk of a failed society, which is a broader term than the notion of 'failed states'. What are those elementary, basic, vital needs? How and why might societies no longer fulfil these needs and break down, no longer be functional or operational? Shelter, food, drink and education are basic needs, but where is the threshold of superfluous luxury? States may break down, but societies seem surprisingly tenacious – in particular nomadic societies whose flexibility and adaptability exceeds that of sedentary societies.

In his remarks, M. Malitza argued that we need to explain why certain peoples, societies and even civilisations decline, cease to be viable and disappear. Even though we use metaphors from both biology and engineering, societies are neither purely organic nor exclusively mechanical. Socio-economic and political entities are more complex, as evinced by the link between freedom and responsibility – two notions that involve culture, values and norms. Moreover, freedom and responsibility raise questions about the role of the state and the sources of authority. There are rival, perhaps even conflicting models in East and West. Will the rise of China and the (relative) decline of the West reinforce the power of the state?

A. Clesse responded by saying that it would be interesting to explore the dialectics of freedom and the possibility that at some point freedom mutates into something different – non-freedom or some other authoritarian paradigm. Whether in a Hegelian or a Marxian sense, a dialectical movement describes not simply a pendulum that swings back and forth but a deeper transformation (*"umschlagen"* in German, i.e. 'to flip over' from one condition or state into another) whereby something sets off a new dynamic. Crucially, we may not realize

immediately that something dramatic has already happened or is still happening or is underway to happening.

Based on this hypothesis, we must ask how important freedom is for the theme of viability and also of course for the question of vitality. This will be a crucial question for the future. In Europe and elsewhere across the world, there is an ongoing contest of rival ideas, approaches and systems. Instead of positing absolute principles, it is conceptually and practically more fruitful to ask different sets of questions. For example, does freedom undermine freedom? How far can freedom go before non-freedom comes back through the backdoor, so to speak? Does the dialectic of 'flipping over' also apply to tolerance and intolerance (e.g. the Netherlands and perhaps also the USA in recent years)?

In the subsequent discussion, several students asked questions or put forward their own arguments. First of all, are we really seeing an increase in the number of authoritarian states and governments? Or do cases like China, Russia and Venezuela escape the conventional prism opposing freedom and democracy to authoritarianism and autocracy? Second, on this issue there are at least two different schools of thought in International Relations – a liberal school that reckons the move towards democracy and liberation will be more gradual and driven by developments within countries, and a (neo-)conservative school that believes democracy can take root without domestic precedents and be actively promoted from without. Third, A. Clesse injected into the debate that according to Samuel Huntington, there have been three waves of democratisation and that each wave has reinforced the previous one – such that an ever-enlarging movement engulfs the entire world. To which M. Malitza responded that democratisation and liberalisation can affect some key sectors like the economy without affecting the public political realm. Neither ideology nor religion can unify the world. Only technology – in particular communication and the internet – has no limits. Fourth, A. Clesse wondered how much freedom or non-freedom is necessary to maintain or strengthen the viability and move to stronger vitality?

On the earlier question of material vs. non-material means of preserving and enhancing a society's viability, a student remarked that 20th-century thinkers like Arnold Toynbee emphasised the intellectual factors underpinning viability. According to Toynbee, there is a cycle of civilisations and these cycles are driven not just by material but also by spiritual factors, especially the later cyclical phases. The presence of intellectual and spiritual forces ensures that societies remain viable even if states are failing or failed, as exemplified by countries such as Liberia, Zimbabwe and Somalia.

Other students mentioned a wide array of factors and elements that affect viability, from historical background and geographical position via culture and economic development to more concrete things such as civic duties as well as investment in education and research. Among the numerous challenges, there is the difficulty of blending rival personal interest, fostering social responsibility at different levels and divergent goals such as freedom and creativity *vs*. security and order.

A. Clesse sought to steer the debate away from pure description of facts or abstract theories towards more conceptual thinking that reflects the reality of different societies. One question he raised was about the defining mark of an authoritarian regime. We know that it is a matter of degree and that changes in degree can lead to changes in quality, such that a certain

political organisation 'flips over' from being democratic to being authoritarian. Formally, there is a broad consensus on the main features of a democratic system but there is plenty of disagreement on the key characteristics of an authoritarian regime. What is the role of a parliament or the role of a leader within authoritarianism? For example, Hugo Chavez is widely accused of heading an authoritarian regime, but he accepted the results of a referendum he lost. Where to draw the line? What is the difference between authoritarianism and totalitarianism? Is the latter an umbrella concept encompassing the former?

