

The Three Global Curtains

From Dependence Civilization to Contempt Civilization: Education Beyond Severance

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There is no power vacuum, nor of ideas. When they are necessary, they are born at the moment other die. In late 20th century, ideas that criticized social reality and formulated alternatives to build a civilization died. There was the feeling that these ideas had become unnecessary, and did not need to be replaced. Utopian ideas were buried under the wreckage of the “iron curtain.”

Twenty years after the so-called “end of history,” humankind has nothing to celebrate, except the end of the risk of nuclear conflicts between the superpowers, even so replaced by the risk of nuclear terror. The early 21st century shows an irresponsible economic and social model in the use of science and technology, immoral in income distribution, indecent in cares with the planet. A humankind split by a more brutal separation than social inequality, and which quickly marches toward biological dissimilarity, which warms the Earth and destroys life on the planet; which suffers from an existential emptiness filled with drug consumption or consumption drug, which creates a culture without esthetics oriented to-

ward market immediateness, with chaotic international migration that creates displaced, displeased and cultureless people, a world submitted to a superpower that tries to appropriate natural resources and impose its culture, religion and a thought that assumes to be the only one.

Instead of the “iron curtain,” the global world has built as or more oppressive curtains, which hinder progress. Never have alternative ideas and projects been so necessary to global civilization. For doing it, we must understand why alternative socialism has died.

We can list at least thirteen reasons:

Moral—Implementation of the utopian leftist project has failed, especially in Eastern Europe countries. The more we try to concentrate on Stalin’ figure, the inhumanity of the soviet *Gulag* was a product of the left. And this was an extreme example, but not the only one. To the extent that we reached the late 20th century with the idea that socialism was equal to political repression, instead of seeing socialism as the symbol of freedom.

Political—With the exception of the USSR and national liberation movements and Cuba, there have no substantial political victories conducted by forces of the left. Victories of the left were limited to conquering national independence and the defeat of dictatorships, but these are also objectives of the forces of the right, and their consequences were not close to desired.

Social—Notwithstanding the greatest victories of socialism having been meeting essential social needs to everyone, such needs have not been abolished, as has already

happened in capitalist countries; conquests were limited by restrictions to technical or economic advance, in the case of health and housing, and individual freedom restriction, in the case of education.

Consumption—Socially failed in part, the left has totally failed in meeting consumption demands, killing them by technical incompetence through prohibition, or focusing its care on chosen people.

Equality—Even breaking class privileges, the left has not been able to eliminate inequality, it has only eliminated hereditary transfer of inequality, because those who joined the party or carried out special tasks defined by the State had the right to reach privileged tiers.

Ecological—In addition to not being foreseen by 20th century theoreticians, and having been an initially refused flag by the left and despised by regimes, the ecological problem is one the fundamental causes of the failure of the left, which did not know yet how to formulate a development model free of the sad arrogance of anthropocentrism.

Historical—The manner in which the soviet empire was undone, starting from the whisper of the fragile labor union movement in Poland and the religious ideas of a Pope in Roma, the nationalist soul of the USSR federation peoples, much more than the West threats, will leave a mark of failure on the left that will remain recorded in humankind history for centuries.

Circumstantial—The fall of the Berlin wall and spreading of neo-liberalism and a single thought have had a great impact on the left in the West, causing radical ideological

changes in socialist parties in each European country, Latin America, and also in the few countries that resist with leftist governments in mutation, such as in China, Vietnam and Cuba.

Spiritual—The mistake of linking social utopia to a rational utopia that would deny spirituality has failed everywhere, to the extent in which materialist thought has not been able to kill, or even diminish, the yearning for spirituality that exists in the human being.

Existential—The left has also failed in the existential plan, when it failed to create the new man that it had promised in the early 20th century. Except for times of national clash, as in the USSR during the Second World War, in Vietnam during the independence war, soviet socialist man continued being selfish. Even in Cuba, where apparently national spirit seems to prevail, it is hard to be convinced that this national spirit would prevail without the foreign threat from the North American empire. A few capitalist countries, such as Japan, for cultural reasons, are able to have a more social man than leftist regimes have.

Intellectual—The left has lost the technical debate that tries to explain the evolution of civilization and be convinced of the direction toward which this process should evolve.

