

## **GLOBALIZATION, AMERICAN DOMINATION AND “NEW GLOBALITARIAN” MYTH : BETWEEN AN IMAGINARY AND A FALSE UTOPIA ?**

Abstract :

Globalization can be defined as the process permitting the creation of a worldwide market and the belief that this process is beneficial for trade, industrial output and personal and collective freedom. This new "market democracy" seems to challenge all notion of transcendence, of any further progress towards an ideal state. It exists, period. Globalization has no great vision, no dream behind it. In this respect, it can be seen as the poor man's paradise, a shrunken Utopia.

The true face of globalization is hidden by its own ideological framework and this latter's constant battle to justify the workings of the former. In this make-believe world, the present day situation and permanent mobility are perfect. The new ‘globalitarian’ myth is intimately linked to a loss of faith in the idea of Progress and create a new world disorder<sup>1</sup>.

Second part of this article see that the nation state, long the object of a mythification process, continues to play a major role on the new world scene; this despite current strategic realities that may be sometimes aterritorial, and sometimes in thrall to rivalry between diverse and contradictory territorial logics or, but are with decreasing frequency, simply nation-state based. The scope of state power is changing and violence has taken on new forms, leading to new fears of future conflict. Globalization highlights the difficulties for states that see themselves as "threatened" by the phenomenon. As with the ‘Brussels cartel’, these states may group together into institutionalized political bodies, thus assuring a kind of collective independence in the face of the new world disorder. In other words, by forming these so-called regional groupings, nation states share out the benefits of this solidarity with a view to prolonging their separate existence, rather than submerging themselves in a larger entity. In contrast large international institutions are well advanced on the road to autonomy. Contrary to their reputations, however, their powers remain limited.

Third part of this article asks the question: What level of human consciousness is necessary to create a global society? Is it really the end of the idea of Progress with Globalization which has made obsolete the definition of international relations as exclusively the study of inter-state interaction. Is there now instead just one dominant nation, the United States, even at a time when we might have thought that its relative economic weakness might be mirrored in future political decline?

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<sup>1</sup> : MARTIN D. , METZGER J. L. and PIERRE P. (2003), *Les métamorphoses du monde. Sociologie de la mondialisation*, Editions du Seuil.

## I. THE "NEW GLOBALITARIAN" MYTH

What face can we put on geopolitics today, in this era of globalization? Taking it from a macro-sociological angle, independent of regional specificities and with the goal of understanding what unites today's diverse trends in terms of geo-strategic relations, we have to ask ourselves: how do the roles of states and supranational bodies link up in the context of globalization<sup>2</sup>?

One particular paradox relating to the theory of geopolitical conflict could be expressed in the following manner: the nation state may be too small by itself to project its authority onto the global scene, but it is also too big to allow all its constituent communities to express a collective identity, the right to linguistic or religious independence, for example. The state often claimed a monopoly on legitimate force within its borders, but was unable to do so without creating a network of transnational cooperation. But what are the most ardent advocates of globalization actually defending? What do they want, now, today, for the forgotten members of our societies?

Globalization is the process that permits the creation of a worldwide market and the belief that this process is good for trade, industrial output and personal and collective freedom<sup>3</sup>. This new 'market democracy' seems to reject all notion of transcendence, of any further progress towards an ideal state. It exists, period. It has had the last word. It is quite simply necessary. Globalization has no great vision, no dream behind it. There is only the certainty of money, in other words, the circulation of objects through the financial markets and their transformation into cash-flow. In this respect, globalization can be seen as the poor man's paradise, a shrunken Utopia.

Following World War Two, in both the ex-communist bloc and developing nations, the emphasis was on a gradual progression towards a better future. In the case of globalization, in the absence of the communist threat, no enemy can be clearly identified. Wars seem less and less 'just'. The recurring theme of and projects for lasting world peace continue to be overshadowed by so-called ethnic or identity-based conflicts or terrorist threats. With globalization comes an expanding power, a surge in communications, an acceleration of mobility. Individuals are flung ever more quickly into change, but our understanding of the changing world escapes us.

