

## 99. Christians in Resistance to the Neoliberal Culture of War

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Summary of contribution on the social and economic aspects of the theme - with special reference to the present process of globalization.

1. Globalization is one of the most quoted words of our time. It has a variety of aspects:

- In their book *Global Dreams* (1994) Barnett and Cavanagh speak of four dimensions of the process of globalization: the rise of global information and images; the emergence of a global shopping mall (including an arms bazaar); the emergence of global work places and of global financial markets;
- In their report *Limits to Competition* (1995) the Group of Lisbon identifies even more dimensions. For them, globalization also includes the rise of mega-infrastructures for world production and services, the emergence of a global civil society, alongside of the globalization of finance, competition, markets, technology, and consumption patterns. They also point to the rise of global styles of governance, and of global styles of perception and consciousness.

All this suggests that indeed on the global level or scale something new is now emerging, though it has begun from national and even sometimes local initiatives. *Time* (3.2.97) has concluded that a planetary awakening of mankind is at hand and is already taking place. Globalization is in any case more than just internationalization, multinationalization, or regionalization, like, for instance, the European Monetary Union (EMU). The so-called triadization (TRIAD = Japan + Western Europe + USA) is sometimes seen as an intermediary step towards full globalization; but may it not be nearer to the truth if we see it as the power-centre behind many present forms of globalization.

2. This leads directly to the question of the sources and motives for of globalization, and/or of its value. Some see its sources as just an extension of Capitalism, others (like Fukuyama) as different from that (with no ideological content by simply seeing it as the end of History as we know it). Opinions about its value also differ strongly - these range from unconditional applause to an outspoken fear, and from conditional acceptance to total rejection.

To come to a good judgment we should therefore study the causes, the character, and the consequences of globalization in a comprehensive manner.

3. The main motors or *causes* behind globalization are: the removal of barriers for trade (liberalization), privatization (the reduced role of public sector), deregulation (especially of the capital markets) and the technological drive which, for instance, facilitates worldwide communication and information (the internet

etc). So business life could now start from the formation of many inter-firm transactions and of alliances between multinational giants. Often, such alliances are formed with the inclusion of national governments on the competitive battlefield! So globalization blurs the already thin demarcation-line between government and business-life.

The *character* of globalization is therefore mainly economic and technological in nature, and sharply oriented to competition, including the possible elimination of other competitors. The other dimensions of life - social, political, cultural- are usually deeply influenced by this process and react, usually in terms of enforced adaptation and accommodation.

The *consequences* of globalization can therefore be formulated in terms of ***inclusion*** as well as ***exclusion***.

4. ***Inclusion*** in this case is a matter of being drawn (as a nation, as a group, as persons) into the sphere of global influence. This will either be because you will have to bear the social, economic and cultural consequences of what global actors do (like global corporations, banks, international institutions), or because of the effect of general global developments in the field of technology, communication, finance, transport and so on. In both cases there are influences on the present style of acting and thinking. Every nation, every citizen is, in this way, now becoming 'included' in the world-economy.

***Exclusion*** refers especially to what is denied to special persons, groups or nations in terms of the availability of power, denying participation in the decision-making process and/or access to resources. Let me list a few examples:

- the poor countries have no access to the creation of international liquidities; the creation of key-currencies is fully reserved for the rich countries;
- capital-flows in the world are now mainly privatised, and go to where there is the highest financial reward, which means that LDC's now receive less than 2% of the world capital flows (Limits to Competition p.25);
- trade-flows are increasing within the TRIAD-zone, but tend to decrease as far as trade with poorest countries is concerned; in the export market of manufactured goods, the poorest 102 countries in 1980 still had a share of 7.9%, but in 1990 this had declined to only 1.4% (Limits p.71);
- Over 80% of the patents in the third world countries are now owned by foreigners (Barnet & Cavanagh p.354);
- economic migrants from the South are not permitted to enter the labour-markets of the North;
- in the South, land of the people is increasingly transferred to global firms, and/or destined to be included in regional export-zones (see for example Kenichi Ohmae The End of the Nation State 1996).

5. The combination of the forces of inclusion and exclusion implies for many

countries, groups and persons that they have to bear additional burdens without any compensation, being marginalised and even forced to bring sacrifices. This means that women and children are required to contribute to a pyramid of sacrifice. Their health and health-conditions may be harmed, their entitlements to basic goods and public provisions reduced, their property-rights infringed. This can also take place in indirect ways, for instance by social and political discrimination. And further, the economies of countries of the South are often subjected to 'structural adjustment programs' by International Financial Institutions (IFIs), but the most unbalanced economy in the world, namely, the economy of the USA, is granted exemption from any demand for adaptation.

