

Towards a Multi-Cultural Modernity
Beyond Neo-Liberal/Neo-Conservative Global Hegemony

Kinhide Mushakoji

1. The Neo-liberal Capitalism and the Neo-Conservative War:

We live in a time when humankind faces a major crisis, the crisis of Western modernity. It is a global crisis in the sense that it engulfs the globe, also in that it covers all aspects of human life and of human civilization, political, military, economic, financial, cultural, and social. It is a global crisis in that it is a crisis of globalization, of the globalization of Western modernity. We will attempt in this paper an identification of the major characteristics of this crisis, in an historical context, which enables us to choose our paths in this global crisis, full of danger, yet full of opportunities.

The contemporary global crisis cannot be grasped unless the true nature of “global finance” and “global hegemony” are understood. First “global finance”. The contemporary neo-liberal version of capitalism subordinates production to financial speculation of a global free market, and turns the States into “welcome States” losing interest in the “welfare State” model. Second, “global hegemony”. The United States has built its neo-conservative hegemony, by using its absolute military-economic supremacy to unite the States into a global coalition to protect the security of the capital and of the global financial casino economy.

The above considerations on “global finance” and “global hegemony” do not automatically lead us into a discussion of “modernity” and multi-culturalism. The speculative nature of the global finance can be dealt with by a neo-liberal economic analysis as performed by the IMF. The War on Terror initiated under “global hegemony” can be analysed from the point of view of national or international security. We have to raise the ideological and civilizational

questions of the present globalization, under the guidance of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism, because the two ideological positions are systematically opposed to the fundamental values underlying the basic assumption of this paper, which is that we have to look for an alternative modernity, beyond the present civilizational project of globalization, as the end phase of modernity, because of the fact that modernity at this phase cannot conceal the contradictions between the universalistic values it proclaims with the human types at the base of its national economy and its State order, i.e. homo economicus and homo politicus.

Our guiding principle, in this paper will be a deliberate choice to look at the world, not from the point of view of the market and the State, but rather from the vantage point of the peoples, whose rights, security and development are put at risk by the actions, institutions and structures of the present global neo-liberal/neo-conservative order. Human rights, human security, and human development, applied to the most vulnerable individuals, will provide us with a way to look at the global realities, different from the conventional views based on the States as unit of analysis, and the universal values defined by Western civilization as the basis of our evaluation of a world order based on the two ideal types of human persons already mentioned.

The choice to look at global realities from this point of view is not based on any moralistic principles. It is based on a belief that our efforts to build a new global civilization will have to meet the Gandian principle of “antiodia”. That is that unless the wellbeing of the smallest is not taken into consideration the whole society will not survive. In the present situation when the global civilization faces a major crisis because of the fact that it is unable to take care of the rights, security, and development of the most vulnerable peoples, we must attempt our critical analysis of the present globalization from this vantage point.

2. Global Colonialism and the Permanent Counter-Revolution:

Let us, therefore, look at the present state of the globalization, not from

the point of view of global finance or national security, but from the point of view of the human security, i.e. the freedom from fear and want, of peoples in most insecure situation. As we have seen, this situation can be defined in terms of two of the major causes of their fear, i.e. the neo-conservative War on/of Terror, and the reason of their want, the global neo-liberal economy.

Superficially, it seems that these two causes of their insecurity are unrelated, one military-political and the other economic. We must put the War on Terror and the global neo-liberal economy in a deeper historical context, from where they both emerge, in order to find that they are closely interlinked. This historical context is nothing but “colonialism”.

The history of colonization of the non-Western world by the Western Powers, (and by Japan which was an exceptional case of a non-Western colonial Power), is characterized by an economic exploitation of the colonized societies by the colonial Powers’ rule backed by their military supremacy. This geo-historical age of colonial rule ended in the 1950-60, and the post-colonial age, which followed was characterized by a new structure of exploitation, where the exploiters were the industrialized countries of the North, and the exploited were the developing countries of the South. This neo-colonialism was also combining an economic exploitation with a political/military subjugation. The combination of a global neo-liberal structure of exploitation with the military/political hegemony can be interpreted within the historical trajectory of colonialism, which we propose to call “global colonialism”.