Emotional—The left has failed to mobilize crowds and awaken young people who today would rather enjoy the *status quo* and focus on looking for individual pleasure offered by consumption, the right, instead of the pleasure of fighting for the revolution offered by the left.

Epistemological—The loss of the debate has mostly resulted from the epistemological prison that tied leftist thinking to 19th Marxism without realizing that the technical bases on which Marx supported his thinking have changed.



But this intrinsic failure to socialism did not mean a victory of capitalism as a civilizing ideal. While it buried socialism under the Berlin wall wreckage, of the “iron curtain,” global capitalism built three new curtains.

Golden Curtain—Iron was used by Churchill, in his famous speech where he created the “iron curtain,” because it meant the power of the authoritarian regime; gold reminds us of Midas, when it socially separates people, according to income and access to goods and services essential to modernity and in this process destroy civilization.

Petroleum Curtain—Petroleum symbolizes at the same time consumerist affluence civilization and non-sustainability of the capitalist model.

Firewood Curtain—Firewood was the element used by medieval catholic inquisitors to burn heretics, Arabs, Jews, gypsies, sorcerers and even Catholics who got out of orthodoxy, judged unfaithful because they did not accept official thinking. The current firewood curtain separates, in the modern world, those who think according to the global-neo-liberal credo fundamentalism from those who dare challenge it, by thinking differently.

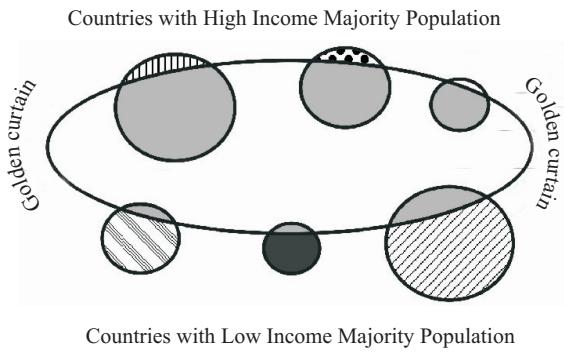


In the first moment, in the 20th century, the division occurred among countries—metropolitan and peripheral, depending. Dependence has become a sociological theory, overcoming it has become the purpose of poor countries' social struggles.

One of the flags of the world left used to be national independence, identified with the end of colonialism. And the independence of each country would be the first step for developing it and, consequently, for its wealth to contribute to distributing it among its population.

The world would consist of independent, developed and fair countries, all part of a *capitalist and developed First World*, or a *socialist and developed Second World*, separated by an *Iron Country*. The 21st century arrived with all politically independent countries, but never has colonialism been so strong, or development so excluding, even in no longer among countries, but among social blocs. The world has made a huge *World-Third-World*, full of poverty and wealth in all countries, although in different proportions, *Countries-with-High-Income-Majority-Population (PMP-AR)*, and *Countries-with-Low-Income-Majority-Population (PMP-BR)*. Wealthy people of all countries form today an *International Wealthy People First World (PMIR)*, integrated in consumption and main cultural preference aspects. Poor people of each country forming a *Poor People Social Archipelago (ASP)*, separated and without identity among them, which can also be called *Neo-liberalism Social Gulag*. Separating the *PMIR* from *ASP*, a *Golden Curtain* hovers over the

Earth, cutting off each country between rich and poor, included or excluded from modernity. included or excluded from modernity.



■ International Wealthy People First World

*At the first moment of industrial civilization, under the protection of national borders, workers from developed countries allied to the capitalists of their countries in order to enjoy capitalism benefits, by using several manners of colonialism and imperialism. At a second moment, in a similar manner to South African *apartheid*, included white workers untied against excluded black masses. White workers started defending their economic privileges against the black population, under protection of the *racial border*, but still inside the national border.*

Currently, instead of racial or national borders, capitalist economy absorbs part of the modern sector workers, no matter from which country, thanks to global modernity pockets everywhere in the world, and inside each country a new *social border*, which separates workers from excluded

ones. The next step would be the implementation of a *biological border* that, more than separating, will make human beings dissimilar, by private and expense excess to technology products and medical techniques.

