

Need for a Reglobalisation of 'Globalisation'

Mahdi Elmandjra

I would like, first of all, to thank very sincerely the organisers of this Conference through its Academic Convenor, Professor Chris Pierson, for their kind invitation as well as Dr. Simon Torney who suggested my name as a guest speaker. Let me also wish the members of the Political Studies Association of the U.K. the full success of this 49th Annual Meeting. On the plane, on my way to this Conference, I read an article by Samuel Huntington in the latest issue of *Foreign Affairs* (March 8), which is so excessively representative of the "realistic" school of politics, that it can also be taken as a respectable essay of political "surrealism". It is entitled "The Lonely Superpower¹ because as we are told from the very first page "there is now only one superpower". We then discover that,

"the settlement of key international issues requires action by the single Superpower with some combination of other major states. The single superpower can, however, veto action on key issues ... The United States, of course, is the sole state with preeminence in every domain of power - economic, military, diplomatic, ideological, technological and cultural - with the reach capabilities to promote its interests in virtually every part of the world."

Then follows a hierarchisation of power in the new world of "global politics". After the "sole superpower", we have, at the second level, "major regional powers", and at the third level, we find "secondary regional powers". Fifteen countries figure within the last two categories and there is no specific level for over 180 members of the international community unless we simply classify them, by elimination, as "others". How can one read the Charter of the United Nations and interpret the most basic norms in international agreements?. What meaning is left to the very concept of negotiation and conciliation? What is to happen to the freedom of choice in international cooperation? Should not we talk of the "liberalisation of power politics" and of the "privatisation of international relations" by a single power, thanks to "its preeminence in every domain of power" as we have seen above?

Globalisation in contemporary international politics requires a hegemony to facilitate homogenisation and the development of a new caste system with different levels where the "have power" and "have-not power" can communicate in accordance with unilaterally set rules in the "interest" of the whole. One power, the United States with a population of 200 million people - 5 % of the world population - is thus justified, in the name of the "globalisation" of power, to lead the planet as it wishes and without any recourse for those who are being led. Madeleine Albright calls it "the indispensable nation" and adds, "because we stand tall and hence see further than other nations."²

The dangers for peace are serious, the preservation of diversity which is a key to survival is at risk, the chances of reducing gaps within and between nations are much reduced, true cultural communication with mutual respect of the other will not be facilitated. Arrogance has never been an instrument of peace or wisdom nor a path to communion and knowledge. Hafiz, an ancient Persian poet, gives us a taste of the wisdom of the East which can help as an antidote to the "post-arrogance" of globalisation.

Those who are forcing globalisation down everyone's throat have not yet discovered their relationship with their people and humanity at large - let alone the Universe. They have kidnapped the globe, militarised space, occupied countries, corrupted governments, bought the minds and pens of quite a few members of the intelligentsia of the third world, paved the ground for take-overs of a respectable proportion of public establishments by their multi-national firms and thus impoverishing national economies of the South and increasing socioeconomic inequalities, and they have provided undemocratic and unrepresentative governments with a life insurance against the will of their own people.

"Globalisation" means concentration of power - all forms of power and not solely political power. Hence, two American companies (Exxon and General Motors) alone have a joint turnover greater than the income of India with its one billion inhabitants. We are going through a period where even language has been denatured and where, through semantic magic, words have taken a meaning often contrary to their original sense. Just as "globalisation" in the final analysis signifies unilateral "self-appropriation", "deregulation" has become a process whereby you "regulate", often with the help of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the dispossession of peoples with the connivance of a leadership which enriches itself collaterally.

About six years ago, James Morgan, wrote the following in *The Financial Times*, "The fall of the Soviet bloc has left the IMF and the G7 to rule the world and create a new imperial age... The construction of a new global system is orchestrated by the Group of Seven, the IMF, the World Bank and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). But it works through a system of indirect rule that has involved the integration of leaders of developing countries into the network of the new ruling class..."

