

# Global Impeachment

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Attempts to remove Donald Trump from office, prove that his actions are incompatible with the post of U.S. president, became the focal point of American, and global due to America's dominant position, politics in 2019. But "public impeachment" has become a widespread phenomenon. News reports are reminiscent of the most eventful periods of thirty or fifty years ago. Venezuela, Sudan, Hong Kong, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, Catalonia, France, Chile, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador made the headlines throughout the year. Different destinies, different systems, different geopolitical orientations, different causes of unrest, but the same manifestation—masses of people take to the streets when they believe that the authorities act in their own interests, not in the interests of society. Add the voting for non-system parties or persons, as in Ukraine and in a number of European countries, and you will get a rather comprehensive picture.

The information revolution in the 21st century has simplified social and political processes dramatically. There is no need for a structure (maybe even a secret organization), a core, a party, a leader, an idea, after all, as before. All it takes to mobilize people is mass presence in social networks and a convincing call from an activist. Clearly, only a certain portion of

users take the cue, but even this is enough to organize mass actions. No one asks for coherent slogans and demands; a sense of injustice is enough to ignite a protest. The similarity of techniques and forms of struggle in different parts of the world leads many to think that all riots have one behind-the-scenes conductor. But there is also a simpler explanation: in an era of total transparency and universal access to information, the exchange of "best practices" can occur naturally.

In general, conspiracy thinking (let us call it "desire to rationalize reality") is on the rise and on the decline at the same time. It is on the rise because the information and political environment does offer almost unprecedented opportunities for all kinds of manipulation. It is on the decline because these opportunities are available to all and everyone, and determining the resultant force would be almost a vain endeavor. But no conspiracy theory can hold water unless there is a concrete mastermind behind it. In fact, you cannot just lay all the blame on the environment.

Over the thirty years since 1989, a turning point in the democratization of the world, the international system has indeed become much more democratic; not in the way it was understood by the proponents of the "end of history" concept, that is, the triumph of the Western liberal model, but

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literally as pluralism and a much larger number of actors demanding a say and direct participation in politics. In the second half of the 20th century, the world was extremely orderly, with ideological, political, and military confrontation constraining and determining the boundaries of the possible. The entire institutional system was essentially aimed at maintaining order, both international and domestic. And yet crises occurred regularly. Suffice it to recall the dramatic nuclear standoff or regional clashes, which were particularly spurred by mass decolonization (international confrontation) or the rebellious year 1968 (internal confrontation). But the system was able to overcome crises and their consequences without rocking the foundations.

We are now living through the finale of that solid system. The period of 1989-1991 did not destroy the model that emerged after World War II but deformed it (disappearance of the second “center”), while giving hope that the remaining elements could be adapted to the new circumstances. But it did not work out. The previous world order has not been replaced with something else, nor has it collapsed, as has often happened in history before, but, using the metaphor from the 2018 Valdai Report, it is crumbling. In other words, the frame seems to be standing, but the structures that make it up lean and sag, forcing the residents to constantly patch up the holes or shore it up.

“Global impeachment” has one thing in common: people are telling the powers that be that they are alien to them. This program is not positive, but quite effective. And it cannot be simply waved away in the era of global democratization. This is why even the toughest and most authoritarian systems of governance pay great attention

to public feedback and people’s concerns. The “old good” suppressive methods may work but only for a very short time. In general, the authorities have to respond to societal demands one way or another, either by undertaking concrete actions, or at least by skillfully imitating them. But imitation becomes obvious fairly quickly, too.

The logic of the past thirty years has been based on the assumption that globalization would provide answers to the main questions. This meant that governance drifted father away from “the ground” into “the clouds,” and the authorities in different states had to follow it (thus widening the gap between themselves and their voters) for objective reasons: decisions important for their countries became increasingly depended on supranational factors. This made people quickly annoyed and alienated from the ruling class. Social transformations, economic upheavals, and social networks have turned smoldering discontent into a rather practical charge of activity. And so the authorities have to turn to their voters, because no matter how fast globalization may go, they can derive legitimacy only from their own constituencies at home.

Unlike the impeachment of a particular head of state, “global impeachment” cannot but take place. The scale of changes in societies, states, nature, and technologies is such that the old ways will no longer work, even if the process of changing governance models can be slowed down in some places. The world will continue to crumble. The main question is how exactly this will happen.

And each nation will have to look for its own answer to the question of how strong and resilient it is in the face of inevitable turmoil.