Dependence ideology among countries does not know how to behave in this new unforeseen reality, which came up suddenly, less split by national borders and more by a social border; and economic and social distance among nations is replaced with the distance among the inhabitants of the same country. PMIR people feel at home anywhere in the world, when among included people, and they feel displaced when in the midst of poor people in their own city. It has become easier to cross-oceans than turning a corner. Because the homeland has become international, even if restricted. It has become even harder to understand the new class reality, where modern workers ally themselves to capital owners, negotiating modern product distribution, while the masses continue excluded.

What is seen, as crowning of the industrial society civilizing project, is humankind walking toward escalation of inequality, which comes close to feeling of dissimilarity among human beings, in the molds of slavery times. This phenomenon is worsened before the predictable biological break among human beings, which may be induced by technical progress, taken over by the modern part of society, and that may differentiate human beings by their physical features, their intelligence, health, life expectancy.

In this new reality, in which technical advance that has built equality and independence now builds international in-

tegration with dissimilarity and separation within each country, utopian ideas seem ruins of “isms.” Utopian ideologies are unable to orient themselves, like someone who walks on the debris of a city wanting to orient himself holding in his hand a map prior to the bombing.

The 20th century left is the daughter of industrial revolution, and watches the world, in criticism and proposal, on the opposite side to proletariat. What it cannot imagine is that, instead of evolving to socialism, national and imperialist capitalism would evolve to global and national separation encompassing rich people in the same world, separating rich and poor within each country, and transforming modern sector workers into superfluous consumption beneficiaries, allied to capitalists, who watch exclusion of the masses.

The optimism of the past two centuries had a concrete base to state that, thanks to technical advance and national independence, the world walked toward equality among human beings.

Four vectors have led industrial civilization of the 19th and 20th centuries, which expanded and universalized consumption, to an exclusion civilization:

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1. Technological—It was with Marx that socialism consolidated the utopian dream and decidedly opted for rationality. Marx not only introduced the idea of communism as a target, but also explained why this utopia was an inevitable trend of human project. Nothing would be able to pre-

vent the end of capitalism. The workers' and communist movement had the simple task of hastening this end. And socialist utopia would be ahead.

In order to reach this conclusion, Marx observed the technological evolution dynamics in industry and its consequences. He could not or did not know how to foresee a radical change in the directions of this technical evolution. At the time in which he lived, technical evolution happened inside the factory, it was a productivity increase instrument, it would force profit drop and would naturally reduce needs, building a world of abundance for everyone by production growth and competition among producing companies. It was the time of technical advance paper optimism.

Neither he nor any 19th century utopists could imagine that human creativity would exchange the preference for concern with productivity increase, reducing needs for already known products, with concern with inventing new products, creating new needs. Technical advance changed its paradigm in the late 19th century, and started inducing needs, instead of reducing them. Therewith, it took political breath away from socialist ideas that sought equality, but had to meet superfluous demands, and gave capitalism breath, providing capitalist economy with a permanent dynamics. However, with this process, it split the world.

2. Product—Starting in mid-20th century, the growing cost of their products required demands formed by high-income consumers, which is impossible to be universalized. The 19th century industrial economy and up to mid-20th century sought to expand the market by producing increasingly

more for more consumers for a lower and lower price. In order to grow, demand had to be expanded, by increasing the number of buyers. In the last decades of the past century, the economy is stimulated by producing more expensive products for the same set of buyers, who periodically change products. Circulation does not require new buyers, only more sales to the same buyers. Instead of producing for the masses at reduced prices, high prices are produced for a smaller number of buyers.

Even if technical advance made each product cheaper from year to year, new products were invented with growingly increased costs, either in the purchase value, or its maintenance value.

In each country, an income concentration process started, in the opposite direction to distributive trend that came from industrial revolution. At the first moment, “developed countries” were able to increase their population average income, raising the standard of everyone. In “developing countries,” income was concentrated further more, taking into account the low average per capita income and the need for expanding demand among a small portion of their population, in order to enable their late industrialization. Income of “developing countries” inhabitants comes near and often exceeds average income of “developed countries.” Creating an upward integration, among the rich, with a downward disintegration, on the poor.

3. Educational—A third excluding vector comes up due to technical education requirement, in order to partici-

pate in the modernization process and inclusion in modernity. Even if there were availability of financial resources to make investments and natural resources were inexhaustible, income distribution would be impossible due to educational exclusion of the majority of the population.