"Developing countries not only accept what would have been regarded as a subordinate role in the world economy two decades ago -- they support the demand for a system where that subordination can be exercised,.. Now, this all is amazingly different from say, 1970, but not very different from 1900..... Within the old imperial lands, things are returning to the status quo ante. "3

Globalisation is already enabling less than 17% of the world population, which presently disposes of over 80% of the resources of the globe to increase the North-South gap to an even more unbearable proportion for five billion human beings. What is being globalised without any doubt is poverty, social injustice, corruption, cultural alienation, limitations to freedom and civil rights. What room is left for democracy in such an inhospitable environment which was fashioned and maintained by a "lonely superpower" and its acolytes ? That is the global question which needs to be globalised.

It is practically impossible, today, for any country in the Third World to engage, freely and democratically, in processes of change without the blessing of the "lonely superpower" and or some "major regional power". The globalisation of democratisation means the fortification of remote-control mechanisms to maintain subservient regimes which formally preach democracy but practice authoritarianism with "global" approval.

One of the dramas of the Third World is that a growing proportion of its elite is "on the market" and is succumbing to these offers. Unfortunately too many members of the academic profession's number figure in this lot. Globalisation has thus not only "deregulated" and "denormalized", (elimination of norms) it is also trying to "de-academise" by commercializing the world of knowledge and research. For globalisation, everything and everybody must "be on the market".

So, why did I make an exception and came to your meeting ? The friendship and respect I have for the organisers whom I have seen at work elsewhere may explain my presence. I also knew that the "indicator of tolerance" among university people would be high enough to ensure a real exchange of views.

It is only today that I fully appreciate the advice that Professor Wight, who supervised my Ph.D. thesis at the London School of Economics, gave me forty years ago. He told me then, "you now have your degree so my advice is that you forget everything you have learned because it will be of very relative use to you. Liberate yourself of the jargon you have acquired if you want to seek the meaning of things."

It is in that context that I question today the use of what I have learned and thought in the university world during the last few decades, especially in the face of theoretical ravings of post-political scientists and their unbearable pretense, not to speak of the salesmanship of the new mercenaries of "liberalism" and "globalisation".

I think that Professor Wright was right. What I have learned and thought in political science, political philosophy, international relations, economics and development is of little help with the missionaries of the modern crusade for globalisation. I went back to some of the authors who contributed to the development of certain of these disciplines for a test of contemporary relevance. In Hans Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* (1960) you shall find references to power politics; they will not, however, help you understand the concept of a "lonely superpower". In that respect, Morton Kaplan's *Systems and Process in International Politics* (1957) is just as useless because it highlights differentiation whereas "globalisation" is about homogenisation. *A Working Peace System* (1960) of David Mitrany is even less appropriate. *Beyond The Welfare State*, which Gunnar Myrdal wrote in 1960, is even more inadequate because its thesis is in total opposition with that of the promoters of "globalisation". These are, of course, very limited examples of a particular period.

Now, if we turn to the UN Charter, we discover that it has become a baroque document to be put in a museum so as to assist in research on the archeology of international relations. Morrison and Commager's detailed analysis of the Charter chapter by chapter and article by article, going back to what was done in San Francisco - 700 pages -- now belong to the geology of political science. Oran Young, who was one of the first to use systems analysis for the study of political systems and whose book, *Systems of Political Science* (1968), was a very innovative work, turns out to be today as unsystemic as Quincy Wright's *The Study of International Relations*.

Even knowledge and research have been deregulated and privatized de facto . Each time

new adepts consist in saying "you have no choice". In my view this expression clearly depicts and faithfully sums up the essence of what globalisation is all about. Freedom and dignity leave us no other choice than to say "we do have a choice and the sacred right to pursue that choice."

People who say "you have no choice" have abdicated for a diversity of reasons and have even consciously globalised resignation as a way of being. This is the case of too great a number of governmental officials and decision-makers in the private sector from the Third World. One will never repeat often enough how non-representative these people are. Their credibility is close to nil with their population. Survival in power and economic greed are the two main explanations for this behavior. In the West, the tendency is to disregard these facts, which are common knowledge, and to back these instances giving thereby a high priority to the short-term without any vision as to the future.