On this point M. Malitza disagreed, saying that bad forms of authority in one sphere should not be taken as normative and serve the purpose of dismissing authority in all other spheres. Both education and science require authority, as does the state. But A. Clesse contended that the real question is the origin and nature of authority. Broadly speaking, authority can be conferred by people or parliaments, but whoever seeks to exercise authority properly needs legitimacy. According to Max Weber and other sociologists, there are different kinds of legitimacy, e.g. charismatic legitimacy. Prior to the Enlightenment, myths played an important role, whereas since then the sources of legitimacy have been demystified or disenchanted (*entzaubert*). Since the 1960s, anti-authoritarian education at the cultural level went hand in hand with so-called post-modernism at the philosophical level, culminating in relativism. Accordingly, there are now no absolute truths and no authority – in short, 'anything goes'. Anyone's argument is as good as anyone else's. But is this democratic? Can one democratise science? Gilles Deleuze, Jean Baudrillard and all these post-modernist thinkers also made key contributions to the debate on anti-authoritarianism, as did Herbert Marcuse in his book *The One-Dimensional Man*. All this comes to mind when one mentions the internet, for example the tool Wikipedia. That's a form of democratisation, a democratic instrument in a sense, everybody can contribute, and now there are corrections, but basically the impetus is in a sense a democratic one. If May 1968 was about contesting authority, then we must ask what its legacy is 40 years later. Will Eastern Europe, Romania and other countries such as Turkey have their own equivalent of May 68? Will they need a May 68? Revolutions seem to induce systemic transformations of societal structures, but can we really compare the Glorious Revolution in England in 1688, the 1789 French Revolution, 1848 in Germany and perhaps 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe? But what kind of change did the events of 1989 bring about? Did these events question authority? Was there a real societal change after 1989 away from totalitarianism or authoritarianism towards freedom?

V. Desirable and feasible political dispensations for the coming society/ societies and the future of democracy

In his introductory remarks, A. Clesse mentioned the fact that democracy has been imposed on countries as varied as Germany and Japan. The conceptual questions we can raise are, first of all, whether some countries are more suited for democratic regimes than others and, second, whether imposing democracy on a nation changes that country profoundly and whether after a while it develops democratic reflexes, instincts, or whether democratisation remains at the surface. These are enormously important questions for the future of societies. Most people would exclude or cannot imagine a return of some totalitarianism in Germany or Japan. However, there is a tension in the German and Japanese collective mind between

authoritarianism and expansionism on the one hand, and obedience to rules and adopting norms (e.g. their post-war 'pacifist' constitutions), on the other hand.

Moreover, the question about whether democracy has a future raises complex issues about the role of violence in building so-called democratic regimes – in the past in America, France and England but also nowadays in Iraq and Afghanistan. Crucially, what impact will the growing militarisation of politics and the use of lethal force have on both the perpetrators and the victims, e.g. NATO countries, Serbia and Kosovo? What kind of societies will emerge?

Is it the case that a world of democracies everywhere would be a better world, a stronger, superior world? There is the assertion that "democracies don't fight each other", for example (Michael Doyle). What makes countries fight? Do certain political regimes actually prevent from fighting each other? Would such a world be morally superior? A world where there are only democratic societies, would it be more stable and would it be possible to solve all the problems, the key challenges, get rid of poverty for example, and the environmental problems?

It is a key question, about the viability and about the best way to tackle the problems of the future. It is up to future generations to devise perhaps a new model of governance. One could argue that democracy as we know it is an obsolete model. Who is thinking beyond democracy or outside of democracy? Because of the past many people are afraid of doing this. Beyond democracy means authoritarianism, totalitarianism, but are these really the only envisageable alternatives? Logically are there no alternatives? Are we perhaps trapped in some Aristotelian and even more Platonist categorization or rather in Montesquieu? The task is to discern and decide whether the prevailing models in the West can be reformed or whether they must be discarded in favour of new ones.

