

Alternative Globalization

(1) In this presentation, I shall refer to a hegemonic program of "globalization" to describe (i) a process of expanding the institutional frameworks of economic and social development which enjoy hegemony in the Anglo-American world on a global scale; (ii) the re-interpretation of such institutional frameworks ascribing to them a narrow - to a certain extent ideological - meaning which does not reflect the variety of meanings those institutions carry in the Anglo-American world; (iii) the undermining of sovereign decision making by states in order to regulate economies and social systems in a way which does not pose limitations to expanding the institutional framework described above. This hegemonic program is at the heart of policies promoted by the US and international institutions such as IMF and World Bank.

Here, I shall focus on the limitations on state sovereignty. I shall make some suggestions concerning the institutional backbone for an alternative program of globalization. To advance my argument, it is necessary to provide a description of the lines along which the hegemonic program of globalization is being developed.

(i) The understanding of economic and social development advanced by the hegemonic program crystallizes around an image of markets which derives from a generalization of US experiences. Such understanding implies a hierarchy of markets with capital markets on top and labor markets at the bottom of such hierarchy. It focuses on a repertoire of instruments of market transactions which developed in the Anglo-American world. In translating this image of markets and specific instruments of transaction into a globally operating program, economies are being reorganized according to a blueprint which aims at changing the system of decision making in enterprises - through corporatization and privatization - and at imposing so called hard budget constraints upon enterprises by strictly limiting the aggregate quantity of money available in a particular national economy.

(ii) The politics generated by this program are anchored in a perception of its contents which is narrow in a twofold way. The hegemonic program suggests a particular version of monetaristic laissez-faire as inherent its institutional program and also, that this monetaristic laissez-faire would generally be prevailing in Anglo-American economies. And the potential of the institutional repertoire, the hegemonic program claims, is limited to a monetaristic and laissez-faire program of economic policies.

The alternative view which is underlying the proposal advanced in this paper suggests that the institutional arrangements around which markets are being structured result in an (often) "unruly pluralism" (Robert Gordon, 1996) of apparently conflicting policies and, thus, in a multitude of contents and forms of such institutional arrangements. It furthermore argues that these institutional arrangements are capable of taking on many different and potentially indeterminate meanings.

(2) The hegemonic program of globalization advances by limiting the regulatory powers of states and of entities with legislative powers, such as the European Union.

○ These limitations usually operate on two levels. First, international institutions make their – in most cases - monetary support for national economies conditional upon the implementation of policies which are in tune with the hegemonic program. Second, globally operating firms are claimed to be entitled to rights which amount in many circumstances to a (quasi) sovereignty. This "normal" course of expanding the hegemonic program of globalization is owed to the power constellations after the end of the "cold war". The demise of the Soviet block is interpreted as being caused by the supremacy of a "Western" system which is reduced - in its prevailing descriptions - to the ideological (mis-)representation of Anglo-American economic and social systems described above.

○ Furthermore, and increasingly often, the weight of US military power is put behind the hegemonic program. In doing so, the US exploits its ability to imposing a state of emergency on societies in any part of the world without being contended by an other power or by the UN.

Most descriptions of the hegemonic program of globalization note the limitations posed on state sovereignty. Accordingly, in a quasi natural process, the powers of states to regulate the economy and to intervene into the social are being constantly weakened. The increasing limitations on sovereignty (of states) are argued to be a main reason for the advancement of the hegemonic program.

(3) I suggest that the weakening of sovereignty is only one moment to note when analysing the globalization tale on state sovereignty. Of likewise importance seems to me a broadening of the concept of sovereignty. It seems to me that the institutional framework of

the hegemonic program of globalization is turning into one moment defining the sovereignty of the US and its allies (the so called "international community"). States which do not accede to the hegemonic program are viewed as threat to the sovereignty of this "international community".

Let me refer – as an example – to the so called "Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo" which contained the request to introduce a "Western style market economy" - in Yugoslavia ("Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo", chapter 4 a, Article 1; published in Le Monde, 2 May 1999).

Initially, this relation between economic program and sovereignty was camouflaged. It developed behind a paravent provided by human rights discourses (Kosovo). Lately, this connection is increasingly unveiled. Nowadays, social systems which deviate from the ones promulgated by the hegemonic program of globalization are viewed to mounting a threat to the "international community". A particular economic and social order becomes a defining element for the sovereignty of states. And the drive for expansion of such order on a global scale is viewed as part of such sovereignty.