A 'global civilization', which is the product of western civilization, does indeed exist. It encompasses science, technology, industry, capitalism and brings with it a number of shared values. It has its backdrops (international hotels, golf courses, and tropical islands, ideal for business conferences.) It has its own logic, one that acts as a framework for business, for many on a daily basis, cutting across international borders, (accounting practices, the primacy of law, the English language, IT systems). This new order aims to reduce diversity in the social sphere and to iron out local particularities. In the long term, it also seeks to create links between producers and consumers that go beyond ethnic and ideological differences: "Consumerism cannot be easily reconciled with laws restricting Sunday opening hours, whether dictated by British paternalism, in the case of pubs, Orthodox Judaism's observance of the Sabbath or the Puritanism of the Massachusetts ban on the Sunday sale of alcohol. Shared markets impose a shared language and a common currency. They also create shared patterns of behavior, product of an omnipresent, urban and cosmopolitan lifestyle. Sociologists studying our daily lives will doubtless continue to differentiate between American and Japanese mentalities, but today's spending frenzy is a universal phenomenon," writes B. R. Barber<sup>4</sup>

Is globalization then a phenomenon devoid of myths? Not exactly.

The true face of globalization is hidden by its own ideological framework and this latter's constant battle to justify the workings of the former. In this make-believe world, the present day situation is perfect. The spread of the logic that is behind constant modernization of work practices in the private

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<sup>2</sup> : GIDDENS A. (1985), *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, tome 2, Nation-state and violence, Berkeley, University of California.

<sup>3</sup> : BECK U. (2003), *Pouvoir et contre-pouvoir à l'ère de la mondialisation*, Alto/Aubier ; BERGER S. (2003), *Notre première mondialisation. Leçons d'un échec oublié*, Editions du Seuil.

<sup>4</sup> : BARBER B. R. (1992), "Djihad versus Mcworld, mondialisation, tribalisme et démocratie", *Futuribles*, p.6.

sector to all walks of life will ensure that gap between real and ideal narrows: more consumption, quicker communication, more profit for those in a position to profit.

The exclusive property of a privileged class, this ideal of a 'new', 'global-spanning' utopia emphasizes the new type of person it claims is appearing in the planet's largest cities. This person, a truly international citizen, takes advantage of the ever-present technologies of mobile phones, satellite links and email, and shares in the exhilaration of being alone and with just anybody<sup>5</sup> simultaneously, of communicating without physical face to face contact. 'Globalized Man' seems to be truly connected and mobile.

In a global economy, neither capital, work or raw materials are in themselves the deciding economic factors. What matters is a relationship between these factors that allows for optimal mobility. Also important is everything that is sold and exchanged: work, land, bodies, organs, blood, sperm, use of a womb...everything must work towards the 'one-world market' and its perfect functioning.<sup>6</sup> Our previous experience leaves us unprepared for the speed of change and the ever-present threat of obsolescence that hangs over our work practices, our jobs (no one is safe from demotion or unemployment), our learning or our affections. Because in reality the financial sphere is the only sector of the economy to have succeeded in delivering real-time connection between and within its business activities and its data networks, the symbols of the global community have largely been created around the principles of the market, managerial value and information exchange. Dressed up in the other virtues of our time, namely instant access, user friendliness, transparency, equality of access and freedom of speech, a new non-hierarchical, 'virtual reality' linking diverse fields can be contributed to information technology and the Internet. Even better, equality of access to information is treated as the panacea for inequalities in learning or knowledge. That is the theory, but in practice, while there is one telephone connection per two people in the developed world there is only one line for every 15 persons in the developing world<sup>7</sup>.

The ability to travel rapidly on a global scale, to communicate by writing, sound or image almost instantaneously, to satisfy fundamental social needs by getting involved on a market or to benefit from the advantages offered by societies and states outside one's own country; all these can be seen as new advantages accruing from the process of globalization, tending to reduce transnational exchanges and, in the process, challenge the central regulatory role of the nation state. The spread of this new "globalitarian" myth goes hand in glove with the return of the concept of private enterprise as a social institution, by advertising business' 'God-given' duty to take over from the nation states in the construction of a universal social unity. A business-style model of communications is fast becoming the norm as a management tool symbolic of social relations and is spreading to society at large, being seen as the "only efficient method of communicating".<sup>8</sup> A Mattelart notes, quite rightly, that organizations such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International no longer hesitate to call on the expertise of private public relations companies. "Everything happens as if "communication" brings reality closer, as if advertising can bring forward the event. The managerial myth serves to boost the globalization project by giving the coherence of a supposedly global order to disparate realities, a classic case of the "self-fulfilling prophecy" or "wishful thinking".<sup>9</sup>

This "globalitarian" myth, first and foremost founded on the fact of constant mobility, pervades all sections of everyday life, being particularly influential in multinationals where geographical mobility is the norm. In an extreme case, P Levy remarks "if unhappy with our current employers, rather than complain, we go elsewhere. It's no different for a couple or a family. The break is made. We look further afield for our fortune or our happiness. We move. Instead of wasting time in changing what refuses to be changed, these citizens of the world vote with their feet and depart for parts of the globe

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<sup>5</sup> : GIDDENS A. (1994), *Les conséquences de la modernité*, L'Harmattan.

