

Original Paper

Back to the Genuine American Dream

A Call to Move Toward a People-Oriented Economics

Amos Avny^{1*}

¹ Omnidev International, Jehud, Israel

* Amos Avny, E-mail: amosav@smile.net.il

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“Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital.

*Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could
never have existed if labor had not first existed”*

(Abraham Lincoln)

Abstract

The essay's Author argues that time comes for reconstructing some of America's Social-economic set-ups. The COVID-19 pandemic strengthened this requirement by teaching two important lessons. 1) The magnitude of the Unknown World, as well as the amount of Universe Mysteries still are threatening. Thus, significant efforts are required for resolving future dangers. 2) The most promising way for coping with such dangers is by enacting collaboration, cooperation and partnerships between the Public, Private and Business sectors. The Author claims that this was, in fact, the original spirit of the Founding Fathers. What is required now, is just to go back to basics. Today is needed, a reconstruction of the American Dream, that originally was offered some ninety years ago. Since the running Brutal Capitalism concept fails in providing satisfactory remedies to America's failing social services, it makes sense to use other methods that work well in other places. Moreover, this move is justified because hard work, devotion, working together and collaboration are indispensable parts of the American genuine heritage. Traditionally they helped US to resume its role as the World's Leader. The brutal Russian invasion to Ukraine, in February 24th just demonstrates how serious and intimidating is the current international complex situation.

Keywords

Hard-work, Collaboration, Leadership, American Dream

1. Introduction

January 2022 is a good time for me, as a senior writer, to recollect my thoughts about America today. The ending process of the **COVID-19 pandemic**, which takes place now, is also a proper time for reexamining, rethinking and summing up ideas on future developments. Thus, we shortly explore history and some of the events occurred during the past 150 years.

The well-known **Statue of Liberty**, is a good departing point for any discussion on people's freedom and general liberty. For many immigrants, who came to America by sea, the Statue of Liberty symbolizes the promise land of new hopes. It signifies the opening of many new opportunities. It was for them: "**an iconic symbol of the American Dream**" (Wikipedia).

The Covid-19 Plague, on the other hand, with already millions death worldwide, even if it is not the worst-case event, is serious enough for being a proper opportunity for reexamining and rethinking some of our main paradigms. Because the subject is so large, we focus here mostly on United States of America with the hope that some of the conclusions will be applicable for other countries.



Figure 1. The Statue of Liberty

Note. The Statue of Liberty, designed by Auguste Bartholdi, was a gift from France to USA as a symbol of American freedom and was dedicated on October 28, 1886 (Wikipedia).

2. The Argument

The **CORONA pandemic** taught us, during the past two years, some important lessons. This general impression, which is too fresh for being regarded as a solid scientific material, is good enough for generating doubts and wonders about the relevancy of the current socio-economic system-the American Capitalism, and its ability to face future challenges. Thus, after discussing two main lessons learnt from the current COVID-19 pandemic, a general socio-economic fresh perception is proposed. We hope that these ideas could be used as a platform for rebuilding American socio-economic system and improve its ability to meet future challenges.

2.1 *Unknown Mysteries still Characterize the Universe*

Despite the tremendous technological advancements and in spite of all the most impressive medical achievements, a small unseen tiny virus challenges the world in the 21st Century. It is fair to assume that the whole World, over eight billion inhabitants, was surprised by this little creature, while nobody really knows what the next unknown threats have to be expected. It is true that the advanced pharmaceutical industry, was able, due to current R&D, to offer reliable vaccination and some types of supporting drugs, but unknown developments are still waiting around the corner.

The simple lesson learnt from the pandemic is quite clear—**Future, withholds some interesting, mysterious or even dangerous medical surprises for Humankind**. How to prepare and what exactly should be done in order to be able and qualified for meeting such challenges is a subject of another and a more specific paper.