In the same manner that previously concentration was made thanks to financial capital ownership against work-force ownership, today concentration is made among capital or knowledge owners, and the “dispossessed” of capital and knowledge. The skilled worker has jumped over the line that separates him from excluded masses, and has acquired strength to participate in product distribution, beside capitalists

4. Ecological—Ecological limits have imposed an increase in predictable cost and even a physical limitation to consumption, preventing a generalization for all the world inhabitants. This made concentration to become a need not only to stimulate demand, but also to keep it in the limits of resource availability. If all the inhabitants of the world had the consumption of rich people of the world, resources would be exhausted in a few hours. Perhaps more than the other aspects, the discovery and awareness of ecological limits to industrial progress are fundamental causes for industrial utopia death, either in capitalism or socialism. When the short period of Malthusian scare was gone, over the 19th and 20th centuries, all industrial civilization “isms” were optimistic, no matter what the civilizing process point of observation was: on the capitalist side or on the proletarian side.

Utopia—capitalist or socialist—stumbled against ecological limits and did not know how to recycle itself, incorporating these limits as part of their civilizing project.

Accordingly, when ecological awareness came up in the 70s and its critical turn to technical advance, traditional ideologies, of the right or left, stood on the side of polluters, not on the side of the “green.” A non-governmental or party entity, was needed, the “Club of Rome,” funded by businessmen and hiring intellectuals, to produce the first consistent document of a new Malthusianism. The document “The Limits to Growth” was received with mistrust by the entire intellectual establishment, of right or left. The ecological movement was seen with distrust, as a conservative movement, unbelieving of human power. Articles on the ecological issue were refused, because the idea of ecological limits was seen as an invention of imperialism to prevent liberation and development of Third World countries. The end of dependence was to walk toward growing plundering of the environment, which approximates these countries to rich ones standards. Having forests was seen as delay, breathing clean air was lack of industrialization. Science and technology as synonyms of unlimited progress hindered perception of the risk resulting from environmental one. Added to this ideological hindrance, prisoner orthodoxy of reality-built thinking of the 19th century—of optimism and class struggle—failed when it did not adopt the new reality of class struggle among generations, due to humankind’s natural asset plundering. The product was no longer appropriated by

capitalists against the proletariat, but appropriated by the current generation of modernity participants, financial capital or knowledge owners against excluded masses and against future generations.

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Instead of one, two additional divisions emerged: between social blocs and between generational blocs. With the political disadvantage that in these new divisions, losers are excluded, unnecessary. Instead of dependence, disdain. In the class struggle between labor and capital, the proletariat had a determining role that granted it power in the productive process dynamics. Today, those who have not been born and marginal ones cannot exert any political power. They are not organizable, or owners of any pressure instrument. They do not make war or strike. They are nonexistent or disdained.

If we follow industrial civilization proposals, whether from the right or left side, the 20th century technical progress and its consumerism will lead to a disastrous social division from the moral point of view, and to an ecological unbalance of catastrophic consequences to life on the planet.

Evolution has shown that the class struggle between workers and capitalists, which Marx and the left always placed as the engine of history, has become a triangular struggle, between workers and capitalists, on one side, and excluded masses on the other. Added value between capital and labor has acquired a triangular feature, in which capital

and labor appropriate the shared product between them, at the same time in which they marginalize excluded masses, destroying the planet and sacrificing future generations.

And, to the surprise of utopian ideologies, modern sector workers support this excluding progress on a global scale, in terms of interests and proposals, between workers and excluded masses.

However, not only social and generational exclusions divide human beings. In a world dominated by the arrogance of global civilization builders—the West—, the attempt to impose a single thought emerges and, consequently, identified credos with this part of the world. But this imposition meets immediate resistances, because marginalized ones from the single thought are not “dispossessed,” they already exist in the current generation, and are not part of excluded masses from knowledge, because in addition to intellectual education, to the point of building atomic bombs, have a religious credo to defend.

The cartoon in a small newspaper, of a small country, in a language that few read, has caused a planetary fire. Few facts would better indicate the greatness of fragility of the global world. Technical greatness of an integrated world, where the drawing made by a simple cartoonist, published without any pretence, in a short time spreads an international revolt wave, a social and political tsunami. And the social frailty of a globalization that did not integrate human beings in the same ethical, religious, political milestone.