<sup>6</sup> : LATOUCHE S. (2000), *La planète uniforme*, Climats, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> ALDERSON A. S. et NIELSEN F., « Globalization and the Great U-Turn : Income Inequality Trends in 16 OECD Countries », *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 107, n° 5, Mars 2002.

<sup>8</sup> : MATTELART A. (2000), *Histoire de l'utopie planétaire*, La Découverte, p. 355.

<sup>9</sup> : MATTELART A. (2000), *Histoire de l'utopie planétaire*, La Découverte, p. 360.

where vital and creative forces can come together and cross-fertilize, creating an environment for collective thought and creativity."<sup>10</sup> S. Latouche evaluates the extent to which, behind this new "globalitarian" myth, there is as much a prizing of movement as a rejection of death and ageing. "The modernity project and the bourgeois ethic have also aimed at eliminating death in all its forms and imposing life, in itself and without any other quality, as a value."<sup>11</sup> The modern individual manages his life like an appointments diary. Biological death, misery, sickness are to be ignored. This fanatical exaltation of biological existence as a value in itself expresses a rejection of our status as mortal beings. "This obsessive struggle against time, the indifference to the enjoyment of the moment, is very much the mark of Western Man."<sup>12</sup>

On the non-territorial expanse of the web, there should be room for everyone, for all cultures. After all, those who take up a lot of space take nothing away from the others! Commercial rivalries should be fought out in the arena of immediacy and instant appeal. In order to sell, the business must make sure its brand is the first to come to the consumer's mind. A kind of global culture would follow, a wide spectrum of activities and creative output produced by virtual meetings and mixings, with the media acting as a relay for this mass of entertainment and escapism. However, this discourse, this 'hymn' to mobility and economic liberalism, allows us to forget all too quickly that for there to be a meeting of cultures an incomplete meeting of minds and a certain pain of getting to know the other culture are also necessary. The experience of getting to know the other culture simply takes time. Meeting another with all his differences is also accepting that you may be changed by him, something which the new "interconnected" world does not promote, and ultimately to throw yourself into a never-ending game of instability and enrichment.

This new culture of the universal remains the mark of an economic elite. Its more widespread acceptance is still some distance off, given that this impoverishing discourse of cultural unification has to reckon with the cultural resistance of communities, which although 'unconnected', symbolize the strength of opposition rooted in local territorial identities. Beyond resignation and the stigma attached to "globalization's losers" there is the problem of coexistence between cultures, of their 'coalition' to use the language of C Levi-Strauss. These 'coalition partners', at the expense of their mutual hostility, are without doubt the only actors capable of keeping open the culture-gap, so vital an ingredient in an authentically "worldwide civilization".

Notwithstanding the extreme individualism of the present day, it seems difficult for us to define things such as fulfillment and respect. At a time when religious beliefs and social utopias are no longer capable of convincing us of the presence of an eternal hope, globalization refocuses man's attention once more towards his immediate life on earth. This entails the desire, even necessity to succeed in life at any price, to make a success out of every moment of life.<sup>13</sup> Individuals come to be evaluated purely in relation to their economic usefulness, i.e. the money that they can spend. Eventually, the individual becomes "no more than what he can sell of himself."<sup>14</sup> When people have lost hope of a better future, they start to look for immediate gratification, feelings which can only be satisfied through the consumer society.

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<sup>10</sup> : LEVY P. (2000), *World philosophie*, Editions Odile Jacob, p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> : LATOUCHE S. (2000), *La planète uniforme*, Climats, p. 39.

<sup>12</sup> : LATOUCHE S. (2000), *La planète uniforme*, Climats, p. 40.

<sup>13</sup> : JAUREGUIBERRY F. (2003), « L'homme branché : mobile et pressé », in F. ASCHER et F. GODARD, *Modernité : la nouvelle carte du temps*, Editions de l'Aube, p. 157.