People in the North are still disregarding the fate of four billion people in the South who suffer from the combined effect of internal mismanagement and corruption, on the one hand, and an external exploitation through post colonialist policies, on the other. The situation is explosive yet everyone talks about how to ensure stability. Stability for whom? Stability at what cost? Ancient colonialism had the advantage of being totally transparent. You had an occupier and an occupied people; a terrorized population facing foreigners; an agriculture and an economy totally geared for a minority from overseas. In one word: open subjugation with no hidden facets.

Things are much more complex today with the advent of post colonialism, which is a joint venture of the older colonisers and the new national exploiters. "Globalisation" has been greatly facilitated by the combined effect of post colonialism, of the sponsorship of the Superpower, the tutelage of the international financial institutions that the latter directs and the corruption and cowardliness of those who run the South.

I shall not elaborate further on the intimate historical, if not pathological, link between "post colonialism" and "globalisation". I think that I have been the first to coin the "expression" of "postcolonialism" and to elaborate its concept. You can find its presentation in the monthly review "Futuribles" (issue No. 147, Paris, October 1990) under the title "La Crise du Golf, Prelude a l'Affrontement Nord-Sud ? Les Debuts du Post-Colonialisme"⁴ This assertion may be easily verified through a search over the Internet for the words "postcolonialism" and "post-colonialisme".⁵

In the era of postcolonialism, you no longer need troops to dominate countries. You use the existing infrastructures, including willing "collaborators" from the ruling groups and a few intellectual mercenaries. These people know very well that they cannot remain in power without the "postcoloniser" and the latter is fully conscious of the fact that his interests and his power transits through them. Hence a commonly shared objective: stability of those in power. Those who cannot get to power through a real democratic process - that is the case of the quasi totality of the present governments of the third world - rely on 'postcolonialism' which has now been enriched and strengthened by 'globalisation'.

Back in 1970, after directing a seminar at LSE on international relations and operational research, I wrote a book entitled "The United Nations System: An Analysis"⁶, a project which grew out of the conviction that societal systems can be studied with a methodological approach particularly if the roles of value systems and of their diversity are emphasised. I had already worked several years in the UN system by then. From the conceptual angle, I was influenced by

had a very concise and extremely deep formula in which he says, "If there is a purpose, there is a system."

My "purpose" in the analysis of the "IJN System" was to see whether one was dealing with a real purpose and hence, a real system, or not. After two years of work, I came to a very simple conclusion: yes, there was a purpose back in 1945. Those who wrote the Charter of the United Nations represented less than 50 nations. They were all Judeo-Christian nations, except for one country - Lebanon (although the President of Lebanon was a Christian). So there was a unifying factor with respect to the system of values, which regulated the system as a whole. All of this changed with the introduction of what some have called the "hordes of independent countries" which all had a vote at the UN just like the Founding members but had however different value systems, breaking thus the harmony which had prevailed so far at that level. These new members, having just been decolonised, were not ready then to submit to a unilaterally imposed set of international norms and practices in the elaboration of which they had not been associated.

The "major contributors" to the UN budget, with the United States heading the list, paying 25% of the budget, became concerned about the effect which the "massive" admission of these new countries might have on the voting process of the Organisation and started questioning fundamental principles such as that of the equality of all the members and of the democratic significance of the "majority". A new expression was coined. The countries of the "North" spoke of an "automatic majority" and depicted it as an "undemocratic" process. Using your right to vote as defined by the Charter came to be seen as contrary to the aims and objectives of international cooperation and the safeguarding of peace!

For the first time in the relatively short history of international organisations the sacrosanct democratic principle of the equality of States was openly and vehemently contested. The basic prescriptions of the Charter concerning the obligatory nature of the payment of financial dues as determined by the General Assembly were not respected. This non-respect, such as in the case of the United States, was unfortunately tolerated by the member states as well as by the Secretariat of the UN. The rules do not apply to those who are in a position to impose their violation. This has become the new implicit *modus vivendi* within international institutions based on "political realism".