World information has been integrated, but not men’s soul feelings. This is one of the risks of globalization.

Because of this, the fact kindled so many doubts. Even to Islamic country inhabitants, the reaction against a cartoon seems exaggerated, it surprises that demonstrators do not understand the press freedom in some country, and further they confused the newspaper with the journalist and with the country where they work. At the same time, to some inhabitants in western countries, joking with sacred things is disturbing, touching the beliefs of billions of people. Islamic peoples do not understand how the West's moral frailty the fact of sacredness of the freedom of the press as been placed over religious sacredness. And westerners did not perceive as an Islamic right the respect for their values; over the freedom of world press itself. Not only because press freedom is fundamental to defend ideas, not to degrade religious creeds.

This is a fact where all are right: those who publish their cartoons and those who kindle afar. And all are wrong: those who publish and revolt against publication, and those who are scared and try to prevent publication or those who defend with courage the right to publish, by republishing it. All are right and wrong at the same time, become we live in a time of doubts, with personal, local, national values, and reality being global, without unanimous rules for social behavior, but with a crushing force that divides the world:

- a) between current and future generations, those who were born and those who were not;
- b) between socially and economically included and excluded, knowledge owners and those who have no knowledge;

- c) between those who take on the single thought of global neo-liberalism and those keeping firm in old creeds or those who keep open to new ideas, between those who believe that history has ended and the world walks toward being a great North American-Europe, ignoring the poor and those who respect the world's cultural and religious diversity, and still dream of a post-capitalist utopia.

Global society, which considered itself unitary in a single kind of world, and considered class struggle a phenomenon of the past and utopia dreams dead, because they would already be built nowadays, refuses to see that the world has never been so brutally divided, that freedom is an illusion, except freedom to adopt prevailing models in the single thought, and that instead of a class struggle there are today three divergent interest struggles.

But those who do not accept the end of history and do not see utopia in the unfair, inefficient and plundering civilization of the global world, often do not realize the lack of ethical values and utopian models. Many of them have not seen or refuse to see the changes of the last decades. They keep believing in utopias, but in old, overcome utopias.

Until the end of the 20th century, there were available utopias. Capitalists believed that economic development would build a new rich, egalitarian, individually free utopia. They were mistaken. The result of wealth was not well-being, or much less equality, and freedom is false. Socialists had clear models, they believed that it would be possible to

implement them on a short term, and fought for it. Today their models have crumbled, displeased with capitalism, but they do not know how it will be later, and they have no flags to fight for.

The crisis is not of ideological trends only, but of the civilizing project itself, which when ethics crumbled and utopically, thanks to technical success, it compromised positions emerging from the industrial civilization spirit itself. Instead of capitalists and socialists, both sides of the same coin, an emptiness emerged. Nevertheless, everything indicates that history has not ended. That in the future, perhaps not near, there will be the possibility of a civilizing model capable of using human intelligence to make a more humane society work, in full balance with nature, without any form of exploitation or unequal exchanges among human beings, with the same compensation of the work of each person, without capitalism inefficiency losses, with compatible planning with individual freedom, where diversity—of race, culture, creed, gender—is a peace asset, and not a reason for war. But in the early 21st century, this picture is so technical to utopia as Jules Verne's stories were to science, in the 19th century.

Even so, we must continue the march toward this utopia that seems evanescent.

The path is in understanding that current contradictions are less between capital and labor, between workers and employers, and much more between those excluded and included of modernity, between current and next generation

consumers, between those who think according to western hegemony and those who believe differently. The struggle is for overcoming barbarism of the three manners of exclusion—social, environmental, ideological—as much as was the struggle of abolitionists in the time of slavery.

Some of these abolitionists were socialists, many utopian, others already Marx sympathizers, but at that time the struggle was against slavery. They were utopian in sociology and economy, but in political practice they were abolitionist only. And they were the vanguard, not because they were socialists dreaming of a post-capitalist utopia, but they wanted immediate slavery abolition.

Being of the left or vanguard is not measured by the size of the dream, or its distance to its fulfillment time, but by the size of the immediate potential transformer. It is mostly military by and immediate social transformation cause in favor of humanist values.

