



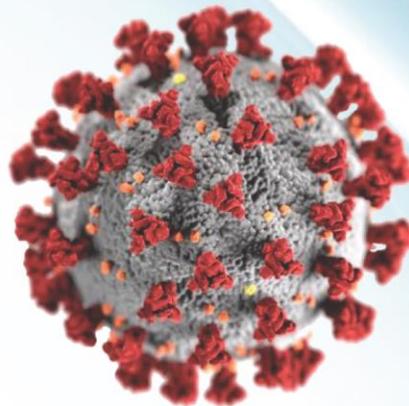
**THE BEGIN-SADAT CENTER
FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES**



Bar-Ilan
University

The Coronavirus Crisis: Origins and the Way Forward

Hanan Shai



Mideast Security and Policy Studies No. 171

THE BEGIN-SADAT CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

Mideast Security and Policy Studies No. 171

The Coronavirus Crisis: Origins and the Way Forward

Hanan Shai

**The Coronavirus Crisis:
Origins and the Way Forward**

Hanan Shai

© The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies
Bar-Ilan University
Ramat Gan 5290002 Israel
Tel: 972-3-5318959

office@besacenter.org
www.besacenter.org

ISSN 0793-1042

April 2020

Cover image: Coronavirus illustration by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention via Public Health Image Library (public domain).

The Begin-Sadat (BESA) Center for Strategic Studies

The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies is an independent, non-partisan think tank conducting policy-relevant research on Middle Eastern and global strategic affairs, particularly as they relate to the national security and foreign policy of Israel and regional peace and stability. It is named in memory of Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat, whose efforts in pursuing peace laid the cornerstone for conflict resolution in the Middle East.

BESA Perspectives are short pieces on timely and fundamental Israeli, Middle Eastern, and global issues. *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* serve as a forum for publication or re-publication of research conducted by BESA associates. *Colloquia on Strategy and Diplomacy* summarize the papers delivered at conferences and seminars held by the Center for the academic, military, official, and general publics. In sponsoring these discussions, the BESA Center aims to stimulate public debate on, and consideration of, contending approaches to problems of peace and war in the Middle East. The *Policy Memorandum* series consists of policy-oriented papers. Publication of a work by BESA signifies that it is deemed worthy of public consideration but does not imply endorsement of the author's views or conclusions. A list of recent BESA Center publications can be found at the end of this booklet.

International Advisory Board

Founder of the Center and Chairman of the Advisory Board: Dr. Thomas O. Hecht

Vice Chairman: Mr. Saul Koschitzky

Members: Ms. Marion Hecht, Mr. Robert Hecht, Prof. Riva Heft-Hecht, Mr. Joel Koschitzky, Amb. Yitzhak Levanon, Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman, Mr. Robert K. Lifton, Rt. Hon. Brian Mulroney, Mr. Seymour D. Reich, Mr. Greg Rosshandler, Amb. Zalman Shoval, Amb. Norman Spector, Ms. Drorit Wertheim

International Academic Advisory Board

Prof. Ian Beckett *University of Kent*, Prof. Eliot A. Cohen *Johns Hopkins University*, Prof. Irwin Cotler *McGill University*, Prof. Steven R. David *Johns Hopkins University*, Prof. Lawrence Freedman *King's College*, Prof. Patrick James *University of Southern California*, Dr. Martin Kramer *Shalem College*, Prof. Robert J. Lieber *Georgetown University*, Prof. Michael Mandelbaum *Johns Hopkins University*

Research Staff

BESA Center Director: Prof. Efraim Karsh

Research Associates: Mr. Emil Avdaliani, Dr. Efrat Aviv, Lt. Col. (res.) Dr. Shaul Bartal, Mr. Edwin Black, Dr. Yael Bloch-Elkon, Col. (res.) Dr. Raphael Bouchnik-Chen, Brig. Gen. (res.) Moni Chorev, Dr. Edy Cohen, Dr. James Dorsey, Dr. Gil Feiler, Prof. Jonathan Fox, Prof. Hillel Frisch, Dr. Manfred Gerstenfeld, Prof. Eytan Gilboa, Dr. Gabriel Glickman, Maj. Gen. (res.) Gershon Hachohen, Col. (res.) Aby Har-Even, Dr. Eado Hecht, Dr. Tsilla Hersheco, Dr. Doron Itzhakov, Dr. Alex Joffe, Lt. Col. (res.) Dr. Mordechai Kedar, Mr. Yaakov Lappin, Prof. Udi Lebel, Dr. Alon Levkowitz, Prof. Ze'ev Maghen, Dr. Mark Meirowitz, Ambassador Arye Mekel, Lt. Col. (res.) Dr. Raphael Ofek, Mr. Amir Rapaport, Dr. Asaf Romirowsky, Col. (res.) Dr. Uzi Rubin, Prof. Jonathan Rynhold, Prof. Shmuel Sandler, Dr. Yechiel Shabiy, Dr. Eitan Shamir, Lt. Col. (res.) Dr. Dany Shoham, Prof. Shlomo Shpiro, Prof. Joshua Teitelbaum, Dr. George N. Tzogopoulos, Dr. Jiri Valenta, Dr. Albert Wolf

