



# Will the Putin-Xi era supersede the Western liberal (dis)order?

by

**Pepe Escobar**

on

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The Chinese constitutional amendment allowing Xi Jinping the possibility of further presidential terms — staying in power long enough to bring "national rejuvenation" combined with the Russian election re-confirming Vladimir Putin in the presidency have assured consistency and continuity for the Russia-China strategic partnership way into the next decade.

This will facilitate the interaction between the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Eurasia Economic Union (EEAU); policy coordination inside the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the BRICS and the G-20; and the overall drive towards Eurasia integration.

The strengthening of what should be viewed as the Putin-Xi era could not but render Western liberals – and neoliberals – absolutely livid.

Capitalist interests have always believed their own propaganda narrative, which directly links

capitalist expansion with the inevitable spread of democracy.

Critical thinking is, at last, debunking it as a [grand illusion](#).

What in fact happened since the early 1980s was that Western turbo-capitalism avidly profited from a variation of neo-slave labor in China's Special Economic Zones (SEZs). Compound it with the proverbial hubris of Western elites betting that China — regarded at best as a source of cheap labor as well as an enfeebled Russia during the 1990s would never accumulate enough know-how to challenge the West, geoeconomically and geopolitically.

The historical record is implacable, showing there's no connection whatsoever between "free" trade — usually freer for those with extra economic heft and political liberalization. For instance, the Prussian monarchy lowered trade barriers and that led to the creation of the Zollverein in 1834. And the Third Reich between 1933 and 1938 offered a heady mix of hardcore capitalism and totalitarianism.

China's system, where a (Marxist) party controls the state for the purposes of national cohesion certainly does not qualify as a liberal democracy. Dissenter [Minxin Pei](#), the author of [China's Trapped Transition](#), already knew 12 years ago that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) would never go the Western liberal democracy way (Pei did understand Little Helmsman Deng Xiaoping's commands to the letter).

He got it right that China has "no interest in becoming a member of the (Western) club. They want the economic benefits from the Western liberal order but reject its political values and fear its security alliances. Now they are in a strong enough position attempting to build their own clubhouse."

What Pei got wrong is that the CCP would smother China's economic growth ("The prospect of a Japanese-like stagnation is real.") Xi Jinping and his new dream team need enough time to successfully tweak the Chinese economic model.

Away from childish 24/7 demonization, the fact is Russia today is a democracy, albeit imperfect. And it's important to analyze how a young democracy can be manipulated. The third chapter of new book [Manifest-Destiny: Democracy as Cognitive Dissonance](#) details the rape of Russia; how Boris Yeltsin's "free market reforms" facilitated by the "Harvard boys" allowed a small coterie of billionaire oligarchs — Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Boris Berezovsky and Roman Abramovich among them — to take over an economy suffering from shock therapy.

Between 1991 and 1997 Russian GDP collapsed by a whopping 83% while investment into the economy fell by 92%.

The case of Khodorkovsky is emblematic. Through Yukos, he owned key Siberian oil fields and was about to sell them all to Western corporate interests back in 2003 when Putin went after him. There's no question this was avidly studied by the Beijing leadership. Control of key national resources is the ultimate red line.

For Putin as well as Xi, the supreme arbiter is the national state, not a bunch of oligarchs like it's become a norm across the liberal and neoliberal West. On a BRICS level, compare it with the current usurper installed in the Brazilian presidency, who's doing his best to hand over most of the pre-salt oil reserves as well as aviation giant Embraer to foreign interests.

### **When in doubt, ask Confucius**

It has become a ritual for [guardians](#) of the Western establishment to weep hard about the "fading liberal world order." At least some admit it is "neither liberal nor worldwide nor orderly."

[Lesser guardians](#) may be more realistic, noting how Western politicians have been completely bypassed by popular anger in myriad latitudes, yet still believing it's possible to "rebuild democracy's moral foundations."



It's not — not under the predominant neoliberal creed, the post-mod TINA (there is no alternative). The guardians, left and right, cannot possibly understand the rise of populism — because those under the populist influence clearly see how the myths of "rule of law" and "national sovereignty" are fast dissolving in the mud. The guardians at best mourn, nostalgically, "the loss of elite influence."

China, Russia, Iran and Turkey — all implicated in Eurasia integration — may all rank as authoritarian systems at different levels. And cases can be made that, with the exception of China they still underperform economically compared to their true potential.

Yet one thing they value most of all is national sovereignty amid a multipolar system. That's their conceptual counterpoint to the il(liberal) world (dis)order. That's their answer to TINA.

As for "the loss of elite influence," that's code for a self-described coterie of the wealthy and powerful claiming a fuzzy democracy moral high ground which only unmasks their deep fear as the Western unipolar moment dissolves sooner rather than later.

All these contradictions are in sharp relief when we look at the European Union. The EU, since the Maastricht treaty, has been steered into becoming what Angela Merkel herself defined as Bundesrepublik Europa — the Federal Republic of Europe.

Anyone familiar with Brussels knows how those waves of tax-free Eurocrats milk an ultra-centralized and bureaucratically Kafkaesque regulation system as they remain completely out of touch with normal, real-life Europeans.

The EU's notion of promoting "economic integration" including heavy doses of austerity could not be more anti-democratic.

Add to it scandals at top state level that do nothing but corrode the belief in the primacy of the Western liberal democracy model. The latest involves the real possibility that Colonel Gaddafi probably [financed](#) the 2007 Sarkozy presidential campaign in France; an outstandingly murky affair featuring the politics of energy, the politics of water, and the proverbial major weapons contracts through which Western liberal democracies discard any moral high ground.

Now compare it with Xi Jinping as *hexin lingdao* (the nucleus of the leadership) a sort of primus inter pares in a Sinified version of Plato's Republic. Greek-Roman-Enlightenment political theory is not the only game in town anymore. Yet not a chance the hubristic West will start listening to Confucius.