A. Clesse also reported that he had discussed some of these issues for many hours with his old friend David Landes from Harvard, namely the notion of self-esteem in the life of nations and of peoples. If individuals require self-esteem to lead a decent life, does this also apply to nations and countries? Most large nations are built on blood and tears, to use Churchill's words, but which other factors underpin their societies? And what about small(er) countries and their societal foundations? What can be the basis, the foundation for building a decent society? So what is decency? Turning to related questions, A. Clesse wondered whether Islam, Confucianism and democracy are genuinely compatible. In turn, this raises the question of the nature of democracy. How representative and participatory is democracy? What about the old Platonist idea of restricting voting rights to certain segments of society? Or alternatively, would it make sense to give some people more voting power than others, perhaps as a function of excellence? Is it best to strengthen and reinvigorate democracy or should one transcend this system and look for another one?

Moreover, do certain specific political systems go better together with certain specific economic and social systems and links between them? What is the interaction, interdependence and the link between democracy and market economy, authoritarianism or even autocracy and a centrally planned economy? For example, are we seeing lasting coexistence of an authoritarian political regime and a liberal economic system? The question is whether the market is dissolving authoritarian, autocratic, totalitarian regimes in a long-term perspective. One could take the classical example of Chile under Pinochet, an extreme

form of economic liberalism allied with a brutal political dictatorship. Finally, what is the place of class or caste in democracies such as Britain or India? How do class or caste societies shape political systems? Does a formal democratic process change class and caste societies for the better or for the worse?

VI. The possible future economic system(s): going beyond capitalism and socialism?

Before discussing specific issues in relation to the economy, A. Clesse began this session by raising and developing a number of more general questions. Is there a general will to build a decent or a more decent society, a viable or a more viable society? Is there such a will at the local, regional, national and global level? Would this take the form of a variety of different societies or a different world society? The following factors, causes or aspects seem necessary and perhaps even indispensable to a new will or determination to create new societal models. First, without a new dispensation, mankind is doomed to perish and disappear, which would mean that in a sense human beings would have no choice other than to act. Second, new ideas and models are the product of a collective (self-)realisation that we are not satisfied with the viability of the present society. Third, new societal arrangements emerge because we want to build a better society.

More specifically on the economy, A. Clesse wondered whether present and future choices are restricted to capitalism and socialism and why socialism failed 20 years ago. Are there not a growing number of people who long for a return to a system that ensured basic social needs which are not met – and perhaps cannot be met – by capitalism, like housing, education, health and other aspects of elementary aspects of human well-being. Did socialism with a human face ever exist? Is it possible? Are socialism and freedom compatible? Or is socialism doomed to fail because there is an irreducible and irresolvable tension or perhaps even contradiction between its humanising and its de-humanising tendency? Conceptually and practically, is a mixed system desirable and feasible? What are the links between socialism and liberalism, socialism and modernism, socialism and wealth? Does ‘real socialism’ imply a claim to moral superiority vis-à-vis capitalism? What is the relationship between religion and socialism?

VII. Institutions of global reach for the coming world: is there a need for new structures?

At the start of this session, A. Clesse asked the question whether the existing institutions at the global level are adequate and whether they are strong enough or whether they are failing in their main tasks or objectives, and if so, what can be done? There are several possibilities. A less radical one is to try to strengthen and reform the United Nations system. A more radical is to replace them by new ones. And then one would have to think about what such alternatives could look like, not necessarily institutions and organisations but instead networks, all kinds of devices, to address some of the most urgent problems of our time and the coming time – structures that are political, social, perhaps cultural in character.

Gerhard Michael Ambrosi began his remarks by raising the following question: if the challenge is to devise institutions of global reach for the coming world, then first of all we need to know what the global specificity of the coming world is. One approach is to say that we are seeing a fundamental change in the means of production. According to Marx, the means of production define the societal superstructure and also the institutional superstructure. Since a revolution is taking place in the shift of the means of production from the industrial age to the digital and the informational age, both institutions and social interactions are also undergoing revolutionary change. Two options are available: either pragmatic, incremental change or ideological, systemic change. The latter was at work in the industrial revolution when a top-down approach put in place a new economy. However, the digital and informational age will not operate like this because it is based on interactions between smaller units without clear hierarchical structures. One question that follows is how these changes will affect the political system and whether politics will adapt to – or even adopt – these new modes of interaction or whether there will be conflict, like in the past. Success will be measured by how smooth the transition to the new paradigm will be.