Program Coordinator: Alona Briner

Publications Editor (English): Judith Levy

The Coronavirus Crisis: Origins and the Way Forward

Hanan Shai

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Amid the debate on the coronavirus crisis, there is broad agreement on three issues:

- The nation-state has failed to check the spread of the virus, quickly and with few people being infected, by using its autonomous capabilities, which turned out to be meager.
- Trans-state bodies that derived their economic capabilities from the state have failed in their role of assisting it.
- The idea of globalism is fundamentally true, and the problems that have emerged in the crisis must be remedied by strengthening the states and, at the same time, as concluded by French President Emmanuel Macron, the trans-state bodies.

This study contends that globalism in its current form has failed and collapsed, just as communism and other social frameworks failed and collapsed before it. The reason for their collapse was that all of them were based on delusory utopian ideas.

These utopian ideas are grounded in a dominant European liberal discipline whose founders abandoned the scientific revolution at the beginning of its path, abjured rational thought, and continued, like the church, to adhere to faith-based thought, feelings of the heart, and delusions of the imagination.

Another liberal discipline, less well-known, is the rational one. Committed to truth and to the absolute laws of nature, it was adopted by the Anglo-Saxon democracies, which, thanks to its values, experienced long periods of growth and prosperity. On three occasions this discipline could be mobilized to help rescue Europe from calamities that its utopian conceptions had caused.

A consideration of the globalism that has collapsed, in light of the rational values of rational liberalism, leads to the conclusion that it must be eschewed immediately and replaced with an updated and realistic global conception based on the values of rational liberalism. Unfortunately, in recent decades faith-based liberalism has penetrated these democracies as well and turned humane centers, particularly in the United States, into standard-bearers of the destructive, faith-based “liberal” “enlightenment.”

The coronavirus crisis and its causes

The failure of the nation-states to prevent the coronavirus, quickly and by themselves, from becoming a lethal worldwide pandemic is first and foremost a resounding failure of globalism.

Globalism is a delusory utopian idea that is similar to the foundational social ideas that have preceded it since the days of the French Revolution: ruthless capitalism guided by the “unseen hand,” socialism that developed in response to the “state of nature” that the “unseen hand” brought about, and communism and Nazism that emerged as a mutation of socialism.

Like its predecessors, globalism aspired to improve humanity by changing it, in the spirit of “The old world we will destroy, the new world we will create,” into the “new man”: a wolf or a sheep that lives in a social “state of nature” created by the “unseen hand” under ruthless capitalism; a citizen who is subservient to the organizations that run his life under socialism; the German as a supreme creature without physical defects under Nazism; an individual without acquisitiveness and without private property that was taken from him under communism; and a globalist “citizen of the world,” freed of his nationality, of his “I,” and of other social limitations that were taken from him under globalism.

The usurpation of nationality, as part of a determined “crusade” to achieve a large-scale blurring of every existing social boundary—national, cultural, religious, gender-based, age-based, and so on—is aimed at diluting humanity and turning it into a “multicultural” pulp of people lacking any clear identity or signature. The insistence on preserving a heritage and national symbols, as well as education to perpetuate them, has become symbolic of dark, Nazi ultranationalism. The insistence on protecting the “I” from the tyranny of the empowered “other” has become dark racism.

The turning of people into a uniform, global human conglomerate with no clear signature and identity had a goal: to enable deriving, from the creative human powers of all the people in the world, a high and unprecedented level of global economic growth.

The entry into the global market of 1.4 billion Chinese manufacturers and consumers, along with tens of millions of other citizens in Eastern Europe, gave globalism a very strong tailwind. The fact that many of the new entrants were educated, diligent people full of a fierce desire to equalize their standard of living with that of the West as rapidly as possible, and at the same time lacking any restraining democratic values, greatly

accelerated the process. The huge demand for workers that emerged in the world, a great thirst for business transactions, for higher education, for travel, for consumption, and for leisure activities, along with a huge influx of refugees, brought about a constant migration of millions of people from their homeland to other countries, including many who migrated to China and, from it, to the world.

