

LtCol Michael Smith

Instructor: Doron Navot

Political Science / Approaches

November 22, 2019

### **Political Science Approaches - Final Paper**

As we began the global season at Mabal, all participants in attendance came with preconceived notions, biases, and experiential knowledge of what globalization truly means. Through classroom instruction, required and additional reading, historical references and schools of thought we began to challenge our previous understandings. While finding the classes, books and videos all very challenging, each helped me to unpack knowledge and worldviews in uniquely different ways. My thoughts on globalization at the beginning of the course and at the end haven't changed tremendously, but the lens with which I observe and analyze it is now crisper than ever.

As our adventure began, my thoughts on globalization were a little immature and incomplete. I would have defined it as the growing together of societies due to economic ties, increased flexibility of transportation means, cultural curiosity and increased communication. While I wouldn't have been all together wrong, the definition would have been somewhat incomplete. The Levin Institute provides a more encompassing definition that matches our studies over the last several months. "Globalization is a process of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment and aided by information technology." Globalization is no doubt a phenomenon that has taken deeper root due to the technology, communication and transportation advancements of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Many changes are taking place in our

increasingly globalized community and Yuval Noah Harari attempts to explain the complexities in the book *21 Lessons for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, that I will use as a background along with two articles from the New York Times “What are the biggest problems facing us in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” by Bill Gates and Steven Poole’s article from the Wall Street Journal entitles “21 Lessons for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Review: The Yogabots are coming”. Both articles will help provide a richer understanding of Harari’s approaches by providing a few different angles to examine. Harari’s book, while difficult for me to accept many of his personal views on globalization, challenged my thinking and forced me to critically analyze why I think certain ways and made it an easy choice to use for discussion of the topic.

As a historian, Dr. Yuval Noah Harari presents his views on globalization based primarily on some direct observations and interpretations through a historical lens across time. With the deep complexities which he describes a globalized world, his Pluralist views are easy to identify. Through his 21 lessons, a complicated story is woven which points toward impending need to change significantly within the Liberal Democracy construct most countries currently use or enact a complete overhaul to incorporate a body that can legislate on behalf of a global community to address the new 21<sup>st</sup> Century challenges. In his book, Harari describes a world that is moving toward interdependence, especially economically and politically. His view of our current situation is that ecology, economy and science are already on the global scale, while political systems are stuck at the Nation State level. He paints a very bleak picture of the state of mankind and the outlook is only slightly better for Homo Saipan’s remaining years because of science and technology improvements which will solve most of our future issues. To bring things down a couple more notches, Harari further paints a global world where Artificial Intelligence (AI) replaces man’s free will, religion will go by the way-side (he believes it was all

created by some Master Storytellers anyway), and views that life is really about work, liberty and equality. The global world and rise of Populism have brought Liberal Democracy to its knees and will become extinct if changes are not made. What those specific changes might be is only touched upon by Harari and leaves the reader desiring more tangible solutions. While these changes were only superficially addressed it wasn't really the purpose of the book and it still provided enough content to create dialog and thought which was Harari's intent. Let's review a couple of ideas from the 21 lessons to see if there are any scientific approaches to what is captured in Harari's 21 lessons.

Dr. Harari seems to dissect global phenomenon from primarily a passive indirect observation through research, adding in direct life experience and providing different forms of analysis of these observations. Many of the 21 lessons seem a little weak on a focused approach which would have allowed him to conduct a deeper dive into problems. While it was difficult to pick-up on political approaches Harari does narrow down to the individual level and describe rational beings but only to quickly pull it back up to the larger social dynamics or structures and therefore Ration Choice Theory could be observed through many of his chapters. In Chapter 9, Harari drills into the global immigration issue. The individuals described have preferences, their information is seemingly complete, and they absolutely conduct cost benefit analysis. As it relates to increased immigration Harari paints a picture of increased cheap transportation with more access than ever before and information expansion which allows for the end user to feel they have the "complete knowledge" in order to make the decision enough to depart their homeland for one with many more benefits to their family and future generations. It is implied that these individuals have run decisions through an internal rational cost/benefit analysis, the

outcome with the “best overall outcome” (Ration Choice Article, Huger Ward Chapter 3 pg. 65) is selected.

After reading Harari’s book, I went through numerous book reviews which presented some fascinating discussions and take-aways that I had not considered. I will quickly discuss two such articles with more favorable and less favorable findings. The first review was very visible and drew much national attention from primarily a United States audience through the media of the New York Times. Bill Gates’ Article, “What are the Biggest Problems Facing us in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” has a positive spin overall on what he describes Harari’s book as “fascinating” with a framework for confronting the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In understanding the author and particular views or motivations for writing this book review, I could immediately rule out a Marxist lens. Bill Gates is economically motivated but not as the sole point of his existence. Gates also has been accused of being an elitist lurking in the shadows and driving political agendas and exerting power of governmental decisions. While there are some verifiable examples of this, the majority of his decisions lend more likelihood to his support for a pluralistic view of balance or equilibrium. Various articles describe an unknown support for different sides of issues, almost pointing to a balancing act being performed. No doubt Gates would benefit economically from hiding his true agenda and therefore not risking ostracizing himself from any group. With this in mind, Gate’s overall support of Harari’s book and previous writing would be in line with a Pluralistic view. Harari’s 21 lessons are full of examples of peaceful co-existence and various broad convictions. Gate’s bend toward elitism is spotted on his disagreement with Harari that, “in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, data will eclipse both land and machinery as the most important asset. Thus, separating the rich from everyone else.” This statement of disagreement seems to be an obvious protection of rising elitist groups and technology tycoons

such as Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg, Google's Sundar Pichai, and Microsoft's Satya Nadella. All told, Gate's article seems to build to reveal a Pluralistic Liberal elite who effectively plays the middle field for his best benefit and is not out of line with Harari's approach.

Taking a different view of Harari's book, The Wall Street Journal published a book review by Mr. Steven Poole entitled "21 Lessons for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Review: The Yogabots are coming". This article destroys many of Harari's lessons as not backed by fact nor described with any amount of detail to help us understand what he means. Mr. Poole's focus seems to be on his interest in language and what people are actually saying. Poole's book titled *Unspeak* (2006), dissects just how today's societies hijack politically charged ideas and the abuse of language sound bites to imply an entire political argument (examples: war on terror or global warming). Poole uses this line of thinking to help provide a counter argument too many of Harari's "21 lessons". Obviously pluralistic in his views, Mr. Poole continually re-enforces throughout his article a desire for deeper empirical data be provided to the reader to support rational thought and decision making. Overall, the article really seems to be objectively critical and I did not deduce or sense any deeply overt agenda by the author, and I wholeheartedly agreed with his assessment on a lack of empirical data to support Harari's claims.

Through my time of reading and researching, I found that even though I had several value disagreements with Harari, I could apply critical thought and really challenge why I think or believe certain ways. The result of this critical thought was ultimately some change but also deeper understanding for opinions different from my own. I found myself agreeing with Bill Gates' book review that Harari's *21 Lessons for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* is a fascinating and thought-provoking book and agreeing with Steven Poole's assessment that the book is lacking in substance and empirical data to back up his claims but achieves his aim of making us think.

While the book and reviews helped me cement some political science approaches, it is the lens that has been developed to be able to see layers below the surface that will be a great asset for the future.

#### Works Cited

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