This paper intends only to attract the attention of state-persons, politicians and other decision-makers to the coming challenges. **The COVID-19 pandemic reminds us all that in addition to the Earth and Climate Hazards we have now and also will have in the future, a threat of many less-known medical plagues. Recognizing and addressing these intimidations is the first step for confronting and resolving the dangers.**

On the other side, we have to realize that future events may be surprising, un-precedential and un-conventional. Thus, as **George Bernard Show** recommends, we have to encourage un-conventional scholars to confront and meet future events.

“The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man” (George Bernard Shaw)

In any case, Governments have to be smart enough for choosing the right capable and courageous people (frequently not politicians) for preparing the world for the future.

2.2 *A Decent Public Health System Is a Must Today*

The COVID-19 pandemic clearly indicates **that medical threats are international, boundaries-less and do not accept any political or man-made borders or limits. World Nations**, have no choice, they have to cooperate for fighting together against these threats. Although every nation is entitled to run the battle according to its policy and priorities, but at the end, all horses drink the same water from

the same bucket.

Moreover, the present Corona plague indicates that overcoming this threat depends on the ability to combine all the relevant organizations for the common goal. The two main sectors, the Private and the Public health organizations must come together for this purpose. In this case, like in others, life indicates that the former Capitalist competitive system, which negates such a cooperation, cannot resolve the issue alone. Only **collaboration, teamwork and partnerships can provide the necessary solution**. This type of action should be enacted in all levels, between local organizations, among nations, between different regimes and on the global arena.

Men and women have no choice; they have to cooperate against Nature's hazards. This World crisis point out quite clear that the right way to go and hope for succusses is by national and international cooperation and working together. As **Albert Einstein** had noted: *“Today we must abandon competition and secure cooperation. This must be the central fact in all our considerations of international affairs, otherwise, we face certain disaster”*.

After discussing the above two lessons learnt from the Covid-19 Pandemic a short historical review is provided. Then the stage will be ready for presenting the main course—a more comprehensive outlook on some of the central principles that should guide and direct American Capitalist Society. The discussion focuses on US mostly and little on other industrialist nations, because the Author knows little about Less Developed Countries. Usually, and practically, the author tends to minimize his remarks on subjects he knows little.

3. The Present Situation

Over ninety years had passed since the “**American Dream**” was portrayed by **James Truslow Adams** in 1931. It was a dream and a hope that millions of immigrants, from all parts of the world, had borne in their minds and hearts. For many this dream came through as they have enjoyed good and pleasant life in America.

However, toward the end of the 1980s, two main processes took place; First, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Communist ideology, as an ideology and as political-economic regimes worldwide. Secondly, **President George Bush**, while addressing this promising change had expressed the wish for coming of a **World New Order**, under the auspices of the American Capitalism. What happened in Russia is beyond the scope of this paper. With regard to US and the advancements of the American Capitalist Regime, two perceptions took place: 1) An Optimist—a non- realistic, and 2) A Pessimist—a more realistic one. Two known books reflect the two options. They have tried foreseeing the situation in the coming millennium: the first was **Francis Fukuyama's “The End of History and the last man”**. The second was **Sam Huntington's “the Clash of Civilizations”**. **Fukuyama** assumed, mistakenly, that as the Cold War is ending, and there will be **no more wars**—meaning, no more historical violent. Such a naïve wish-full thinking proved to be a utopia, which was failed within few years. **Sam Huntington** argued almost the opposite. He suggested to divide the World into nine

Civilizations while assuming that future wars or conflicts, will be between them. This forecast was more realistic since it foresaw more wars and conflicts.

However, with the moving into the new Millennium, American Capitalism continues galloping for increasing corporates' wealth while the New York's Stock market continued to sky rocketing. **President Bill Clinton** encouraged the economy while young people start having hope. But then occurred the big terror attack of **September the 11th**. This was a living example of the theses expressed in the above two books. It was a terror attack—a new type of post-modern war signifying that, wars do not stop, as **Fukuyama** mistakenly hoped. They became a battle or a fight between Civilizations, as **Sam Huntington** foresaw. The 9/11th terror attack, later drag US into 20 years of the Afghanistan War, that costed several trillion dollars.