The growth and abundance that globalism wrought in the world in a very short time were without precedent. But there was a fly in the ointment: too many of the world's citizens did not enjoy the fruits of the prosperity; the nation-state was weakened by the massive transfer of authority and powers that it had exercised on behalf of its citizens to global and regional organizations and corporations; individuals and states preferred to invest in projects yielding large and rapid profits so as to reinvest in further, similar projects. Investments in projects that do not yield an immediate profit, such as those in health, education, counteracting ageism, and infrastructure maintenance, were greatly reduced; the huge, unprecedented utilization of human creative power that emerged, highly intensively and aggressively, caused enormous destruction to nature that was likewise unprecedented.

The coronavirus, from the moment that its outbreak in China became known, was enough to impel millions of "new people"—"citizens of the world" supposedly freed from the shackles of their nationality—to flee in panic straight into the hands of the state of their own people.

A huge fleet of passenger planes—one of the classic symbols of globalism and the means by which four billion people (half the world's population) travel about the world each month—was quickly mobilized to transport the masses fleeing back to their homes. However, disastrously, the passenger-laden planes were turned into "petri dishes" that increased the virus's rate of reproduction and became a key factor not only in the rapid return of the "citizens of the world" to their far-flung countries of birth but also in the rapid global spread of the pandemic.

Upon returning to their various homelands, the "citizens of the world" discovered that the "Leviathan" that was supposed to protect the citizens of the state had turned into a midget. It indeed sparkled like a goldfish from the prosperity of many of its citizens, but it had been divested of its state authority and powers by human rights organizations, progressive liberal elements within the country itself, and global transstate organizations outside of it.

At the moment of truth, huge regional and global bodies that had derived their power from the nation-state had trouble responding to its requests for aid or even ignored them.

The anguished plea of the Italian prime minister to the citizens of Germany to help their Italian neighbors—given the fact that Germany, their state, and the European Union had turned their backs on Italy—was in fact the death knell of another delusory, childish, utopian idea. Like communism that preceded it, globalism, too, collapsed overnight amid the spread of vast destruction that cannot yet be estimated.

The claim by a German cabinet minister that the United States had stolen masks from a Thai manufacturer, masks that had been procured and prepared for Germany, is not only a sign of the precipitous collapse of the global social order. It is also an omen of the possible collapse of the intrastate social order.

Today there is a real danger that democracies, including old and stable ones, will be replaced by dictatorships in an orderly democratic process like the one that gave rise to Nazism—or, worse than that, through civil war.

It must be candidly acknowledged that cooperation between strong, sovereign nation-states, however close, honest, and fair, would not have sufficed to produce the sort of growth and abundance that globalism produced. At the same time, the flattening of the world in an attempt to turn people into “citizens of the world” and rob nature of its lifeblood may have played a central role in turning a viral outbreak, which could have remained a containable local one, into a global pandemic. The nation-state that should have been the first to contain it quickly within its unclear borders turned out to be a paper tiger with no ability to perform that task.

Here it is worth recalling that the Ebola virus, which was far more lethal than the coronavirus, was contained in 2014 in the location where it emerged (West Africa) without spreading to the continent or to the world. Its spread was prevented thanks to the openness that—unlike China—the states of Africa displayed, and no less than that, by the remoteness of the center of the outbreak from the foci of the global revelry.

The roots of the crisis

The roots of the consistent, resounding failure of modern society to promote people’s welfare and right to live in happiness can be found, perplexingly and unfortunately, precisely in the “scientific revolution.” That is, in a foundational revolution that was supposed to replace myths and stories originating in the Christian faith with rational, scientific thought.

In the natural sciences, humanity has, since the advent of the scientific revolution, used its reason to decipher the one truth at the basis of nature and its laws, thereby making progress in the scientific domains. In the field of humanism, however, humanity remains behind; the threat that reason posed to myths and beliefs caused the enlightened liberal elites in the humanistic fields to shy away from it.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the father of French and European philosophy, indeed rebelled against the Christian religion that believed in the son of God. In its stead, however, he founded a new faith-based religion that believed in man himself instead of the son of God, in the spirit of a Hellenistic belief that “Man is the measure of all things” (as asserted by Protagoras in the fifth century BCE).

Christianity believed that the reason for the suffering of humanity was its original sin. Rousseau, however, believed that humanity was good and perfect by nature, and the

reason for its suffering was its subjugation to the tyranny of the church, the feudal aristocracy, and the monarchy in its time, and to the tyranny of the bourgeoisie and of nationalism in a later era.

Similar to Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, the father of German philosophy, claimed that rational knowledge must be set aside “to make room for faith.” Isaiah Berlin calls that decision one of the three most fateful turning points in Western culture.