In response, A. Clesse said that within the vast spectrum of alternative options, the most utopian ones like a world government are no longer seriously discussed or envisaged. It is possible to revert to David Mitrany's idea on a 'working peace system'. By devising the right institutions which have enough legitimacy power, competencies, the ambition is to address and to solve the main problems confronting mankind and the world in the economic and the social field for all citizens on the planet, but is this realistic? Instead of a peacekeeping force that keeps warring factions apart, the goal would be to set up a real military force that prevents global war at all levels – between tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities and states. Those who have now the means to wage war would renounce part or perhaps all of their means to go to war or to wage war which would require not just a political but also and above all a mental, psychological revolution as well as a legal one in terms of international law. For the decision to go to war has been seen for hundreds of years in the whole Western legal tradition as the most important prerogative of the nation state, so it would require a genuine revolution in all respects. However, the West seems to be on the opposite track, waging war on the Balkans, in Iraq, in Afghanistan and elsewhere, as well as suffering social decline and perhaps even the demise of Western society as a whole (at all levels, including the rise of androgeneity and other cultural-biological phenomena).

VIII. Rethinking and reinventing man's relation with other creatures and with nature

At the beginning of the penultimate session, A. Clesse formulated a number of fundamental questions. What brings about change in a society? So-called healthy shocks from inside or outside, or general mobilisation, a new motivation, a new ambition? Or is there a kind of resistance to change? Or are some societies or some countries largely impermeable to change? Political reform? New political personnel? Or economic and business reforms?

In his remarks, G.M. Ambrosi said that viability implies the imperative to maintain the world as we inherited it. In short, to think of viable future societies is an ecological concern. He also referred to Thomas Hobbes' definition of the state of nature as a war of all against all (*bellum*

omnium contra omnes) where each is enemy to the other (*homo homini lupus*). People must be restrained so that they do not kill each other, which is why we need the state. That was the idea of the absolutist monarchy in early modern Europe. The paradigm of the civil society is that the citizens should have rights against the state and not that the state grants rights to the individual citizen. There always is the danger that the state reduces, suspends or abolishes certain rights. In order to protect everyone against external threats and honest people against internal crime, the state claims an overriding right to wield absolute power and control everybody. This is the basis for pre-emptive and preventive action, a move that can lead to a surveillance society and also a police state.

Both sets of remarks raise the fundamental question that the state imposes absolute and arbitrary norms of what is allowed and what is not. In the absence of universally recognised principles or criteria, the state defines the extent and the limit of its own power, as well as the scope for individual and communal agency.

IX. Going beyond viability: creating a world it will be worth living in

A. Clesse began the final session by reiterating his overarching argument that the basis of any society is violence, be it open violence or hidden violence, physical violence or psychological violence, individual violence, or collective or indeed state violence. It is not always easy to say how violent a society is. Violence can be structural (Johan Galtung), both internally and externally, either towards the population itself or towards the outside world. As discussed in the course of the preceding sessions, violence can take multiple forms and take place at different levels of society – between regions, ethnic groups, tribes, families, within families and also between man and woman.

However, there is also violence between man and nature, between the human and the non-human species or – perhaps more accurately among different species. Traditionally violence against so-called animals and against nature is at the basis of any human endeavour. If this is so, then the question is whether progress and creativity based on violence justify the high costs of a violent society compared with the benefits. Whatever people try to build in terms of a viable or decent society, they must take into account human nature and then build in sufficient safeguards in order to contain violence and aggressiveness. Based on the work of Konrad Lorenz, Edward Wilson, Eibl-Eibersfeldt and Sigmund Freud, it is possible to point to scientific and other discoveries to suggest that man might be characterised by a "*Todestrieb*", the drive to *thanatos*, this longing for (being pushed towards) death. As a result, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's claim that man is born free can and must be challenged. It also casts doubt on the ideology of progress and the idea that the countries in Central and Eastern Europe are moving forward on the liberal-capitalist path towards freedom and prosperity.