My conclusion, at the end of that analysis, more than 25 years ago, was that the United Nations System was condemned because it was no longer guided by a commonly agreed purpose except on an ad hoc basis. The UN, having undergone a major transformation in terms of its membership, should have attempted to reconstruct the whole system on the basis on a newly defined purpose so as to reflect and respect the new diversity of its components. The UN of 160 countries is not the UN of 1945.

So what do you do? I think we ought to pay much more attention to the weight and role of value systems in international relations. Back in 1978, at the first North-South Round Table, organised by the Society for International Development (SID), I said:

"We must accord the highest priority to the scale of values to demonstrate that the present crisis between the North and the South can not be overcome through simple adaptation."⁷

In October 1986, in Tokyo, on a television program on the "Future of International Cooperation", I maintained that the causes of future conflicts will be essentially of a cultural nature. In 1991, after the Gulf War, in an interview of Der Spiegel, I said that it was "the First Civilisational War".⁹ A few months later I published a book with that title.¹⁰ Chapter 13 of that book is entitled "Civilisational Confrontation"¹¹ - it dates back to 24 February 1992.

The cultural dimension of international relations has been one of my constant preoccupation -- academically as well as administratively -- during my 20 years of service at the UNESCO, particularly while in charge of the cultural sector of the Organisation. Culture is an invaluable key for the analysis of world affairs.

For example, one could foresee the Gulf War from the following statement made by the President Bush on mid-August,

"Our jobs, our style of life, our freedom and the freedom of friendly countries throughout the world will suffer if the control of the biggest oil reserves fall in the hands of Saddam Hussein."¹²

That is what I did in an interview with "Radio France Internationale", which was broadcast on 6 October 1991 and in which I said "Yes, there will be a war".¹³ Bush's phrase meant that the great danger, in his eyes, was no longer just political, economic or even strategic but that there was a high risk affecting the value system of the Nation and of its friends and close allies. For the American (and Western) way of living to be preserved, the production and commercialization of oil has to remain under control although its price had not increased since 1978. A handful of multinationals unilaterally determine the price of that oil with the backing of not even another handful of governments.

In these situations, "Globalisation" signifies that Tomahawks and other types of missile are ready to intervene to back up at all cost the maintenance of a value system and a "style of life" regardless of the consequences for the others. All I want to stress is that since the end of the bipolar power system and the launching of the new ideology of "globalisation", the weight of cultural values in international relations has increased greatly and so has the risk of confrontation. The underlining of the place of cultural values in international relations and the absolute need for better cultural communication are intended to facilitate international understanding and peace building.

"Globalisation" has come about and is nurtured by a cultural arrogance that originates from the ignorance or disregard of other value systems and of their right to existence. This is gradually leading to a global de facto cultural authoritarianism: "Do like me if you want to safeguard your right to exist". This is exasperating billions of people who are already sufficiently maltreated by regimes, which have all surrendered to a "globalisation" which is their only support and defense in the face of popular dissatisfaction. If nothing changes "global destruction" by implosion or by explosion will become unavoidable in a generation or two or three.

The important question is whether the "globalisers" are ready to accept conceptually and practically that there are other types of human beings who have other histories, especially if their history is counted in centuries rather than millenaries. It is true that I have always and always remained obsessed as to the importance of cultural communication.¹⁴ It's not because you own

Time magazine, or CNN, or because you are a Murdoch, that you direct the world more than virtually. The communication I am talking about deals about conviction and compassion for others, not for products and profits. This is where the respect of diversity becomes an essential prerequisite for tolerance and dialogue. "Globalisation" is very far from such pedestrian preoccupations.

In *World Politics of the Global System* which he wrote in 1966, Herbert Spiro was already talking about another global system - an open and tolerant system. So did many others in the same spirit when the study of "Global Organisation" was in fashion in the 60's and 70's. The very opposite of the meaning has been acquired today and which leaves very little room for freedom, social justice, dignity and peace. Dignity has become a bad word because in globalisation you have to submit, you have to bow, you have to crawl to capital and to the new owners of the so-called 'global system'.