With the incoming of the new Millennium scholars started wondering whether the American Capitalism is the best qualified system for resolving the sever social-economic issues of the time.

Joseph Stiglitz (2002) questioned the value and the worth of the Globalization in his book “**Globalization and its Discontents**”. Additionally, another **Nobel Prize Laurette Paul Krugman** (1999) examined the world economy, denied the classical capitalist solutions and proposed some different ways and monetary reforms in his book: “**The Return of Depression Economics**”. A third critic was presented Prof. **Ha-Joon Chang** (2010), who paraphrased the maxim on Democracy. He claims that the **free-market capitalism is the worst economic system on earth**. Further he argues that by ignoring or omitting the free-market system, as the sole solution, other forms of capitalism could be much better. For this purpose, he published his book: “**23 Things they don't tell you about Capitalism**”.

However, and in spite all precautions, the American Brutal Capitalism was so eager that it pushed the economy to the 2008-9 financial crisis. Many explanations proposed for justifying the crisis. However, only few dared to blame the American Capitalism for this irresponsible greediness. As many times in the past, Easy-to-be-made Capital, is always the easy-to-evaporate one.

This was another clear evidence that genuine capitalists care first for their own interests and less about the “Common Good”. Moreover, those who loudly oppose any public intervention in private business, did not hesitated to be the first who pursed and asked for public moneys for helping them in bad times.

The next denial of the capitalist principle of **Open Competition at the Free Market** was expressed few years later, **by President Donald Trump**, when declaring on his policy of “**America First**”. This challenging declaration surprised many traditional economists, who blindly followed, the idea of free international market and competition, disregarding and sometime even contradicting the basic interests of local industries. By this declaration **President Trump** indicated that sometimes, and maybe frequently, **National interests precede theoretical economic maxims**. It is fair to assume that often, **providing decent employment and meaningful jobs to fellow citizens, precedes increasing dividends to the stockholders**.

This astonished move, even if or when it came out of political reasons, has a remarkable impact on national economy. It clearly indicates that: the **“Free Market” is no more the sole and exclusive smart and right decision-maker**, there are also other participants within every decision-making process. Such a policy, stating by **President Trump**, contrasts the teaching of many professors of economics and the advice of similar consultants. It preferred supporting people’s first and increasing the value of the employees. A worry, economists frequently forget.

And then came the **2019-2022 COVID-19 pandemic**, that put many business initiatives at hold. It raised doubts about the strength of the current system to run and lead the economy. Consequently, it forced to run an unprecedented policy of public support of private enterprises and the use of government budgets for assisting small, medium and large businesses.

Summing up things together, one may say that at present, at the 2020s, American society is in a mess. Many of the previous rules and arrangements are questioned and even denied. Some politicians and social activists argue that the historical American Dreams does not match present-day’s US reality. It is just a past remarkable declaration that is far away from being achieved. Many political fractions try to lead politics, run the streets and impose their bizarre ideas. America is political divided into two large groups while one group does not even listen to the other. **The 2019-2022 COVID-19 pandemic** reality, does not resolve the existing popular conflict. It even increases it. Many agree that such a situation is bad and even dangerous. They call and wait for a **change**.

As a humble contribution, we offer hereby some notions and ideas for promoting the required change and encouraging its execution. Since always a good idea requires having competent followers for ensuring its execution, these thoughts may help them a little. **George Bernard Shaw** had already referred to these **“change agents”** by noting: **“Those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything”**. Thus, we try here to bridge over those social conflicts by offering some different paradigms. Ones that were learnt from the pandemic behavior but are connected also to America's past heritage. Let us start with basics.

3.1 We the People

Who are “the People”?—those that Presidents and Governments’ officials frequently claim that they represent.