However, G.M. Ambrosi argued that the false and disappointed optimism about the economic and political transition in the East should not give way to a false and gloomy pessimism of contemporary reality. The situation in Romania, Bulgaria and elsewhere was always precarious. In the distant past, these countries were threatened or oppressed by the Hungarians, the Austro-Hungarians and the Ottomans. More recently, they suffered the consequences of fascism and then Soviet Communism. As a result, countries like Romania used to have a short-term perspective. The main thing is to survive, what will happen

tomorrow was unknown because political constellations could change. At the very least, EU membership ensures the stability of national borders. Transylvania will not break away, the Hungarians will not take over the northern part of Romania. To think that Romania in its substance is externally endangered is out of the question, not even Russia will come here. So for the first time in Romania's history, it can develop a long-term(ish) attitude. This should be stressed and should be conveyed to the public that in this regard the present world situation has changed dramatically to the better of the country.

Concluding remarks

A. Clesse concluded the seminar by suggesting that the single biggest challenge for all countries in Europe and elsewhere is to offer a decent education to everyone. Beyond the rewards of EU membership or the benefits of free trade under WTO rules, states and government need first and foremost to be aware that it is important to give young people a strong education. All people should participate according to their skills at all levels of society, otherwise the intellectual and cultural foundation of societal life cannot and will not be maintained or strengthened. A decline and absence of intellectual and cultural vitality will be followed by a decline and loss of viability and the slow demise of a society and its culture. Of course this imperative in no way implies that there is a single model for all countries. Rather, one could adopt and adapt Max Weber's approach of ideal-types and draw up a provisional typology of countries and societies. Instead of abstracting principles, it makes perhaps more sense to look at both formal and informal institutions and practices. For example, we might observe certain possible trade-offs between rules and flexibility (e.g. corruption *vs*. loss of freedom), but equally the absolute decline and perhaps irretrievable loss of certain standards and customs such as political manners, civic virtues and moral norms.

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Appendix I

Report by the Working Group on Politics

The purpose of this working group was to identify the most important challenges facing our society at the present moment and come up, if possible, with ideas/solutions for a viable society in the 21st century, from a political point of view.

Considering the pre-dominant system nowadays, we focused on the characteristics of consolidated democracies in the world. The main subject of discussion within the group's first meeting was that of identifying the main challenge(s) facing liberal democracy.

The following problems were identified, as a result of brain-storming:

- democracy is not representative enough; the issue of under-representation (voting behaviour);
- negative vote;
- dictatorship of the majority;
- low level of mobilization compared to authoritarian regimes;
- mass migration from poor countries;
- integration of minorities, child protection; the need for greater effort in order to combat efficiently the trafficking of human beings;
- the issue of the majority not being educated enough – civic education which aims at imparting the knowledge and skills that we need for effective participation in the life of the community, government, and politics;
- the functioning of the justice system, the prosecution of high-level corruption.

The creation of the dictatorship of the majority could raise difficult problems for the future society because we speak about a majority that is not educated enough and that is absent from public life, thus making political regimes less legitimate.

It is worth mentioning here also the danger of having a majority that is not educated enough but much more involved in the voting processes. Such a case usually leads to the danger of bringing into power political leaders and parties that proclaim an extremist approach to both national and foreign policy.

The main question to be asked in this paper is how to give voice to the people.

The answer is by ensuring:

- free elections;
- transparency;
- investments in education and research.

We insist upon the active participation of citizens in the governmental decisions that affect their lives, as the best way to hold elected officials accountable to the people.

What is democracy from a political point of view? Is it viable for all upcoming societies?

Ivan insisted upon democracy's value related to the possibility it gives to the people to change its representatives through periodically held elections. Plamen assessed that the electing system could move towards an electronic based one, thus making it much easier for citizens to participate in a larger number.

Miruna raised the question of democracy, whether such a system could be suitable for all countries in the world. Could it be viable everywhere? And how do we tackle the problem of democratic deficit?