We are facing a "semantic takeover" like some of the financial deals in the stock market. A takeover of a powerful word whose original meaning is full of generosity, tolerance and universal love of others and which has been transformed completely to achieve the exact opposite. Somebody said recently in France "the next wars will be semantic-".

Imposing your concepts, language and definitions is one of the most effective ways of dominating the world. Some self-defense mechanisms have to be envisaged for a protection against these semantic campaigns.

What is in a word? A great deal. The title of the present paper is an expression of that preoccupation and of the refusal of attempts which seek to denature and adulterate the significance of noble terms which are the product of a universal cultural heritage and the public property of all mankind . They are not subject to privatisation.

What we are witnessing today is not a total surprise. Some authors expressed their concern about these trends almost sixty years ago. In 1943, Simone Weil, the French philosopher and collaborator of General De Gaulle in London, wrote that "an Americanisation of Europe would be a grave danger" and that "it would prepare an Americanisation of the terrestrial globe" and added, "humanity would lose its past and the past is a thing that once lost can never be found again."¹⁵

Such preoccupations have always been latent throughout the world but they are coming out into the open, even in Europe, in the form of soft fears which are more and more linked to the building of Europe. Andre Fontaine, former Editor-in-Chief of Le Monde, exclaimed in that paper:

"How can one want 'more Europe' without wanting, at the same time, 'less America?'"¹⁶

Not long ago, Lionel Jospin, French Prime Minister, stated that "globalisation carries with it the danger of cultural uniformisation".¹⁷ The link between "globalisation" and the "danger" for culture and values is therefore quite explicit. Zaki Laidi's apprehension that "globalisation tends today to destroy the idea of universality and of world responsibility" ¹⁸is shared by numerous analysts.

A good number of the equitable democratic regulatory systems, which have been

sovereign General Assembly, a quasi-omnipotent Security Council and an independent Secretary general are over. It is true that the UN system was more than ailing especially since the 1991 Gulf War where the grip of some of the Great Powers came out right to the open with a passive complicity of the Secretary General who thus set a new tradition faithfully respected by his successors up to today. The system can no longer be reformed nor saved. It must be completely overhauled to serve as an antidote to "Globalisation". What is evidently clear is that there is an almost total incompatibility between the latter and any international regulatory system as the United Nations was meant to be.

In the near future, there will be only room for unilateral international regulatory processes under the cover of multilateral parodies. "Globalisation" is a new "sect" with its own doctrines and hierarchy, its priests, its proselytizers, its rituals, its devotees, its mystics, its assets, its investments, its mega-multinationals and even a rapidly increasing number of web sites on the Internet.¹⁹

A very rapid look at the web pages concerning "globalisation" reveals a tremendous geopolitical and socio-cultural gap with respect to the origin, the language and the content of these sites. Over 90% of them originate from a single country. That is the communication side of globalisation. The major challenge today is how to promote a cultural communication with the aim of preserving and enhancing cultural diversity as well as the capacity of listening to others.

A word of conclusion, "globalisation" as presently conceived and imposed is one of the principal causes of the increase of violence and military conflicts we are witnessing across the continents. "Globalisation" is also a breeding ground for even more serious global confrontations which are likely to endanger the survival of humanity unless urgent remedial measures are taken to correct the excessive disequilibrium which the International System is no longer capable of supporting. What is at stake is simply "global peace". Seeing my deep convictions as to the role of culture and cultural communication in the building of that peace, I shall quote Mahatma Gandhi before concluding.

*"I want the cultures of all lands
to blow about my house, as freely as possible
But I refuse to be blown off my feet, by anyone of them."*

My conclusion is relatively simple - it is in the title of this paper. The concept of "globalisation" is a beautiful and generous one. It has been the object of a fraudulent semantic abuse. Its reappropriation calls imperatively for the "reglobalising" of "Globalisation".