



## Secularism: The beginning of the end?

Communism collapsed when it failed to provide its adherents prosperous lives when compared to the capitalist West. But its troubles started well before the grim decade of the 1980's, when the rot was clear for all to see. The Space and Arms race consumed much of the productive wealth of those living under the Soviet Union, this was the initial sign that the communist ideology could not effectively answer the key economic questions of the day. Moscow had already given up its global struggle against the capitalist world in 1961 when it sought coexistence with the US, the world's leading Capitalist state. This was in direct contravention of the Communist creed. Communism eschewed all coexistence with Capitalism. By replacing the destruction of Capitalism with its accommodation, many people became aware of the impracticality of Communism in regulating relations with other states. This effectively became the beginning of the end of Communism and accelerated its demise, with its eventual collapse in 1990.

For any ideology to confirm its strength and display itself as the vehicle for progress, it needs its fixed principles to remain steadfast in the face of new developments. Conversely, if any of these principles are compromised, discarded or relaxed, it will demonstrate its weakness and leave itself open to questioning and most likely its abandonment, as the Communist ideology experienced in 1990.

Capitalism, the world's dominant ideology, has faced numerous challenges since the beginning of the 21st century and its problems continue to grow; these range from economic, political, social to environmental. But in the last decade the emergence of Muslim unity and the demand for Islam in the Muslim world has perplexed the Capitalist world and its leader America. In the face of this ideological challenge, the West has followed its Communist foes by adopting contradictory and compromising positions.

### Torture

On 9th December 2014, the US Senate Intelligence Committee released a report detailing the methods of torture employed by the CIA after 9/11. It found the use of waterboarding on detainees as well as torture using freezing cold water, unnecessary rectal feeding and sleep deprivation in widespread use. Liberal values afford all humans 'human rights' and the right to a trial where allegations against individuals can be scrutinised. However, despite being a sacred value within Capitalism, it was abandoned as doing so was said to provide actionable intelligence to the CIA, save lives and provide information that stopped imminent attacks. The Senate report refuted this "ticking time bomb" theory as it was said to provide no intelligence that was not already known and exposed how much of the justifications for torture were hypothetical rather than real. Whilst this led to much damage to the CIA and the Bush administration, its damage to liberal values has far more implications. This violation of its very own values was highlighted by the Senate report, which said the programmes, which is now defunct, violated American ideals by torturing suspects. Numerous programs were started by the US administration in defence of its values after 9/11, but in its defence it abandoned the very values it was attempting to defend. Whilst claiming to spread such values around the world, the US was quick to forego these as it became clear that its values were impractical in the face of a new emerging threat.

### Right to a fair trial

A fundamental idea within Western societies is that every individual has a right to a fair trial. After 9/11 and the launch of the War on Terror, the Bush administration with the continuing consent of world powers saw the creation of Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. This

essentially functioned as an animal cage where individuals were held without charge or trial under the title of “enemy combatant” and denied the right to be judged under the conventional civil court system. Instead individuals were tried under the Military Commission where minimal evidence can be used to prosecute individuals along with that which is obtained through torture. The idea of “innocent until proven guilty” was reversed as individuals were put through a parallel judicial system where the usual court system was ignored and this trend is rising across the West in cases concerning Muslims. Sidelining these core principles of the justice system is nothing small as these factors are meant to be the bedrock of the Western political tradition. To compromise on such key tenants of this system shows the weakness of its source in the face of another ideological challenge.

## **Suspension of key principles**

Whilst describing 9/11 as a clash of civilisations and the ‘war on terror’ as a battle to defend liberty, what we witnessed was the abandonment of the very liberty and values into the dustbin of history which the US was purporting to defend. Values were abandoned when it was found difficult to deal or adapt to the new challenges of the international environment. To justify such actions, many in the West argue for the necessity of abandoning laws in the interest of national security. The rationale of protecting the nation’s security is the perennial argument used by dictators and tyrants through the ages and is used constantly by regimes from North Korea to Zimbabwe to defend their draconian policies. However these regimes don’t pretend to be something that they are not and nor do they seek to promote their values abroad. It is the active promotion of secular democracy abroad while simultaneously abandoning it at home that is the brazen hypocrisy. From claiming to “free women”, they oversaw and committed the rapes in Abu Ghuraib and whilst promoting the freedom of the individuals, they relentlessly kill hundreds of people via Drone attacks while calling them “collateral damage”. However, the suspension of the presumption of innocence, the right to a fair trial, the right to be aware of the evidence that is being used to imprison you and not being tortured, are not mere footnotes of political life to be altered at will; they are rather supposed to be the bedrock of Western political thought and history. These blatant contradictions of their core values alongside the countless compromises made, Capitalism is fast failing in the eyes of the people to take on the Islamic ideological challenges coming its way.

## **Capitalism’s Communism Moment**

We have seen time and time again the West, in all their might and grandeur, forced to compromise on their principles in the face of certain ideological challenges. They discard the rule of law to deal with “terrorists,” societal freedoms to silence “extremists” and human rights for intelligence.

One could argue that such incidents are isolated, but these incidents are now a regular occurrence. This leads us to pose the question - if the core pillars of secularism can be compromised in the face of challenges, what does that say about the strength of the ideology itself. The grand claims of personalities such as Francis Fukuyama who espoused Capitalism’s superiority over every other civilisation is now just another footnote of history, that proved to be wrong. All of this prompts the question, **is this the beginning of the end for secularism?**

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