<sup>14</sup> : ENRIQUEZ E. et HAROCHE C. (2002), *La face obscure des démocraties modernes*, Editions Erès, p. 49.

## II STATE GROUPINGS, REGIONAL UNION BUILDING AND SUPRANATIONAL AUTHORITIES

The new 'globalitarian' myth seems intimately linked to a loss of faith in the idea of Progress. For this reason, from Millau to Seattle, Porto Alegre to Genoa, the counterweight to the devastating effects of globalization surely lies in new political choices, adopted and controlled by the largest possible number of citizens. "For want of a third way between the state and the market," affirms I Ramonet, "we will perhaps survive as consumers, but not as citizens."<sup>15</sup>

Globalization, as we should remind ourselves, has benefited from the political decisions of sovereign states. In Europe, for example, without the priority given by national governments and legislatures to competitive deflationary measures without an acceptance of the consequences of interest rate levels, there would have been neither an opening up of markets nor a common currency in the Euro.

These states have experienced this over the last few years, as an 'unsolicited boomerang effect' which could nonetheless have been foreseen. Many note the strict subjection to the rules of capitalism with an attendant reduction in public spending, privatizations, slimming down of social security schemes but also an increasing transfer of powers towards supranational bodies.<sup>16</sup> The WTO, IMF, World Bank and the OECD, to mention just a few examples, work with states to produce normative models and to fix limits for the coordination of activities, they also bring in auditors and consultants to ensure these agreements are respected and finally, seek to legitimize them from an ideological standpoint.<sup>17</sup> These organizations seek to reduce the state to the role of one strategist amongst many others. States, in their paternalistic role, are longer able to keep their social commitments. National economies being in competition with each other, and productivity differentials now negligible between many countries, governments only have social costs to play with (being costs to reduce). The almost instant obsolescence of military technology encourages inter-state cooperation, or at least, the building of temporary alliances to tackle specific problems, to act as a kind of collective world policeman in a shaky world order.<sup>18</sup>

Globalization has been accompanied by a proliferation of regional associations which aim to reinforce cooperation between states in individual geographic zones. States have been compelled to react to outside challenges in this manner as a result of the greater freedom of movement of capital. This phenomenon can also be explained as the consequence of ongoing state policies, which have lifted barriers to the movement of goods, services and people, thereby boosting direct overseas investments. These policies have also played their part in the growth of multinational companies and have elaborated a political program that aims to free up trade and liberalize commercial exchanges from all restrictions.<sup>19</sup>

While the European Union is the oldest and most extensive example of this process of regional association, the idea has spread to other world regions, for instance, in the free trade agreement reached between the USA and Canada and subsequently extended to Mexico in 1994, known as NAFTA. MERCOSUR, created in 1991 by Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay, mirrors NAFTA in that it does not feature supranational structures that might reduce the independence of its member states. MERCOSUR does however, set up a free trade area, with the goal of customs union by 2006. Such projects have met with less success in Asia, perhaps due to the great diversity of countries and cultures, proximity to the Japanese economic giant and the aftermath of the Cold War. ASEAN,

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<sup>15</sup> : RAMONET I. (2000), "Globalisation, culture et démocratie", in *Mondialisation, citoyenneté et multiculturalisme*, L'Harmattan and Laval University Press.

<sup>16</sup> : MERCURE D. (2001), « Une société monde ? », *Une société-monde. Les dynamiques sociales de la mondialisation*, De Boeck, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> : BUSINO G. (2001), « Quelles significations attribuer aux processus de rationalisation de la mondialisation ? », *Une société monde ? Les dynamiques sociales de la mondialisation*, De Boeck Université and Laval University Press, p. 175.

<sup>18</sup> : CASTELLS M. (1998), *La société en réseaux*, Fayard, Tome 2, p. 317.

<sup>19</sup> : SENARCLENS P. (2001), *La mondialisation*, Armand Colin, p. 95.

formed in 1967 during the Vietnam war, is still struggling to become a real free trade zone and has been trying since 1992 to develop a regional pole for dialog along the model of the OSCE model.