The development which turns the hegemonic program of globalization into a defining element of the sovereignty of certain states is noteworthy because it renders the hands visible which are busy crafting a new world order along the lines of the hegemonic program of globalization. In recognising this turn, the expansion of particular institutional arrangements seizes to be a quasi natural phenomenon. To argue in favor of alternatives is, hence, not ludicrously voluntaristic.

(4) Also, alternative programs find an institutional arena if elevated to the stage of reasoning about sovereignty. In other words: if economic and social orders become generally recognised as defining elements for sovereignty, interventions by states or international institutions in favor of one particular economic (social) order - against other ones - would be recognised as violation of the sovereignty of the non consenting state. In view of public international law in force - such as Art. 1.2., 1.3. and 2.1. of the UN Charta; or Art. 3 and 4 of the Convention on Rights of States (Montevideo, 26 December 1933) - this statement seems to summarize prevailing wisdom (within a discipline; public international law). An analysis of so called IMF or World Bank conditionalities for the support of national economies shows the

hegemonic program (of globalization) leaving international law behind; which is even more obvious in light of the official rhetoric of the remaining super-power.

(5) An alternative program of globalization may use the traditional repertoire of public international law as instrument to argue in favor of decisional and regulatory powers on the level of states and intergovernmental organizations (like the EU). The reference to public international law requires, however, a review of its institutional and doctrinal repertoire. In this respect, I shall limit myself for the purposes of this presentation, to referring, on the one hand, to David Kennedy's account on the perpetual re-proposition of the narrative on (state) power with a continuously changing grammar and unaltered contents. The main moves of doctrinal account described in his analysis – from the move to the secular to institutions; and from institutions to procedure –reconstitute the dilemmata of the previous throughout the following stage of the narrative of international law. Kennedy's analysis of moves of international law doctrine provides for sufficient instruments to critically view the institutional programs proposed by the hegemony program and also the alternative set forth below.

The alternative view on globalization, as proposed herein, relies on the review of the notion of „neutrality“ undertaken by Nathaniel Berman in his account on the conceptions of international law which dominated the debate during the Spanish Civil War (1936 to 1939). Berman describes a "functional agnosticism" towards competing claims to sovereignty as sophisticated doctrinal turn in the meaning of neutrality aimed at upholding the peace order of the League of Nations (Nathaniel Berman, 1994).

I shall borrow this concept of functional agnosticism to allude to an institutional framework for competing programs of social development on a global scale.

To institutionalize a competition and a pluralism of programs of social development on the largest possible scale is the core of the alternative program. This program suggests that the world needs the reinvention of an effort in favor of socially sustainable development like the Bretton Woods system. It conceives of institutional arenas for the meeting of competing visions of social and economic development and an unbiased allocation of resources for experimentation with such competing visions.

(6) Let me briefly speak about the contents of the alternative program and afterwards sketch the institutional framework within which to promote this alternative.

Social institutions as developed in the Anglo-American world and the rich societies of the North-Atlantic basin are potentially indeterminate as to their meanings and functions. They assume meanings and take on such forms as requested by regulatory tasks in specific circumstances. The abstractions of a variety of institutions into the prevailing ones are therefore context bound. The narratives on the development of social institutions is in most cases nothing but an ex-post legitimization which simplifies such developments. Robert Gordon's work on early modern concepts of property in the US (1996) draws an instructive picture of the genesis of property rights as not linear. He informs us about a multitude of conflicting institutions, and in many cases about the prevailing of the exemption to the doctrines which are described as origin of contemporary concepts of property rights.

The same can be claimed for other social institutions, in any given time and for many societies. The design of a blue-print of social development on the basis of a generalizations or even with reference to a given set of institutions in a particular society is an inaccurate description of such society, at best.

To solicit an "unruly pluralism" (Robert Gordon) of meanings and forms of social development is the task of alternative globalization. This pluralism might encompass conflicting understandings of Western institutions. And it should extend over social institutions in societies which are not Western in terms of their genesis.

The most important aspiration of a program aiming at soliciting the pluralism of form and content inherent in any given society is the trust in continuous experimentation and the understanding that social problems are never solved but have to be permanently dealt with. And it is built upon the trust in peoples ability to act in inspired ways.

The hegemonic view on globalization is supported by international institutions which promote "globalization" of the kind described in the first part of my presentation. An institutional framework for the alternative program of globalization must be "functionally agnostic" as to the particular features of varying social and economic programs (policies). It should allow for the promotion of different and differing programs and for a continuous assessment of each

program. And must be agnostic with respect to the particular institutions which constitute the framework itself.

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