6. The overall structural consequences of this development urges us to come to a deeper level of analysis, also from a Christian point of view. Two observations may be of some value here:

- A. There is nothing wrong with development as such, but it always has to be also a matter of being in balance, a process by which there is a simultaneous realisation of norms (ref Professor T. P. vander Kooy). At least five levels can be mentioned, in which globalization is either fed by, or is leading to, fundamental and unbalanced distortions:
- i) the imbalance between dynamic expansion over against what cannot expand, or can only move slowly. Because of the accelerated speed of technological and material development and flows of trade, not only nature itself is threatened but also community-life (see for example Herman Daly *Free Trade, Capital Mobility and Growth versus Environment and Community* ISS, The Hague 1996). In such a 'dynamistic' world vision the traditional arts, the elderly, the handicapped and the weak are less respected and honoured because they consume without being 'productive' - they have to stay behind or are simply left behind;
  - ii) the imbalance between the economic-financial dimensions over against the social and cultural interests: there grows now a dominating influence of the yardstick of money in even those domains of life which originally had nothing to do with big business - consider charity, sports, sexuality, and the transfer of human organs;
  - iii) the imbalance between the economic and the financial world: there is a growing disproportionality between money used for real transactions and money used in the typical financial sphere. The ratio's that describe this imbalance are regularly mentioned as between 1:30 and 1:60, indicating that finance has become largely an autonomous matter, guided by subjective expectations and speculative moods. The international money reserves are now less than the turnover of two days of money-transactions in the valuata markets (ie the market in currency trade).
  - iv) the imbalance between general interest and private interest: global private capital is present in abundance, but there is a clear lack of capital for public or social purposes; policy comes under the control of private interests, while governments are involved in the competitive struggle (*Limits* p.62).

- v) the imbalance between wisdom and knowledge: there is a tendency towards over-information. Information flows explode, but there is almost no reflection about the possible use of all that information, and about the direction and meaning of all recent global developments.

B. *If many of the balances are distorted simultaneously, then this will guarantee the involvement of violence*. This may happen, on the one hand, because of the inevitable need for enforcement which runs alongside globalization processes. This enforcement is usually 'sold' to peoples and nations as obligatory because "there is no alternative" (TINA, the slogan of the WTO). But on the other hand such a cumulative many-sided distortion leads also to a multitude of adverse counter-reactions (think of ethnicism and the rise of criminality in the financial circuit). Martin van Creveld predicts in his *The Transformation of War* (1991) that high intensity conflicts between states will inevitably decrease, but that so called low-intensity conflicts within nations but also between nations will inevitably increase. This brings him to the conclusion that "if, as it seems to be the case, the state cannot defend itself effectively against internal or external low intensity conflict, then clearly it does not have a future in front of it".

7. A combination of A and B leads to the conclusion that we are in the process of a gradual transformation of national economies to a global tunnel-society, often composed of regional blocks, with an ideology of competition at its heart, accompanied by corresponding structures of sin (as identified by John Paul II in *Sollicitudo rei socialis*), and of which the internal war-aspect is paramount.

But that is an outcome, which simply cannot be accepted by confessing Christians. For here we are confronted with an ideology which is spiritually deeply misleading because of the inbuilt hypnosis and the adoration of rivalry, and with 'a society in the making' which not only tends to ruin the earth but may even destroy the human condition altogether (Hannah Arendt).

8. *Resistance* is therefore needed: not against technology as such, or against economic development as such, but against its distorted spiritual orientation, its lack of balance, its sacrificial nature, the idolatrous spearheads of its global dominating power. Which implies that without a spiritual depth dimension, any ongoing resistance will not succeed at all.

- (i) Real resistance in this case primarily needs the power of *conviction* that becomes a power to *convince* by its message for the whole of humankind, but especially for the mighty, that it is completely useless to win a world and at the same time lose your soul. That is true for nations, but also for business-communities.
- (ii) Secondly, resistance needs *insight*. Such insight is needed about the knowledge of concrete alternative ways, and a trust that they do exist. These alternatives should always be related to a concept that views growth and development not as something which is always expanding but which is blossoming. A blossoming economy is in complete correspondence with the norm of *oikonomia* (house-keeping) in its significance for everyone's own culture. Over against the view that there is no alternative (TINA) we must

continue to affirm TATA - there are a thousand alternatives. This presupposes a positive appreciation of concepts like 'enough' and 'saturation'.

(iii) Thirdly, it will need *cooperation*. Cooperation especially between those groups and movements around the world which are concerned about the future of our planet and about the prevailing injustice done to the poor and the weak, particularly when that injustice takes the form or road by which exclusion grows. A global civil society could become the base and platform of a recharged global consciousness.

(iv) Fourthly, and most urgently, an *awakening* is needed. This awakening is especially called for within Western Christianity to wake-up out of its hyper-active slumber. That is not because we have a world-saving new blueprints or grand metanarrative to present, but because we are called to walk on the path of concrete obedience to the norms of love, justice and stewardship in social-economic life today - even if that leads to forms of suffering, and to a direct and painful opposition to ruling powers and mighty institutions.

For where feelings of sympathy and solidarity end, there begins the Biblical norm of agapé (Joseph L Hromadka 1889-1969).

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