The successors of these thinkers were more extreme than they were. For Hegel, truth is relative; for Heidegger, the ideologue of Nazism (who claimed after the Holocaust that Nazism had failed because Hitler was too humanistic), the truth has vanished completely because “all is nothing and nothing is all.” Sartre, for example, had no trouble believing in communism and admiring Stalin, even when his misdeeds were apparent to all. When he needed a higher dose of totalitarianism, he went on to believe in Maoism. In his old age he returned to the Christian faith and, like his ancestors, was buried as a Christian believer. In 1987, at the threshold of the present century, the Frenchman Baudrillard stated that truth is “what we need to get rid of as soon as possible.”

When truth, of which there can be only one (Freud), is made superfluous and replaced with myths and beliefs, morality—which is supposed, in Buber’s view, to protect humanity from the lie that does not exist in nature and is an invention of human beings—is also rendered superfluous.

In the absence of morality, man cannot use his mind to control emotion, instinct, and reflex in order to circumscribe them. In a world without truth, morality, and the restraint of the mind by the conscience, the need and the ability to distinguish between good and evil, and hence also the need to conduct conscientious soul-searching, to repent, to amend errors and injustices and avoid repeating them, become useless.

Nietzsche saw the atrophy of the human conscience as a gain. “Repentance and soul-searching,” he asserted, “oppress human nature,” and where there is no conscience, “real heroes do not regret and do not suffer.”

The human character, the “in the image of,” is not, Shalom Rosenberg maintains, innate and God-given but a goal toward which one must strive by internalizing the values of morality and, in their light, using one’s conscience as a guide, a judge, and an executioner. The eschewal of truth and morality, which made the conscience—the human character—extraneous, freed people from having to exert themselves to employ it and suffer its pangs.

The Nietzschean “new” *ubermensch* celebrated his liberation from enslavement to the “image” in Auschwitz. There he worked assiduously to destroy the people that had burdened humanity with the morality, repentance, and soul-searching that “oppress” human nature. His colleague, the enlightened, faith-based French liberal, was more modest and settled for hunting down the rebellious people and sending them via the French rail company to the “care” of the Nietzschean *ubermensch*.

When dark Christianity reached its nadir, its soul-searching mechanism was able to generate, despite its moral limitations, a “protest”—Protestantism—that salvaged the continent from the darkness of the Middle Ages and paved the way to enlightenment and the three fundamental revolutions—the scientific, the democratic, and the industrial.

When the liberal, faith-based, enlightened religion brought humanity to an even more terrible nadir because of its ambition to create a physically flawless *ubermensch*—and another man, an angel without urges for consumption and material gain—this religion had neither morality nor a conscience, and hence also no awareness or ability to engage in soul-searching.

Exempt from soul-searching and relieved of the hard work it entailed, the faith-based enlightenment’s Pavlovian response to its failure to create a communist man was to launch yet another imaginary social experiment: to create a globalist human uniformity.

The first to identify the great potential for profit in the new project, which requires the flattening of the world (as in the book *The World Is Flat* by Thomas Friedman—an ultra-Orthodox, enlightened/faith-based liberal), were capital and the markets. In their boundless desire to expand and grow, they supported the project’s advancement with—so it seems—boundless generosity.

It was clear that the alliance that emerged between boundless capital and markets and a crusading, liberal, enlightened/faith-based, mobilized commando force for erasing boundaries was volatile in nature and likely to end in a calamity.

Despite the great destruction that the democratic “crusade” to flatten the world wreaked as it passed like a storm through the Middle East (the “Arab Spring”), the faith-based liberal papacy that propelled the crusade, one might say with its own hands, did nothing to contain it.

Moreover, Barack Obama’s presidential reprimand to Hosni Mubarak—in which he told him to speedily resign so as to enable a “new order” that would grant Egypt stability and growth (despite the Egyptian president’s warnings of the disaster his forced retirement would cause to his country)—indicates the depth of the religious ecstasy that drove this hallucinatory and brutal liberal-democratic, faith-based crusade to flatten (and in hindsight, devastate) the world.

The crusade was checked by a local virus that the flattening of the world helped turn, in no time, into a global pandemic. This was despite the recent proclamation by a well-known, faith-based, liberal historian-futurist that humanity is no longer threatened by pandemics.

As of this moment, the dream of creating a global “new” man, a “citizen of the world,” has ended in the return of the “faith-based liberal Cinderella” to a much earlier time: a man isolated from the company of other people, hidden within the narrow boundaries of his own home like the primeval man in his cave.

If Heidegger's conclusion from the collapse of the Nazi experiment was, as mentioned, that it was caused by Hitler's being too humane, the new and foreseeable conclusion from the collapse of globalism of French President Emmanuel Macron is that the European Union fell apart because its power was too limited. Hence, he claimed, it must be given not only additional economic power but additional military power as well (by whom and at whose expense?).