A large body of literature has sprung up, examining the question of whether these regional associations respond more readily to pressure from the economic and technocratic spheres or political interests. The EU is interesting in the respect that it is supposed to produce truly supranational institutions. Since the European Coal and Steel Community, and especially after the Treaty of Rome, Europe, born out of American-supported reconstruction, has built itself on a basis of the progressive transfer of sovereignty (initially economic), to the detriment of the principle of the indivisibility of state power. Besides its economic and monetary aspects, since the Single European Act and the Treaty of Maastricht, the EU has sought to create the idea of "European citizenship", symbol of the unification of the European political corpus, while at the same time its citizens have practically no influence on the workings of the EU institutions. P Senarclens returns to this debate, contrasting the functionalist and realist approaches. The functionalists stress the dynamic of the political system, where development follows the converging paths of the main actors in order to respond to the economic challenges these encounter. (The key role of governmental elites, the civil service and above all, business leaders is stressed). The economic is supposed to give the lead to the political in a context of technocratic impetus and pragmatism in the face of the decline of ideologies. On account of the political obstacles encountered, the neo-functionalists - without fundamentally questioning the economic growth - have since placed their emphasis more on the political dynamic generated by the economic dynamic and especially on governmental readiness to create supranational institutions.

As for the realist approach, it prefers painstaking compromises between European leaders, arrived at with due reference to their relative strengths; compromises necessitated by economic pressures outside the EU. European countries gradually lose their capacity for innovation and their competitive edge, faced with American and Japanese rivals. Hence the decision to enlarge the European market from within. The movement towards integration is therefore regarded as a strategy used by governments and administrations to achieve their goals by going over the head of parliaments and local government. This image of the European Union is certainly an inter-governmental political reality "whose aim is the management of economic interdependence by means of the coordination of economic policies."<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the legal and political restrictions born out of the EU institutions are a direct result of the political will of the leading EU states.

P Senarclens concludes that the EU remains a dynamic hybrid where member states must function with sovereignty in part devolved to the institutions, but in the knowledge that - unlike in a federal or cantonal system - retreat is still possible. States can complain about their limited room for maneuver, but they also benefit from the dilution of power into intergovernmental networks of cooperation.

Contrary to the grouping together of states, the large international organizations are well advanced on the road to autonomy. There are many who believe that their officials work not for a country (e.g. the USA), but towards a certain shared notion of the world (technocrats would therefore have the feeling that they were working for their own cause). From every side, we note the growth in power of ever more numerous organizations and actors, whether in the intergovernmental or supranational spheres, or the global arena of public opinion. The current international system is dated, having been created in a post World War Two world of about 30 independent states when nowadays there are nearly 200. This is not to mention the 300 organizations campaigning for the settling of various disputes across the world and the many international treaties that have been signed.

Intergovernmental organizations (the OECD created in 1958 and its predecessors, UNICEF, HCR, UNDP and of course the World Bank and the IMF) can be counted in their thousands today. The UN alone has 50,000 officials, creating a population of experts to add to those of national civil services. Even if the Cold War largely nullified the usefulness of these organizations - their divisions never being adequately offset by their capacity for coordination or ability to set aside rivalries - the positive

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<sup>20</sup> : SENARCLENS P. (2001), *La mondialisation*, Armand Colin, p. 65.

contribution of many specialized organizations (UNICEF, FAO, ILO, etc.) must be recognized. These organizations helped put flesh on a corpus of 'global' values such as the fight against hunger, the eradication of poverty, the defense of refugees' rights, the promotion of human rights, rights for women and children.

C Chavagneux notes that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are developing a tendency for direct political involvement in the countries that they deal with; this is due to the selective nature of the loans that their grants (since its creation, the World Bank alone has granted more than \$250 billion in loans) and to evaluate policies employed.<sup>21</sup> This entry into politics arose from the notion of good governance, favoring a long term approach which consists of creating a legal framework that promotes the private sector. J Stiglitz demonstrates that the IMF mistakenly wishes to transplant solutions already tested in Latin America (budgetary and fiscal discipline, deregulation of currency and financial markets, incentives for private investors, privatization and the state reduced to little more than a ritual role) to Africa and Asia.<sup>22</sup> Countries which have retained controls over movements of capital (Chile) or forged their own path (Malaysia) seem to win out over the prevailing orthodoxy.

Even if the phenomenon of intergovernmental and transnational organizations is large enough for the UN to have been described as "the solar system of the NGO galaxy"<sup>23</sup>, the concept of the NGO remains difficult to define. The NGO label covers a wide spectrum of organizations of widely differing sizes and capabilities (2200 were listed in the industrialized nations in the field of development aid alone, representing 8% of public donation.). One of the oldest is the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, funded in 1823.