Ivan concluded that democracy would remain viable for as long as there will be people competing in elections and people voting for them. He presented an example referring to a metaphor, that of a pie: '*democracy is a recipe, people are the ingredients – if the pie is not tasty, it is the problem of the ingredients, not necessarily of the recipe*'.

Miruna asked about what was not functional in democracy. Then discussions revolved around examples of self declared democracies like Russia where there is no free television and where also the issue of free elections is debatable. Serbia was said to have a democratic regime in the '90s, because it used to hold regular elections. The point Plamen made was that it was democratic not to monopolize the process of competition for power.

Going back to the democratic deficit (the point Elena made), applying the referenda did not seem a viable solution, because of the "yes" or "no" answer that was possible, therefore free elections and referendum are not enough to solve the democratic deficit. The viable solution would consist in education, as Plato pointed out.

Miruna emphasized the fact that the EU wanted to make up the lack of critical thinking of its citizens with scholarships and development programs but that the *'EU is not a democratic government'.*

When discussions raised the issue of 'buying' votes in order to win the power, Ivan answered that if somebody was powerful enough to 'buy' votes, then he would be in power; after four years the politician might not perform as well as expected and then he would go back to buying votes again, which is not a viable solution.

According to Elena, Ana and Ivan, better education remains the solution; we should get involved more into teaching people how to teach children.

Further on, members of the group discussed another problem facing democracies and that is the gap between poor and rich.

Ivan insisted that the demos was not supposed to solve this problem, but the government. Roxana pointed out that democracy was for citizens; so as long as we didn't have citizens, it

was not viable. Elena added that we lacked democratic attitudes, while Roxana argued that in Eastern Europe there were no internally-developed models. In Romania, the surveys made in 1990 showed that 80% of the Romanians referred to democracy as *'holding free elections'*. Ivan appreciated that people had asked for democracy in 1989.

Roxana proposed to consider democratic procedures a transitional period towards the establishment of an internally-developed model, and the other agreed that a specific model that would suit better the country/region could be a viable solution.

Miruna then asked about decentralization. The group discussed the viability of having a network of small democracies. Soon after followed the question referring to the atomization of society.

Another issue would be the increasing bureaucracy, also a problem of democratic regimes, noticed also at the European Union's level.

In the end, everybody agreed on what the solution to a viable political system for the upcoming societies was, and that was to leave each country the necessary time (during which the democratic procedures should be applied) in order to let their elites (entitled to legitimacy) choose/find a proper system, viable and in accordance with the specificities of the country. In other words, a custom made democracy.

In particular, it would be premature to conclude that democracy will be a viable solution for societies. Several additional factors will determine the future of democracy but all working group members agreed that democracy was a viable solution in the 21st century.

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Appendix II

Report by the Working Group on Economics

Introduction

The need for a critical examination of the current global economic system has never been more obvious than today. We have reached a point in human civilization where we have perfected our economic systems to a point that could hardly have been imagined by our forefathers, in both efficiency and global reach. However, with great achievements have also come great challenges; efficiency has brought about a lack of sustainability and coordination, which endangers the basic viability and future vitality of the system. Although we are able to generate vast amounts of wealth, we still incur great obstacles in the attempt to redistribute this wealth and tackle problems such as famine in Africa, poverty in even the richest of industrial nations, and basic infrastructure in under-developed countries.

A sustainable societal model is what we urgently need in this context. Defined by the Brundtland Commission, sustainability has been expressed as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. A sustainable economic model will be a crucial component of such a societal model.

This is why we believe a discussion on the current flaws in the global economic system, and not only praise to its successes, should be taken on. This is certainly a discussion that would require vast amounts of knowledge, as well as a considerable time investment on the part of all those involved. What this report attempts is presenting the general framework for a future, more competent, discussion regarding the problems that the current system experiences. A secondary, albeit riskier, attempt of it is also to sketch possible solutions to the problems that our group has considered of greatest urgency.

The subsequent paragraphs will present the above mentioned problems, followed by their possible solutions, as well as a general description of the resulting global economic system.