Rational liberalism: The escape hatch from the crisis

Besides the threat to health, humanity is threatened by a major social crisis resulting from an unprecedented economic crisis that has befallen it. Together with the loss of purchasing power, as in previous severe economic downturns, in the current crisis society has lost its power of production and is now subsisting from inventories. If these are not speedily renewed, the result could be a rapid social disintegration and a return to the Hobbesian "state of nature" of "war of all against all." The rush to gun shops in the United States reinforces this assessment.

The chances of preventing the possible social catastrophe with a new social agenda that would be based on a rational liberal approach (which even Macron's despair- and pity-evoking conclusion points to) are tiny. Even if a new catastrophe is warded off for now, past experience indicates that is highly likely to occur at a later stage. Now is the time to replace faith-based humanism—the humaneness of whose proponents is doubtful in light of the series of disasters it has inflicted on humanity—with a true, rational humanism that is founded on rational liberalism.

Unlike faith-based liberalism, rational liberalism did not dissociate itself from the scientific revolution but went along with it and settled modestly in the Anglo-Saxon democracies. Because of their consistent adherence to the values of rational liberalism (though not to all of them), these countries experienced long periods of prosperity and growth that enabled them to stand firm against attempts to spread the delusory European ideologies in them. On three occasions, their strength and fearless devotion to the values of rational liberalism led them to mobilize to salvage Europe from the calamities wreaked on it, and on the world, by the delusory ideas that grew in it, and even to sacrifice the lives of many of their young people to this end. Unfortunately, in recent decades faith-based liberalism has also penetrated these democracies and turned humane centers, particularly in the United States, into standard-bearers of faith-based, destructive "liberal enlightenment."

There is not enough space here to fully set forth the doctrine and values of rational liberalism. To understand its essence and the chasm that yawns between the two liberal outlooks, it suffices to be familiar with the main aspects of its approach and with some of its constitutive values.

Similar to faith-based liberalism, rational liberalism seeks to redeem humanity from its subjugation to the tyranny of the strong and to prevent a social "state of nature." It does

not claim that man is good or evil, perfect or flawed, and so does not seek to change him into a meditator, an ascetic, a seraph, or an angel who is disconnected from his “I.” On the contrary, it accepts man as he is.

Rational liberalism attributes the emergence of the social “state of nature” to two facts that are intrinsic to human nature: the fact of the inborn inequality that nature creates between human beings, and the fact that, unlike animals (and even plants), man lacks a natural, inborn mechanism to limit his urges and gratifications, including the urge to lie (which, as noted, Buber refers to as a human invention that does not exist in nature).

Given the inequality, a weak and less talented person who has failed to produce his food will probably require, in order to survive, the surpluses of his fellow-man who is stronger and more talented than he is.

The lack of a limit to the drive for domination and the drive to accumulate and empower property will likely cause the strong person to exploit the weakness of his fellow-man whose life depends on him—and, in return for salvaging the latter with his surplus, to subjugate the weak person’s property to him and eventually also his body. Throughout history these two drives have caused the stratification of society into two classes: a minority of strong individuals who became the enslavers, and a majority of weak individuals who became the enslaved.

Christianity tried to avert this stratification by preaching the subdual of the human drives through abstention, and the meditative cultures devised behavioral rituals for disengagement from the body and its urges. Democracy focuses on containing the drives for domination, and the gratification gained by accumulating governmental power, through the democratic mechanism, which decentralizes governmental power downward and prevents its accretion at the top of the pyramid.

The values of rational liberalism and its mechanisms

Rational liberalism adds to the democratic mechanism, and to the values involved in implementing it, the inherent component that is missing—values of moral judgment when making democratic decisions.

Moral judgment can complement the mechanism for limiting drives and gratifications, which is inborn in animals and nonexistent in humans, through a man-made mechanism and thereby avert a social “state of nature.” To that end, rational liberalism makes use of the forethought that is unique to human beings so that they can subjugate their drives and gratifications to their consciousness, and likewise to the values of morality, which are like road signs directing the traffic.

Rational liberalism derives these guiding values from the laws of the universe and of nature, including human nature, laws that constitute an absolute and eternal truth. Hence, like the logic of the creation and the laws of nature from which they are derived, the values of this form of liberalism, too, are an absolute and eternal truth. Because the

elements of nature and its laws are in harmony, social conduct in light of values that are derived from nature and its harmonious laws can produce a similar harmony (social justice) between human beings (notwithstanding their innate inequality) and, furthermore, between them and nature.

Rational liberalism equips society with three mechanisms that are meant to restrain it, without denying man the right to enjoy his innate drives: a moral mechanism whose values are derived, as noted, from the logic of the creation and its laws; an educational mechanism designed to teach and instill those values so as to accustom people to adhere to the truth, contain their drives, restrain their gratifications, and control anger, enabling them to live in peace with themselves and to compromise with the other; and the democratic mechanism, which—if the first two mechanisms are absent—can turn into a tool “for building a state for the sons of Satan,” as Kant warned.