Throughout the past 75 years, since the ending of World War Two, American population grew by about 100 million people. That population grew not only quantitatively, by almost 50 percent, but, have changed characteristically also. It has changed from a homogeneous Anglo-Saxon dominated society into a **heterogeneous mixed-races society**. Such a heterogeneous society evokes many new or different problems, never appear before. Not only that the new emigrants seemed different, they differed in their thinking, their basic education, their customs and daily behavior. Naturally some of the “old-timers” old and young, feel bad about these differences, while some were even more violent against the new-comers. Although similar feelings and actions appear in other similar countries Americans are little too extremist.

US's Prudent, Strength, Competence and Ability springs mainly from its history as an immigrant country. Although some tend to forget or hide this legacy the facts remain so. History shows that when various people of different countries join together, they have the chance to succeed in building a new mighty Super-power. This was in the past and may happen in the future also. Let us and every single individual support this idea. This is the way great ambitious nations are created. We believe that this idea will assist US overcoming its present crisis.

3.2 How to Assess People?

***“Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves
much the higher consideration”*** (Abraham Lincoln)

Following Lincoln's above statement, we have to added that Labor is carried out by people—Laborers. There is no anonymous labor. Labor means laborers, working people, doers, human beings. Thus, our interpretation of Lincoln's phrase is that **nurturing, developing and empowering people**, specifically working ones, **precedes promoting capital interests**. The basic Capitalist Value Chain should be reversed—**Human-beings can invent, create, produce and increase Capital**, while **Capital cannot and is incapable of creating or producing human-beings**, hardly it can hire or buy them. Based on that axiom, it is right recommending that **the People of America, their needs, desires and hopes, should be the first and foremost future concern of every US Administration, Government or Agency**. This is our interpretation to the Constitutional **“We the People”**, and the right meaning of the **“Blessing of Liberty”** goal. The above statement should be the Highpoint, the Moto and the North-Pole Star of every public and private job-holder and of organizations or individuals, who are involved in the work of Government.

4. Two Notions on Labor and Laborers

***“Try not to become a man of success,
but rather try to become a man of
value.”***

(Albert Einstein)

Although many agree that a change is required and even indispensable, few will point on the specific points. Thus, two critical subjects are referred below. Even if they are self-understandable, known, old and daily practice indicates that many job-holders tend to forget these commitments. Some will wonder why, when trying to improve American social-economic system, we begin with touchy points like people in general and laborers in particular. The answer is that, following the Founding Fathers teaching, we see **The People** as the basic cornerstone, the crucial component and the main leverage for any initiative and improvement in both the public or the private sectors.

Moreover, while discussing the people, and accepting the **“People come First”** statement, two subjects have to be considered in detail: 1) **Hard Work**, and 2) **Team Work**.

4.1 Hard Work

American and **Western** History, Legacy, Literature and Culture are full with many stories and examples about the critical role **Hard Work** has in any marches to success. **Hard Work** is almost the crucial prerequisite for any attempt to initiate or accomplish anything. Thus, those who are not ready or willing to work hard are gently advised to look for other opportunities.

Pele, a famous Brazilian soccer player, explains: *“Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying scarifying and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do”*.

Margaret Thatcher, former British Prime Minister, point on hard work as a prerequisite for a successful career: *“I do not know anyone who has got to the top without hard work. That is the recipe”*.

While **Sam Ewing**, an American baseball player, reflects on the character of the hard workers:

“Hard work spotlights the character of people: some turn up their sleeves, some turn up their noses, and some don't turn up at all”.

4.2 Team Work

“Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win Championships” (Michael Jordan)

Business persons want money, Military Generals pursue victories, Sportspersons compete for championship while social activists and upscale national leaders seek prosperity and success. The quotes at this paper indicate that most social leaders understand that these goals could be achieved only by working together, as a Nation, a group or a team. Although such a claim may contradict some of the American individualistic and traditional maxims, the 20th Century's technological achievements, such outer space flights and deep ocean diving, demanded that execution will be carried out by teams. **Helen Keller**, the bright blind social personality, had said it simple: *“Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much”*.