The NGOs play a not inconsiderable role in the global public arena. Some have enormously increased financial means and influence thanks to the support of national or international public opinion : Save the Children Fund, Oxfam, Médecins sans Frontières, Amnesty International and Greenpeace all run large, international fundraising operations. NGOs have supported the concept of the right of intervention, for example, in the defense of human rights, and also the creation of genuinely democratic institutions which can serve as a basis for economic development. At the end of the first Gulf War, the UN Security Council Resolution 688 of April 5th, 1991, demanded that Iraq end its repression of its Kurdish minorities and help NGOs establish themselves on Iraqi territory in order to bring aid to the Kurds. Is the right of intervention linked to the development of a universal consciousness or does it owe more to American policy of bypassing international organizations (and Russian and Chinese vetoes) ?

In the eyes of P Senarclens, NGOs do not secure - faced with the opposition of state realpolitik - all the elements that might guarantee democratic expression on a universal scale. NGOs are capable of mobilizing support for humanitarian causes (Handicap International for the fight against anti-personnel mines, for example), but they also incorporate a sometimes wildly diverse collection of interest groups and ideologies. At the anti-globalization protests in Seattle, for example, ATTAC walked side by side with anarchists, religious groups and defenders of sea turtles.<sup>24</sup>

It is true to say that human rights "rose" to academic respectability towards the end of the 1970's with the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Amnesty International and the subsequent mushrooming of relevant courses in top law schools.<sup>25</sup> However, there are several points to consider. The continuation of the activities of NGOs remain largely dependent on certain states, even if they can contribute to a change of political focus and public debate thanks to their networks of experts or the occasional publicity coup. NGOs are not above forming their own networks, such as the World Organization

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<sup>21</sup> : CHAVAGNEUX C. (2000), « Le Fonds Monétaire International et la Banque Mondiale tentés par la politique », *Esprit*, n°6.

<sup>22</sup> : STIGLITZ J. (2002), *La grande désillusion*, Fayard.

<sup>23</sup> : SENARCLENS P. (2001), *La mondialisation*, Armand Colin, p. 42.

<sup>24</sup> : SENARCLENS P. (2001), *La mondialisation*, Armand Colin, p.45.

<sup>25</sup> : DEZALAY Y. et GARTH B. (1998), « Le « Washington consensus ». Contribution à une sociologie de l'hégémonie du néolibéralisme », *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 121/122, p. 38.

Against Torture, which regroups 150 NGOs in its Geneva base. NGOs, wherever they work, need the support of states, intergovernmental organizations or associations such as the EU. In 1992, for example, 8.2 billion dollars of aid to the developing world was channeled through American or American-influenced NGOs, i.e more than all the aid distributed by the UN. NGOs therefore remain a Western-based phenomenon, often still influenced by the sphere of action of the United States (Greenpeace has little clout in China or Pakistan, for instance). Behind the varied political (or often apolitical) leanings of NGOs can often be seen the mark of a political culture distinguished by liberal individualism and a secularization of relations with authority as opposed to clan loyalties.

Y Dezalay and B Garth underline the extent to which organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch compete for media attention, marketing themselves as authentic "symbolic investment banks" on the civic virtues exchange.<sup>26</sup> They also demonstrate that America's founding fathers belong to an elitist clique of anti-communist business lawyers and illustrate the process of politicization and professionalization of the new elite of good cause militants, who have come from the best universities (corporate donations are closely linked to how well known they are and a high media profile.). These NGOs also lend impetus to the emergence of an international market in "state skills". "To intervene in the power-play, instead of resorting to higher authority or the governing elite, this new generation of human rights practitioners now deploys its very own alumni network."<sup>27</sup> And, we could add, public opinion too, by mobilizing academic skills and public goodwill. "With allies (and informers) in government bodies, professional activists are well-placed to exploit administrative weaknesses or the contradictions of public policy."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> : DEZALAY Y. et GARTH B. (1998), « Le « Washington consensus ». Contribution à une sociologie de l'hégémonie du néolibéralisme », *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 121/122, p. 23.

<sup>27</sup> : DEZALAY Y. et GARTH B. (1998), « Le « Washington consensus ». Contribution à une sociologie de l'hégémonie du néolibéralisme », *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 121/122, p. 39.