The guiding values of rational liberalism that are important for a discussion of globalism are:

- **The value of truth:** In rational liberalism, the truth pertains to one world, as derived from the one, absolute, and eternal truth that exists in the laws of nature. As in science, in humanism an effort must be made to ground truth in proofs that are as strong as possible; and as in science, the consistent adherence to one truth, and to the ongoing effort to reveal that truth in interpersonal relations, is meant to reduce the element of gambling in human life, thereby enabling people to carry out their plans at a high level of certainty and to enjoy stability and security in their lives.

Liberal/faith-based “truth” is the inverse of rational truth: it is not absolute but multiple and relative because, like beauty, it is “in the eye of the beholder” and can also be based on narratives and “political correctness”—that is, legitimization for bypassing the truth so as not to compromise the dignity of the person (particularly “the other”) and his rights.

It comes as no surprise, then, that in response to accusations of concealing information about the coronavirus, China claims that—in line with the value of “political correctness”—it had to protect the dignity of the Chinese person and his right to privacy, particularly regarding his state of health. China can also claim that, after repudiating communism and its old liberal rabbis Marx and Engels, it learned from the new rabbi it made for itself—the faith-based, more progressive liberal, Baudrillard—that “the truth is what we need to get rid of as soon as possible.”

- **The sanctification of life:** In rational liberalism, this constitutes a guiding, foundational, and cardinal value that supersedes, except for special cases, every other value—exactly as, in humans and in animals, the existential instinct guides in them, reflexively, every other reaction so as to ensure their survival.

In contrast, faith-based liberalism put human dignity and rights before the sanctification of life, including, as noted, the right to privacy—which became the flagship of its humanism. Out of adherence to this value, for example, the U.S.

administration refrained from security checks on domestic flights before the Twin Towers attack occurred. Such a check before the attack may, notwithstanding a certain infringement of privacy, have saved the lives of thousands of people and enormous damage to property. Because of the violation of this value, buckets of cold water were thrown on the heads of police officers who, before the relevant emergency law was legislated, rushed to save the lives of worshippers from the coronavirus.

- **The value of freedom:** In rational liberalism, the liberation of man from tyranny begins with the removal of restraints. What turns that removal of restraints into freedom is the ability, which he did not have while he was subjugated, to make spontaneous decisions. In the absence of values, or when the values in whose light he spontaneously makes decisions contravene the logic of nature and its laws (like the “values” of faith-based liberalism), the person does not enjoy freedom but only the absence of restraints; given human nature, this absence of restraints will probably end quickly in his return to the “state of nature” from which he was freed.

The social order was designed since the French Revolution and especially since the collapse of communism in accordance with the values of faith-based liberalism, whose adoption was the main factor behind a series of collapses of this order in recent centuries. Thus democratic, and particularly European, man has not yet won real freedom but at most very brief furloughs; the last one ended with his relegation to solitary confinement in his home.

- In rational liberalism the **value of mutual responsibility** is derived from a similar symbiosis that exists in nature—in animal and plant life and indirectly also in the inanimate world: a utilitarian altruism that pays off for the recipient but also for the giver. The practical significance of this value, as Freud defined it, is the duty of each individual to carry responsibility and obligations toward his fellow-man. The boundary of mutual responsibility is the practical ability to fulfill that responsibility and those obligations.

Rational liberalism defines this boundary as the person’s duty to extend his innate obligation to his parents and his family, which comes easily to him, to his nation as well. The nation, within permanent, defensible borders—unlike the social frameworks preceding it in the social hierarchy (the clan, the tribe, and the city-state)—is large enough to create collective, decisive power and thereby to prevent a routine of “living by the sword,” with the lack of stability and certainty that characterize life in the lower frameworks of the hierarchy.

Rational liberalism is also globalist: it produces global power through the obligation of each nation-state to accumulate sufficient power, not only to carry out its commitments toward its citizens but also to fulfill its responsibility and duty to cooperate in projects that advance humanity and thereby to guarantee, in time of need, the universal system.

In contrast, faith-based liberalism ignored the “limit of the extent of human control and oversight,” because of which humanity is layered and stratified in almost every social domain, including its organization into peoples, nations, and in the new era, into nation-states as well. Faith-based liberalism blurred the contours of the national layer so as to replace it with a global “Leviathan,” a body with unprecedented power but without organizational flexibility and physical closeness to threats—and thus also without an ability to respond to them rapidly, flexibly, and in the same spirit of mobilization, which in the nation-state is generated by such elements as language, ethnic cohesion, homogeneous tradition and culture, and common history going back hundreds and thousands of years.

