



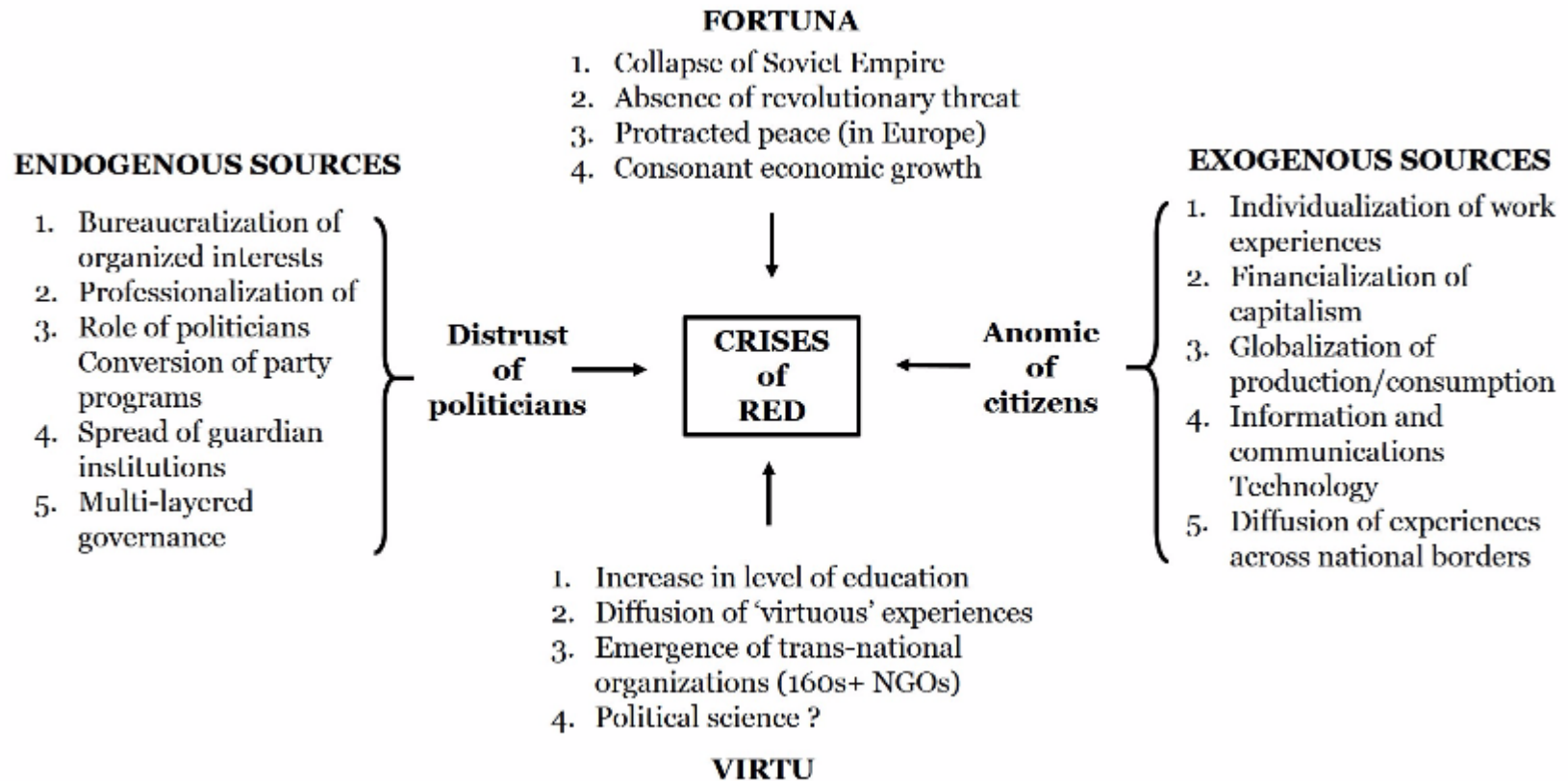
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‘REAL-EXISTING’ DEMOCRACY AND ITS DISCONTENTS

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SOURCES



Endogenous Sources

- Replacement of individuals by permanent organizations – political parties, interest associations, social movements – as their effective citizens
- Professionalization of the role of politician (including those surrounding him or her).
- Convergence of party programs making it increasingly difficult to distinguish the classical difference between Left and Right.
- Spread of guardian institutions staffed by technocrats and deliberately chartered to be independent of the competitive political process.
- Emergence of multi-layered governance arrangements that confound the distinctions between national, sub-national and supra-national authority.