<sup>28</sup> : DEZALAY Y. et GARTH B. (1998), « Le « Washington consensus ». Contribution à une sociologie de l'hégémonie du néolibéralisme », *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 121/122, p. 40.



### III WHO EXERCISES HEGEMONY AT A GLOBAL LEVEL?

The new geopolitical map as it appears post 9/11 demonstrates the legitimization of war as a potential tool for conflict resolution, perhaps even as a "normal" policy instrument<sup>29</sup>.

The USA is looking to entrench the strength of the market in the Middle East and by their military presence, support its vigorous development. This effort will take in a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict as well as a redefinition of the American system of regional alliances with capitalist Arab states. In the background, two further issues are at stake: energy security through control of the Gulf monarchies and reliable means of transport of energy resources and the constitution of a banking and non-stop financial system.

No country today is totally self-reliant or capable, on its own, of safeguarding its security and independence in an age of nuclear power and terrorism. The classic theories of international relations have long hidden the problem of "interpreting interaction between players culturally distanced from each other....instead assuming that all the actors shared a same rationale, permitting the 'cat and mouse' theory to be used to interpret and explain serious international confrontations."<sup>30</sup> The question of hegemony is consubstantial to that of globalization. It sometimes trips up on the idea of historical determinism, or more frequently, the 'worldwide conspiracy' theory and its alliance of "globalizing" intellectuals, unrestrained capitalism and the military-industrial lobby. In this utopian post-national world of open borders and ultimately, non-sovereignty, P A Taguieff sees a basic consensus appearing amongst the elite in every field of expertise, creating something like a "crypto-sect" with its visionaries, prophets and preachers.<sup>31</sup>

Leaving behind this raft of actors on the international and supranational scene, will one or more powers in fact exercise total control as a result of a process of a state's monopolization of resources and means of leverage at international level?

To talk of hegemony implies the existence of a state which has the political willpower and the economic and military means to maintain order on a global scale. This state can choose between the British model of Splendid Isolation and its preferred tool of intervening only when necessary, but decisively, and the Bismarckian version of alliances with 'natural' i.e. culturally close allies, (excluding its chief rival). The risk of hegemony therefore, is to be the nodal point of an unstable network. The UK played this role until 1914. It was a role taken up by the USA after 1945 and today a situation of "tied up Gulliver" today, according to S Hoffmann. Controversy still rages, perhaps exacerbated by globalization, over the supposed "lost hegemony" of the United States at the close of the end of the Cold War (defeat in Vietnam, the effectiveness of the USSR's military counterweight, economic weakening and loss of international prestige, the emergence of Japan and the European Community). The erosion of American hegemony, has, it has been said, brought about the abandonment of the monetary system installed at Bretton Woods and encouraged the role of private banking in the creation of international liquidity. The financing of economy-boosting American military programs by the Japanese is only possible as long the creditors agree to prop up the American deficit.

The theory of the decline of American power has been extremely controversial. In particular, S Strange<sup>32</sup> demonstrates that America's strength is evident in four main spheres at a global level. Firstly, national security, linked to military capacity, successful counter-espionage and the nuclear deterrent. The United States account for 40% of global military spending and 63% of the total NATO

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<sup>29</sup> : RAVENEL B. (2003), « Prendre en compte la dimension stratégique de la globalisation », *Mouvements*, numéro 25, p. 5 ; STRANGE S. (1987), « The persistent myth of lost hegemony », *International Organization*, 41,4.

<sup>30</sup> : BADIE B. and SMOUTS M. C. (1992), *Le retournement du monde*, PFNSP / Dalloz, p. 26.

<sup>31</sup> : TAGUIEFF P. A. (2001), *Résister au « bougisme »*. *Démocratie forte contre mondialisation techno-marchande*, Mille et une nuits, p. 89.

<sup>32</sup> : STRANGE S. (1988), *States and Markets*, Pinter.

budget.<sup>33</sup> The State Department has seen its spending slashed between 1980 and 1995 due to pressure from a public that demands bloodless victories, a “just” cause and which balks at any kind of institutionalized cooperation. This last phenomenon is well documented: tensions surrounding the Kyoto protocol, the 1996 rejection of an international treaty aimed at banning the use of anti-personnel mines and the boycott of the International Court of Justice (1998) and the convention on maritime law in 1994. In a similar vein, we have seen a growth in private companies specializing in military training and solutions.<sup>34</sup> The American industrial-military complex remains dependent on Pentagon spending and significantly, on the presence of placement funds (pension and mutual funds) that demand a return on their investments.<sup>35</sup>

Secondly, the production of goods and services, linked to multinational companies. The American economy may represent more than 20% of the world economy but 500 of 1,000 top multinational companies hail from the country of George Washington. In the framework of American geopolitical thinking, the control of “vital resources” and petrol are necessary to assure its single superpower status (global power).