The liberal/faith-based great notion of the dignity of “the other” and his empowerment vis-à-vis the “I” not only contravenes the instinctive drive to exist; it also turned the utilitarian, mutually beneficial altruism that underpins the value of “mutual responsibility” into a destructive, nonutilitarian altruism that directly clashes with the value of “sanctification of life.” Levinas characterized faith-based liberalism’s cult of the “other” as an autoimmune disease that has attacked society.

When the coronavirus crisis erupted and the nation-states, lacking their national powers and other capabilities, required the assistance of the “global Leviathan,” they discovered that the mentality that had taken hold among its official “citizens of the world” is the mentality of capital and the markets that had impelled the Leviathan’s creation—which means hastening to please the depositors but hiding in a bureaucratic maze when they want to withdraw their funds.

- **Faith:** Rational liberalism does not make faith superfluous, as perhaps emerges clearly from the scathing criticism of the conceptions and “values” of faith-based liberalism. On the contrary, for rational liberalism a sincere faith in the validity and veracity of its values is an important means of easing people’s rehabilitation from their subjection to the four addictive tyrannies (imagination and falsehood, domineeringness, the drives, and the gratifications), and even more so, of helping them maintain a routine of staying “clean” over time.

The crisis of democracy

The democratic revolution liberated humanity from the yoke of the aristocracy’s absolutism and turned all of its citizens into liberals. However, faith-based liberalism restratified society into two classes: a ruling class of the faith-based, “enlightened” liberal aristocracy took control of the societal heritage assets (law, media, military, art, and education) and turned them into latifundia aggressively ruling the “boorish” masses of subjugated people.

With the wisdom of the multitudes, with healthy natural instincts, and particularly with moral judgment in light of values of truth, the “boorish” masses realized that, like communism, the new king—globalism, a further creation of unrelenting faith-based

liberalism—is naked. Intellectuals who should have constituted a moral shield for democracy abused their office and held their peace. Only in politics did some “rebels” stand up and say out loud, in an attempt to defend democracy and society, that the king is naked. However, a high acoustic wall that the aristocracy of faith-based liberal law, media, and art had built around itself kept those voices out.

What needs to be done

The virus that toppled the global order and is now sowing a calamity creates an opportunity to implement the lesson that Kant already warned of three centuries ago and that has not been adopted by democratic society since the first modern calamity—the bloodbath and destruction that the French Revolution and its aftermath wreaked in France and in Europe. This lesson, which is also the basic lesson of the collapse of globalism and its ramifications, underlines the fact that democracy without an orderly morality of values of truth is dangerous, destructive, and corrupting no less than dictatorship, even if its leaders are “refined” liberals.

If ruthless and evil dictators were responsible for the calamities of Nazism and communism, democratic leaders (from the left and the right) are responsible for the calamity of faith-based globalism. And because even horrendous events like the Holocaust and other genocides in the twentieth century were not enough to inculcate this lesson in the democratic societies, the coronavirus calamity provides a further opportunity to achieve the great rectification that is needed.

It is proposed here that the platform for carrying out that rectification will be a second “Yalta Conference.” Like its predecessor, in which rational, practical decisions were made for defeating Nazism and delimiting communism, it will be devoted to making decisions on creating a rational, practical alternative to another utopian caprice that quick-witted faith-based humanism may come up with.

The convening of the liberal democracies for the conference should be initiated by the Anglo-Saxon democracies, whose leadership also initiated the convening of the first conference. Indeed, these countries, primarily the United States and Britain, have their hands full coping with the calamity that has befallen them and with domestic political crises whose contours overlap with those that distinguish between rational and faith-based liberalism. However, given the experience and the repute they have gained (thanks to their adherence to the values of rational liberalism) in rescuing Europe and the world from the three great calamities they have already undergone in the modern era—the French Revolution and Bonapartism, the ultranationalism of World War I, and Nazism and communism—none are better suited to this task than they are.

The Anglo-Saxon democratic leadership must immediately set up an “arrangements committee” to prepare for the conference and formulate a platform for discussion with five sections:

- A common rational-liberal, values-based code that the democracies must incorporate in their constitutions or their basic laws, thereby making the consideration of these values a requirement—in legislation, in politics, and in judgment.
- A plan to inculcate the values of rational liberalism at the same speed with which the tenets of faith-based liberalism were inculcated in society (truth that can also be a narrative, dignity that comes before life, freedom that is the removal of restraints, patriotism that is dark ultranationalism (and a will to live that is racism)).
- A practical guide to creating capitalist socioeconomic justice that has never been written. Despite its shortcomings, capitalism, unlike socialism and communism, has not been tossed in the wastebasket because it accords with human nature. Hence it is essential to set boundaries for it so that its full potential can be realized while protecting society from its defects.
- A plan for the rapid elimination of the United Nations, which has become a global organization for the destruction of standards. The new, alternative United Nations should be designed in line with the vision of Woodrow Wilson—the U.S. president who planned the creation of the first United Nations—and its mission will be to serve as a tool to spread the values of rational liberalism in the world and thereby establish, in their light, a rational and moral global order. Actors who refuse or are unable to adopt the values of this new order and behave in accordance with them (if not in their home court, then at least in the global court) must be denied the right to influence its decisions.
- An international relations discipline for the era of recovery from the coronavirus crisis. In this sensitive period, it will be appropriate to base this discipline on a combination of two past disciplines: realism, as in the Cold War era, and liberalism, as in the Obama era, but instead of faith-based liberalism as during his tenure—rational, practical liberalism. While the updated discipline clearly will not enable off-the-charts growth, it will also prevent a sharp, disastrous plunge.

The liberal democracies have the opportunity to exploit the calamity that has befallen them like thunder on a clear day in order to change humanism, like science, into something rational and respectful of nature and its laws, including human nature. Only then, in light of the values of rational liberalism that they will adopt, will they be able to alter the routine of short “furloughs,” particularly in the European democracies, into a stable and ongoing freedom and to live in harmony not only socially but also with nature. Only then might nature, in return, desist from its fury and turn to human society with a shining face.

Recent BESA Center Publications

Mideast Security and Policy Studies

- No. 149 The Privileged Palestinian Refugees, *Efraim Karsh*, May 2018
- No. 150 The Israel Defense Forces, 1948-2017, *Kenneth S. Brower*, May 2018
- No. 151 In Memoriam: Per Ahlmark, *Manfred Gerstenfeld*, June 2018
- No. 152 Iran's President Rouhani: Part of the Problem, Not Part of the Solution, *Udi Evental*, July 2018
(English and Hebrew)
- No. 153 China's Military Base in Djibouti, *Mordechai Chaziza*, August 2018
- No. 154 The Oslo Disaster Revisited: How It Happened, *Efraim Karsh*, September 2018
- No. 155 The "Separation Fence": A Political Border in a Security Guise, *Gershon Hacoheh*, October 2018
(Hebrew only)
- No. 156 The North Korean Air Force: A Declining or Evolving Threat? *Noam Hartoch and Alon Levkowitz*,
October 2018
- No. 157 The 1981 AWACS Deal: AIPAC and Israel Challenge Reagan, *Arnon Gutfeld*, November 2018
- No. 158 Pakistan and Its Militants: Who Is Mainstreaming Whom? *James M. Dorsey*, November 2018
- No. 159 American Jews and Their Israel Problem, *Kenneth Levin*, December 2018
- No. 160 The West Bank's Area C: Israel's Vital Line of Defense, *Gershon Hacoheh*, January 2019 (Hebrew)
April 2019 (English)
- No. 161 The Islamic State's Religious Nationalism: Challenging the Existing International Order, *Galit Truman
Zinman*, April 2019 (Hebrew only)
- No. 162 Israeli Nuclear Deterrence in Context: Effects of the US-Russian Rivalry, *Louis René Beres*, June 2019
- No. 163 A Geopolitical Crossfire: Al Azhar Struggles to Balance Politics and Tradition, *Dr. James M. Dorsey*,
August 2019
- No. 164 EU Funding of Illegal Palestinian Settlement in Area C, *Edwin Black*, September 2019
- No. 165 What Happens to Israel If the US and Israel Go to War? *Louis René Beres*, September 2019
- No. 166 Trump's Trade Wars: A New World Order? *James M. Dorsey*, November 2019
- No. 167 Land Combat Vehicles: Protection Comes First, *Maxi Blum*, November 2019
- No. 168 The Soleimani Killing: An Initial Assessment, *Hillel Frisch, Eytan Gilboa, Gershon Hacoheh, Doron
Itzhakov, and Alex Joffe*, January 2020
- No. 169 Iranian Missiles and Its Evolving "Rings of Fire", *Uzi Rubin*, January 2020
- No. 170 Operation "Shahid Soleimani": Iran's Revenge, *Uzi Rubin*, February 2020
- No. 171 The Coronavirus Crisis: Origins and the Way Forward, *Hanan Shai*, April 2020 (English and Hebrew)

Policy Memoranda

- No. 8 Perfect Storm in the Middle East, *Yaakov Amidror*, June 2015 (Hebrew), July 2015 (English)
- No. 9 Israel-Greece Relations, *Arye Mekel*, September 2015 (Hebrew)
- No. 10 Space Wars, *Aby Har-Even*, May 2016 (Hebrew)

Colloquia on Strategy and Diplomacy

- No. 29 Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations: Whereto? (Hebrew) August 2014
- No. 30 IDF Challenges (Hebrew) August 2016