Seen as a single phenomenon with two sides, an economic aspect characterized by neo-liberalism, and a military/political side characterized by the War on Terror, the present process of globalization can be seen as a final phase of the colonialism which began in the 16th century. Traditional colonialism and neo-colonialism exploited and extracted surplus from the colonies and from the developing countries. Now that there is no more frontier left to colonize, global colonialism extracts surplus from the “multitudes”, the peoples unprotected by the States like the citizens.

The clear divide between the South (provider of primary products) and

the North (specialized in value-added industrial production), which existed during the neo-colonial period does not exist any more in the age of global colonialism. There is now an outpost of the North in the South, where the cheap labour of the South is exploited by the North in its industrial production, including information technology(IT) and Bio-technology. “Ciderabad” in India is a typical example of this emerging North in the South. This outpost creates a new middle class, and a small ultra-rich minority, while leaving in abject poverty and insecurity, the rural communities and the urban informal sectors, in this “deep South” where the large majority of the people lives. In many urban centers of the North, there are expanding informal sectors where the diaspora communities live in a chronic state of insecurity, as a result of the massive exploitative migration from the South, often undocumented and “illegal”.

This situation where a great number of people live unprotected by the States and over-exploited by the transnational corporate agents, both in the South and in the North, is a typical manifestation of global colonialism. The traditional colonialism, has been a system where States and civil societies had established a contractual relationship, with the former monopolizing all means of violence in exchange with their commitment to protect the security and welfare of the latter. This contract between the States and the civil societies, did not cover the multitude living in the colonies. The peoples living in the deep south and in the informal diaspora communities in the North are in the same insecure situation of exploitation as the colonial multitude, in terms of the lack of State protection of their security and welfare. Global colonialism is nothing but this new form of exploitation of the global South by the global North.

3. The War on/of Terror and the Military/Police Security system:

The 9-11 incident has become a pretext for George W. Bush to legitimize his neo-conservative hegemonic agenda. The neo-liberal global economy is promoting the worldwide application of free market economy, attributing a minimal role to governments. This minimal role, however, concerns the security of the society especially of the market. The role of the

State in traditional liberalism has often been characterised by the concept of the “night watchman” State. The agenda of the Bush administration, as expressed in the Report on “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America” limits the role of the American State to this security function. The United States promises to play the role of an invincible night watchman, with a world-wide deployment backed by weapons of mass destruction, for the global market, promoting free market principle, as well as freedom and democracy, against possible attacks from the “terrorists” and the “rogue States”.

This “War on Terror” has transformed the Westphalian World Order, which has characterized Western modernity. This world order was based on the “balance of power” between sovereign States, which were recognized an absolute right to guarantee the security of their citizens, domestically through their police force, and internationally through their military. The principle of non-interference into the domestic affairs of other States was combined with the principle of clear separation between the domestic security controlled by the police, and the international security maintained by the military, both under civilian control was supposed to provide the institutional conditions indispensable for domestic and international democracy.

Now, the afore-mentioned Report by the government of the United States, officially declares the non-compliance to these principles by the United States, engaged in the War on Terror. The right of this global hegemon to wage preemptive attacks on the rogue States, and the policy to merge military and police activities indicate the hegemonic decision to ignore the above basic rules of the game adopted by all the law-abiding members of the Westphalian inter-State order.

The new military strategy of the War on Terror has put an end to the modern separation between the military and the police, an arrangement which so far had helped avert a threat to democracy, a likely scenario when the military is permitted to intervene in civilian affairs. The military/police security is based on a systematic anti-human-rights surveillance, control and punishment system where “uncivilized” others, such as the prisoners in

Guantanamo, are treated as object of fear rather than of humane compassion and are treated as evil people who do not deserve any elementary sense of justice.

The War on Terror is, in a sense, on the antipode of a state where human security prevails. The United Nations Human Security Commission Report points out this fact by criticizing it in the following way:

“What is known being described as the “war on terrorism” dominates national and international security debates. In addition to military actions, it has increased attention to other tools to fight terrorism, such as tracking (and blocking) flows of funds, information and people. It has given rise to new areas of international cooperation, such as sharing intelligence. Yet these actions focus on coercive, short-term strategies aimed at stopping attack by cutting off financial, political or military support and apprehending possible perpetrators. Equally, state-sponsored terrorism is not being addressed, while legitimate groups are being labeled as terrorist organizations to quash opposition to authoritarian government policies. And fighting terrorism is taking precedence over protecting human rights and promoting the rule of law and democratic governance...,, (T)he “war on terrorism” has stalled that progress (i.e. multilateral strategies that focus on the shared responsibility to protect people: insert mine) by focusing on short-term coercive responses rather than also addressing the underlying causes related to inequality, exclusion and marginalization, and oppression by states as well as people.”