The current struggle against the Covid-19 Virus also indicates how cooperation and collaboration within and between the medical teams is important and crucial for getting success and conquering the plague. The huge unknown universe, which threatens human civilization, forces all power involved to find ways of working and researching together. The world needs individual talents, breakthroughs initiated by individuals, but further R&Ds depend on team works.

Hard Work and **Team Work** have also an additional effect. Besides their effect on the quality of the work and the execution's worth, they also have a remarkable effect on the type and the form of the formal and un-formal relationships within the organizations. Similarly, they affect the inner culture and climate. Such a positive atmosphere is a crucial requirement for building a healthier and supporting environment for social and communal life. People working together, in a given department, a group, a team, like fire-fighters or other emergency's squads run special in-house relationships, maintain a special supporting climate and use unique jargon. Working within such a given designated organization

helps people to adopt unofficial rules and behaviors beyond the formal requirements of the organization. It also trains them to care for their colleagues and support them in bad times. These are the places where Fraternity gets its true shape and meaning. Unfortunately, the business competitive atmosphere does not encourage such relations in many greater organizations. **Henry Ford** has nicely expressed his feelings on this topic by saying: ***“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success”***.

American manufacturing industries, learning from their foreign competitors, had replaced their former “classical assembly line” systems by different forms of team or group works. Time came that the rest, the industries that stick to old “Scientific Management Methods”, will move forward and will adapt the more effective and human-oriented team-work.

5. A Promising Future Requires a Fresh Outlook

“Most people do not really want freedom, because freedom involves responsibility, and most people are frightened of responsibility” (Sigmund Freud, Civilization and its Discontents)

For about two hundred years Americans believed that Capitalism, as a social-economic system, will resolve their problems and will bring them successes and pleasure. Many scholars, in the Academy and in the Business-world promise them that this is the only and may be the exclusive way for making good life in United States.

Unfortunately, at the second decade of the 21st century and at the hopefully ending of the Covid-19 pandemic, many Americans, of all walks of life, are still looking for a better future. For being fair with the readers and respecting our fellow citizens, we tend to be very moderate by pointing out on some reconstructing strategies, that if smartly be inactivated, may bring some satisfaction and prosperity to many. Further, some refreshing ideas are addressed.

5.1 Meaning of Life

“Ever more people today have the means to live, but no meaning to live for” (Viktor Frankl)

Having a vision, a goal or a given meaning to a person’s initiative seemed today relevant and self-explainable. It is unfortunate that only in the second half of the 20th Century researchers, scholars, managers and executives had come to this conclusion. It is pity that many well-known Academicians realized that workers, laborers, scholars and actually everyone, will act better and will function more professionally when being familiarize with the organization's vision and when being acquainted with the firm’s Goals.

Most organizations, for-profit and not-for-profit, experience during their life, bad times. Usually, they fail meeting their employees’ financial demands. Providing an inspiring picture of the future, setting meaningful goals for the coming days and empowering the employees' self-esteem, may, to a given extent, replace monetary compensations.

The last pandemic indicates how important, assisting and effective are human touch in bad times. The struggle against the Covid-19 Virus and all the Public-Health campaigners, who work so hard for overcoming the plague should remind us on the thanks and credit we owe them. It is another example of human initiative, which is so required and demanded around. With regard to this medical effort, it is worth citing **Winston Churchill**, who noted in the “**Never Give In!**” speech, at the British Parliament: *“Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few”*.

Advanced technology and the digitation movement in particular, drive many to ignore and disregard the value of human touch. Many do not understand that as high and sophisticated technology can go, so must be the staff who serve it.