Abolitionists were more of the left than theoreticians who dreamed about socialism without seeing with indignity, without suffering as a humanist, without urgency of changing immediate slavery reality. Before fighting from utopia, abolitionists fought against barbarism, because of this they were more humanist than utopists.

To that end, the 21st century, has brought a throwback in the size of utopists' struggle.

In a world where barbarism of inequality is on the march becoming separation and dissimilarity, the utopists' immediate flag cannot be in socialism, not even in a post-

capitalism, but only in preventing this barbarism, knocking down the “golden curtain” that separates social blocs in today’s world, the “firewood curtain” that separates single thought from alternative thought, and the “petroleum curtain” that separates today’s generations from future ones.

The gravity of utopia loss is not the fact that it is impossible at the immediate time, because the present and power require pragmatism; the gravity is pragmatism making itself to be somewhat temporary, a requirement of political and financial limits of the immediate, but rather a definitive posture, ignoring the three divisions of civilization, assuming the end of history.

For this reason, the first objective of a utopian thought flag is the defense of those exclude from the world. A global flag on the side of those who did not believe that history is dead. It is possible that objectives will change, but their bases will continue: the increase in the degree of freedom, the end of essential needs, peace, and tolerance.

Because of this it is so difficult to be of the left in Europe, because excluded masses are outside their borders or are emigrants without any right to citizenship to demand changes in the government line, which leads to the left, by force of electoral circumstances, to take measures against immigrants, in defense of their workers’ interests. Because consumption vices have already been spread and it is impossible to imagine any change in the model, and because they are the source of single thought, and arrogance is hard to be improved. The First-World-International-of-the-Rich inhabitants who live in Countries-with-Majority-Low-Income-Population think as

their “social countrymen” of “developed countries,” and with the same arrogance reject the poor in their own countries. With less easiness, because they are around, because they vote in election, even liable to manipulation and submitted to the blackmail of charitable benefit programs.

Industrial civilization utopia was born with western arrogance, and Marx was part of this world, thinking that the Europe project should be followed in all quadrants of the planet, provided that under the highest form of industrial civilization, the socialist one, and not under the form of capitalist imperialism. The theory of dependence defended that the independence of each nation was the objective of utopian civilization.

The imposition of a single civilizing standard, capitalist or socialist is a form of imperialism, if not economic, cultural. But when the power of techniques allows any nation in the world to make decisions that will resound in the entire world and over centuries, or even millennia, utopia demands respect to the set of nations and to necessary diversity of peoples. This evolution requires a new posture where respect to diversity is a fundamental objective.

An even greater challenge of utopists will be to formulate a civilizing development thought and model that it will take into account the value of nature. At its origin, civilization was a predatory instrument. Its origin in Greek rational thought and in Judeo-Christian relations led the left to relegate in arrogant manner any value to crude nature.

This thought is shown in the value theory, where only human work creates value, and nature is seen as a raw mate-

rial and industrial garbage repository. If it is certain that this theory represented one of the greatest intellectual and moral advances in humankind history, it is also certain that, in face of today's world reality, it is reactionary, because it does not realize the risk that humankind runs in light of the ecological crisis.

Utopia to be born requires tearing down the three global curtains. This must be the flag of the 21st century abolitionists:

- a) give up the arrogant anthropocentrism of western history and build a modest anthropocentrism, which will build the civilizing project in communion, between man and nature;
- b) abolish social separation that divides human beings, breaking the cradle of inequality that in the cradle inequality—the school;
- c) build a tolerant society, which respects cultural diversity, with no imposition, open to new ideas.

The path to it is education.

Global left needs to be global in its objectives: formulate and defend a worldwide program for education of all children and adults of the entire world. A program such as this is possible; the world has financial and material resources. There is lack of political will. This is the reason for the struggle.

The way to mobilize necessary resources without threatening consolidated interests, creating an ecological aware-

ness and cultural and religious tolerance, is through and intensive, radical Global Program for Education.

The flag of those who consider themselves of the left, in today's world, is to defend universalization and education qualification, within each country and the whole world. This is more possible today than the fight for slavery abolition was two hundred, one hundred years ago. We miss that many of those who fight for utopia farther in possible and more delayed, in the conception of 19th century socialism, understand both limitations that they suffer: fight with overcome instruments and objectives, and fight against impossible to vanquish forces, before the end of separation is done and the three global curtains and torn down.