Exogenous Sources

- Individualization of work experience due to increased dominance of the service sector, smaller and smaller units of production, and “ambiguous class relations” within the units.
- Shift of center of accumulation within capitalism from industry to financial services.
- Globalization of systems of production, trade and consumption (with the consequent decline in capacity of national governments to regulate and re-distribute)
- New information and communication technologies that facilitate direct but virtual exchanges between citizens at little or no cost.
- Enhanced diffusion of knowledge about political experiences and outcomes across national borders

CONDITIONS

- The endogenous (political) sources combine to produce and reproduce **mistrust** in the politicians and institutions of RED. The exogenous (socio-economic) sources contribute to the spread of **anomie** in the population.
- **The core hypothesis embedded in the Figure One sketch is that the peculiar intensity, persistence and potential threat of the present crisis of RED are rooted in the interaction between these two “intermediate conditions.” Mistrust alone would most likely result only in sporadic outbursts of resistance by citizens, usually in the form of reactions to revelations of scandalous malfeasance in office. Anomie alone only provides an incentive to withdraw passively from politics or to express personal dissatisfaction which, however, is incapable of motivating others due to his or her social isolation. Together, mistrust and anomie are capable of sustaining a movement of opposition that could threaten “democracy as we have known it.”**

CAUSES

Fortuna

- The collapse of the Soviet Empire
- The unprecedented absence of any plausible threat of revolution or alternative regime type
- The financial crash of 2008 and the ensuing 'Great Recession' (following a lengthy period of persistent economic growth)
- The crisis of mass emigration triggered by declining living standards and increasing violence in the (non-democratic) countries of origin.

Virtù

- General increase in the level of education of the population
- Greater diffusion of knowledge about 'virtuous' political experiences from country to country
- Emergence of trans-national, governmental and non-governmental, organizations promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law
- The institutionalization of the academic discipline of political science and its global spread (????)

REFORMING – REDESIGNING REDs

Democracy has been there before and survived – by redesigning its institutions. Three elements have combined to produce this outcome: (1) a collective **agent** that was willing to bear the costs of transformation; (2) an **ideology** that presented a credible alternative future regime; and (3) a convincing **strategy** for bringing about the transformation.

SYMPTOMS (1)

1. Increase in electoral abstention
2. Decline in party membership and identification
3. Rise in electoral volatility
4. Decline in voter support for traditional Left-Right centrist parties and rise in support for fringe parties.
5. Weakening role of parliaments and strengthening of executive authority

SYMPTOMS (2)

6. Decline in membership and support for class-based associations
7. Greater difficulty in forming and stabilizing governments
8. Increased direct intervention of business firms – especially financial ones – in the policy-making process
9. Finally, that catch-all symptom, **populism** – the number and success of populist candidates and, eventually, their acquiring responsibility for forming governments.

PROSPECTS

I used to think (and published) that the eventual outcome would be one of three types of reformed RED:

- pre-liberal,
- more liberal, or
- post-liberal

Or...

Something else?

**The democratic dilemma between
“Responsiveness” and “Responsibility”**

I. “RESPONSIBLE” POST-DEMOCRACY

- **meritocracy**
- **de-politicization**
- **“guardian institutions”**
- **Governance arrangements**

i.e. CAPITALIST DEMOCRACY

II. «RESPONSIVE» POST-DEMOCRACY

- Media-ocracy
- Politicization beyond parties
- «amateur institutions»
- Executive privilege

i.e. POPULIST DEMOCRACY

III. A DIALECTICAL SYNTHESIS?

QUESTIONS NOT CONCLUSIONS