Problems in the current global economic system

The working group has identified five main problems for the current global economic system:

1. the current capitalist system is inducing needs in consumers, which leads to over-consumption and overexploitation of natural resources;
2. inefficiency/waste of raw materials in the production of commodities at a global level;
3. insufficient competition, due to monopolistic tendencies in the current economic system;
4. structural unemployment;
5. crisis of modern welfare systems.

The first refers to an undesired effect of modern marketing and advertising techniques, which is to annul the classical economic dictum that demand determines supply. In its place, modern economies have seen demand being artificially created in order to create a market for a product. The examples for this range from portable music players (e.g. iPod) to regular potato chips. This has been done not to fulfil a need that the consumer expressed, but to maximize profit for companies and their shareholders. In turn, it has brought about an overexploitation of natural resources that makes the system carry with it the seeds of its own destruction.

The second problem concerns the lack of coordination in production and manufacturing of goods, which can sometimes lead to an overabundance of products in one country, while at the same time, in another, the same products are in short supply.

The third refers to a tendency in the current economic system of allowing oligopolistic structures to form (a few global players operating in relevant industrial fields), in search of efficiency. While this has certainly helped keep prices at a low level for these industrial products and has accelerated development, in the long term it will be damaging to the market (boosting prices up due to formation of cartel-like structures).

The fourth and fifth problems concern, first, structural unemployment at the global level, and a generalized crisis at the global level in welfare systems. Although it is particularly difficult to pinpoint the array of causes of structural unemployment, we believe that some of the more relevant are the inability of the state, in a globalized world, to accurately forecast the demands of the market in terms of workforce, as well as the increasing number of workers that are allowed to cross national borders. Welfare systems have come under increasing strain in advanced industrial nations; because of higher life expectancy and lower birth rates, an increasing number of retirees are supported by a dwindling number of workers paying their contributions. Although the strains in the system have been evident for at least a decade, it is only now that we truly feel the burden of its defective functioning; it is our opinion that if action is not taken in an expedient manner, the strains will grow to become cracks and ultimately cause a shutdown of the system.

Besides all the problems listed above, a structural problem of energy is at hand to deal with: Energy resources are shrinking, which creates a need for a change in the production and consumption patterns until we establish a functioning system with new renewable energy sources.

Of course, these are only a few of the problems that the current global economic system is experiencing. In selecting them and rejecting others, we have certainly given reason for disagreement; why particularly these problems and not others? What criteria were used in selecting them? Why those criteria and why not others? To address these questions here would mean starting a debate which would certainly extend the length of this report to unfeasible limits. What we can acknowledge is that in selecting these problems we have always kept in mind that a major fault in today's global economic system is its increasing disconnectedness with humans, their needs and their values; while it has been exceptionally able to function with increasing efficiency, it has been deficient in actually responding to people's needs.[1]

[1] In fact, it has been better able to create needs in order to satisfy its pursuit for profit.

Solutions proposed

The solutions that we present in the following bullet-points aim to bring this "alien" system closer to human values and expand the scope of control that people have over it:

- a greater involvement of the political system in limiting the consumption of harmful substances and greater investment in education, in order to create a much more informed consumer;
- a better communication and coordination between educational institutions, R&D institutions and the business establishment in order to bring about a more efficient production system;
- involvement of a global institution (modeled after the UN) in breaking up global monopolies (with a corresponding involvement of national institutions in doing the same at the national level); perhaps setting up global trade unions that can have the upper hand in a negotiation with corporations;
- again, a greater involvement by the state, this time in controlling flows of labor migration and in better forecasting of the necessities of the labor market;
- a more equitable and fairer system for financing social security should be found, which has become a real problem due to demographic decline in western societies. Heavier taxation on corporations and the wealthier strata of society in order to finance the deficit in the welfare systems might be an option. Increasing efficiency and productivity in economic activities also contributes to an economy's ability to offset lower numbers of labor force. Better management of social security systems, including fight against fraud, is important to keep welfare states functioning.

The solutions presented above make the first few steps towards exerting more control over the operations of the global economic system. In this case, we rely on the state (and the political system) for a greater amount of control over the operations of multinationals and the externalities they cause. The state should be involved more in regulating the environment in which corporations operate and in educating the public to be a better consumer; we consider that the state is the most appropriate actor that should be in charge of the latter function, given its responsibility for the welfare of its citizens.[2] In some cases, such as that of global oligopolies, we have preferred a global actor given the problems associated with reaching consensus and then continuing with decisive actions, when the body that needs to reach the consensus is comprised of approximately 200 members.