From our early days of childhood, throughout school and university genuine Americans taught us—“**Make money and that will make you Happy**”. They have said it, not because it reflected their own experience, but rather, because it was **the American Dream**.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic, besides similar events taught that this is not the right equation for good life. Money, Capital or Wealth are very helpful and assisting for enjoying life but, not necessarily the crucial ones. **Viktor Frankl**, based on his observations in Nazi Concentration Camps, during World War Two, claims that in order to maintain **Qualitative Life, one should permanently pursue meaning to his/her Life**. Moreover, he explains that this “meaning of life” must be concrete and particular

“The meaning of life differs from man to man, from day to day and from hour to hour. What matter, therefore, is not the meaning of life in general but rather the specific meaning of a person’s life, at a given moment” ([Viktor Frankl])

The Corona pandemic taught us how little money can do in critical moments and how unbelieving help may provide a supporting gesture or an encouraging word.

The conclusion, the saying: **people should join together and collaborate in struggling against natural catastrophes, man-made tragedies or terror disasters**, is a lesson should be taught to young children from their early days in kindergartens. When young children will properly be educated accordingly, it will be easier for them later to act similarly along their life.

5.2 A Visionary Nation Should Evoke a Genuine Dream

A Nation, which is inspired to be a Super-power, a Union that pretends to lead the World and a country that wishes to be a nice place for decent life, should be **a visionary nation. It should rest on inspiring ideas, just rules, fair play and equal opportunities**. After all the bad occurrences, the mal functions and the unjust behaviors, enumerated along the previous pages, the United States yet, is not a lost case. Thus, we do not wait for an extreme revolution or a similar event to lead a radical change. We just suggest to change some of the leading capitalist theoretical guidelines. We offer to install a more moderate people-oriented, political-economic system, based on the positive elements taken from Capitalism and Socialism. It should rest on practical experience in every country and should be more people-oriented than capital friendly. We should never forget **Abraham Lincoln’s** statement: *“Labor*

is prior to, and independent of, capital". With this vision in mind and for carrying out this mission we do not have to go too far away. We can just adopt a ninety years old original text of the **American Dream**:

"The American Dream is a national ethos of the United States, the set of Ideals (democracy, rights, liberty, opportunity and equality) in which freedom includes the opportunity for prosperity and success, as well as an upward social mobility for family and children, achieved through hard work in a society with few barriers" (Wikipedia)

This is the proper place for asking, first, **what**, really **people want?** and secondly, **how to get it?** However, it is beyond our duty to ask whether such a demand is really needed or justified. Similarly, we refer only to just and legitimate ways of provision and negate any type of unjust ways of supply, like violent or terror.

6. Conclusion

"I have a dream" Speech (Martin Luther King)

In concluding this essay, we have also a dream, **We, hope to see America regains its position as the World Leader**. We hope it resumes its historical stand as the **World's Prophetic and Visionary Nation**. **We wish to face a Novel Global Vision**. A vision, which contains, resolving Nature's unknown Mysteries, leading advance science and technology efforts, while promoting and empowering human ambitions. However, we hope that these wishes will not remain as dreams or wishful desires. We believe that while those expectations gradually will be fulfilled a decent, meaningful and just, satisfying and happy daily life will endure for generation to come.

P.S.

Writing in Mars 2022, when Autocratic Regime's armies attack against and invade into, a Democratic State, while all international means fail to prevent it, reminds me of the darken days of autumn 1939, when Hitler began World War Two. We can only paraphrase **Winston Churchill**, who noted in the **"Never Give In!"** speech, at the British Parliament: *"Never in the field of human conflict" were so few Autocrats responsible for so many sorrows and deaths done by the running dictators of Russia*.

As our tiny contribution we can only offer Pete Seger's Song: **"We shall Overcome"** that **"became the anthem of the American Civil Right Movement of the 1950 and 1960"**.

"We shall overcome, We shall overcome, We shall overcome someday

Oh, deep in my heart, I know that I do believe, We shall overcome, someday

We shall be all right, We shall be all right, We shall be all right, someday

We shall live in peace, We shall live in peace, We shall live in peace, someday.'

This song is so inspiring because it offers courage, comfort and hope" for people all over the world (Wikipedia). Thus, let us wish **Victory and Peace to all today's Freedom-Fighters and the supporters of liberty and Democracy**.

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