Thirdly, finance. The strength of the dollar brings with it the ability to influence structurally foreign economies, to encourage deregulation and reorient them even in the absence of complete structural control.

Fourthly. Scientific and technical expertise, linked to research communities and communication networks. We can also see the spread of an Americanized way of viewing and understanding the world, taken up by diplomats and international public opinion in a vast political, administrative, intellectual and media machine. In terms of television programming, for example, the United States export more content than all other countries put together. But to what extent does American cultural production broadcast a genuine picture of America rather than a meaningless “standard” image?

The new global geopolitical situation remains uncertain. With no real rivals since the decline of the ex-USSR, only the United States can today allow themselves to act according to the demands of domestic public opinion. This is the so-called “democratic privilege”, a contrast to the mini-worlds in being of China and India. P Melandrin and J Vaisse demonstrate that the post Cold War period is above all marked by increasingly powerful internal influences in United States foreign policy.<sup>36</sup> as well as the importance of bilateral contacts with other states in competition with supranational bodies. Among these domestic influences, the power of the lobby and Congress’ attempts to break the Executive’s monopoly on Foreign Affairs policy-making stand out. The United States, therefore, acts multilaterally where possible, but unilaterally if necessary. In their book “L’Empire du milieu. Les Etats-Unis et le monde depuis la fin de la guerre froide” (The middle empire. The United States and the world since the end of the Cold War)<sup>37</sup> Melandrin and Vaisse demonstrate that American freedom of action requires selective alliances in order to impose economic sanctions and carry out retaliatory actions. Can we start to talk of a drift from a “downgraded multilateralism” towards a centralized order?<sup>38</sup>, one which conflicts with the idea of a world of “networks” and “regions”? The US remains the only global superpower but its position is weakened by a new and disparate terrorist threat that pushes it towards preventative war. If at one time we fought exclusively with our neighbors and enemies well within our reach because our hereditary enemies were often at the gate, today’s terrorist threat plays on its image of omnipresence and milks its media impact to the maximum in an ever more interconnected world. On the global scale the “forced landing” of the American eagle means that all wars have a tendency to develop into civil conflicts. The movement of criminal networks, creating national security headaches in their wake and terrorism’s systematic use of mobility, civil unrest and mobilization of third party public opinion to its own ends, all go towards creating a situation that can no longer be explained along or confined to classic national lines. The global public arena is more and

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<sup>33</sup> : SIPRI (1999), Oxford University Press Yearbook.

<sup>34</sup> : SERFATI C. (1995), *Production d’armes croissance et innovation*, Economica.

<sup>35</sup> : MOREAU-DEFARGES P. (1998), *L’ordre mondial*, Armand Colin.

<sup>36</sup> : MELANDRIN P. et VAISSE J. (2001), *L’empire du milieu. Les Etats-Unis et le monde depuis la fin de la guerre froide*, O. Jacob, p. 370.

<sup>37</sup> : MELANDRIN P. et VAISSE J. (2001), *L’empire du milieu. Les Etats-Unis et le monde depuis la fin de la guerre froide*, O. Jacob.

<sup>38</sup> : MELANDRIN P. et VAISSE J. (2001), *L’empire du milieu. Les Etats-Unis et le monde depuis la fin de la guerre froide*, O. Jacob, p. 410.

more open to apologists of every shade of opinion for every kind of action who can use the internet as a new sounding board.

In short, contrary to certain theories, it is still possible to make sense of the post-Cold War, but only by understanding its present position in a halfway house between disorder and maintenance of order by a USA in search of vital allies even in countries where radical Islam holds way. Is it possible that the United States could dominate “by default”, in other words, their imperialism would be unintentional but in effect dominating nonetheless? What should we fear more, American isolationism or American unilateralism?<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> : MARTIN D. , METZGER J. L. and PIERRE P. (2003), *Les métamorphoses du monde. Sociologie de la mondialisation*, Editions du Seuil.

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