In all the other aspects that were presented, we consider the state as the appropriate entity that should deal with the problems. After all, unlike a corporation or the market, it can be held accountable for the decision it makes and the effects that they have on the general population. In addition to this, the state can afford to have a long-term perspective when making decisions (such as the benefit of investing in education, or in a better infrastructure), whereas the market (or a corporation for that matter) generally has a medium- or short-term perspective when reaching decisions.

[2] A corporation only has a responsibility towards its shareholders, and that is to turn in a profit.

Institutions

These solutions must be implemented and then administered by a set of institutions. It is much more efficient to use the current system of institutions (comprised, among others, of the IMF, ILO, World Bank, OECD, UN, as well as numerous regional organizations) and simply reform in light of the new challenges it has to face than to create new ones from scratch. However, in order to avoid a serious financial crisis in the upcoming years, an agreement including US and China should be made in order to increase mutual trust. That agreement should secure the dollar as a stabilized currency, the US promising to pay back her debts while China promising not to sell out her dollar reserves immediately. That agreement could also recognize the stabilizing role of the Euro in the global financial system.

We in the group definitely envision a stronger role for regional organizations such as free trade areas, customs unions and other such regional cooperation efforts. EU could be a good example for the other regional cooperation initiatives to form customs unions or free markets, who will interact with each other. There must be a balance between fragmentation in this system of regional bodies (which would lead to inefficiency in decision-making when higher-order problems appear) and a damaging tendency for unification (which would certainly bring about efficiency, but would damage its ability to be flexible when problems arise).

We believe that an institution such as the WTO should be reformed in the direction of making it more equitable to under-developed nations, as well as making it more efficient in promoting free trade (which, we consider, ultimately benefits every country, regardless of levels of development and industrialization).

Countries should also fight against social dumping within the framework of WTO. However, we should also differentiate standards in different countries. Some countries do have low levels of infrastructure, thus their labour costs should not go up to the level of advanced industrial nations. Regional minimum wages can be considered in that context.

How would the society look like?

We mentioned in the beginning that we would also like to offer a general image of how a "better" global economic system would look like.

The system that we propose would be closer to human values than the current one has managed to be. The current system has fine tuned its every interaction so as to achieve a maximum of efficiency and profit; however, humanity has never considered efficiency to be an important value.[3] What we are left with today is a system that is alien to our desires and the values that we ascribe the greatest importance to. The framework that we propose would make the first steps toward a system that follows important human values and not just creates them for its own purposes. It would strive to create a more informed consumer, and would function with the goal of bringing about more equality in the world system and on the national stage. It would attempt to minimize unemployment, realizing that a job provides not only a

[3] Instead, it has emphasized "respect for life", "togetherness", (varying degrees of) respect for individual privacy etc.

mere income, but also a sense of dignity that is vital to integrating in a community and living a fulfilled life.

This system would be under a greater degree of control of the political system than the *status quo*. This is a more desirable situation; only if the economic system is subordinated to the goals of the political system can the citizenry expect to exert some measure of control over the former (this under the obvious condition that they are able to exert control over the political system to begin with). Only when this happens can we hope to have a system that is conducive to human development. It is also a system in which the rule would be coordination among states and not the pursuit of national interest. This cooperation is vital if we are to hope for solutions for truly global problems that can impair the functioning of a global economic system.

A salient trait of the system would be its necessary sustainability. If a global economic framework is to be viable, it clearly needs to function in harmony with its surrounding environment, and with a constant preoccupation for preventing the depletion of vital natural resources. Finally, it is a system that is capitalistic, although of a more humane strand. Unlike socialist systems, it would not take coordination to the extreme, and turn it into regulation applied to the functioning of the global economy. Instead, it would simply try to address some of the externalities that an unrestricted mechanism of the market would inevitably create. We consider the level of free enterprise that a capitalistic system would preserve as crucial for the perpetuation of a vital global economy.

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Special thanks to Prof. Gerhard Michael Ambrosi for his guidance and valuable contributions.