The War on Terror is, as the Report “Human Security Now” denounces, not only refusing to address the root causes of the insecurity it is supposed to face, but is becoming in itself a major source of human insecurity. This is not because of any miscalculation by the hegemon. It is necessary to realize that it is because of the very historical nature of this “War”. As the afore-mentioned Report on the national security strategy of the hegemon, so clearly states, the War on Terror is providing the ground of a special reading of history particular to the neo-conservative hegemon. The present situation opened by the War on Terror is defined as an unprecedented age of peace among nations, which have renounced to wage wars for the first time in history. The War on Terror creates a situation where no more wars can be

envisaged by any States of the world, which all joined in with the hegemon in combating terrorism.

The War on Terror is, in this sense, a Trotskyite revolution in reverse, a permanent counter-revolution uniting the States, the transnational corporations and the technocratic elites in their common fear of the multitudes. The War is not supposed to end in a victory, but rather to continue indefinitely, justifying the monopole of economic and military power by the global hegemon.

4. Global Fascism calling for a New Contract of Citizens & Multitudes:

We have seen already that the present combination of two sources of human insecurity, neo-liberal global economy and neo-conservative War on Terror, is a new form of colonialism. We will also argue that it is a global form of Fascism, and that it should be combated by a new anti-Fascist common front.

Just as traditional fascism of the 1920s and 1930s had established itself using the fear of a proletarian revolution and of Zionist hegemony among the middle classes, the new fascism exploits the fear of the multitude and Islamophobia propagated by the global media. We must eliminate the fear and the sense of insecurity of the citizens vis-à-vis the multitudes.

It is sad to realize that the two Fascisms are closely linked by the conflict between Israel and Palestine. The fear to be criticized of anti-semitism is forcing an important sector of the world public opinion to accept Islamophobia. The recollection of the Holocaust by the Fascist States does not permit the public opinion to criticise state terrorism, as so well pointed out in the Report “Human Security Now”.

The fear of a proletarian revolution has disappeared in most parts of the world, with the exception of the Philippines with its NPA, and Nepal with its militant Maoist movement. There is, however, a new target for the fear of the middle class in both the North and the South. It is the “multitude”, identified

by Negri and Hardt to be an emerging sector of the Empire, which can play a key role in destabilizing its global rule.

The multitude is represented by the terrorists, thanks to their indiscriminate violence, that is manipulated by the War on Terror coalition of States and media. More generally, the “illegal” migrant workers, and the transnational criminal organizations, which exploit them, are also sources of public fear. They bring into the global North, different sources of human insecurity. They bring in drugs, trafficked sex-workers supposed to bring in HIV-AIDS, and disturb the public order by their crimes.

Seen as a human security problem, the insecurity of the middle classes is just a mirror image of the insecurity of the multitude, all the peoples, in North and South, unprotected by the States engaged in the War on Terror. To overcome the mutual insecurity, and the “security dilemma” which causes a vicious circle between the mutual threat perception of the civil societies and the multitudes, it is indispensable to build a “common security” between both groups.

Global fascism not only denies the rights and security of the multitude, but also the rights and security of the citizens, and the multilateral system guaranteeing the rights and security of the States. A new contract must be signed between the multitude and the citizens, and should be extended to the States who do not want to stay mere “welcome States” in the global colonial scene.

As proposed by Antonio Gramsci in the era of national fascism, we must develop an anti-fascist common front suited to the conditions of global fascism, as the Porto Alegre World Social Forum proclaiming that another world is possible, in opposition to the hegemonic alliance represented by the Davos World Economic Forum.

5. United Front of Civilizations in Search of another Multicultural World:

The anti-Fascist common front must combat the prevalent hegemony

by forming a new historic bloc, with a clear civilizational project. The project must formulate an alternative civilization, based on a reflexive critique of Western modernity. It must identify the constructive trends towards transformation generated as a consequence of the Western historical process of human liberation originating in the Enlightenment. This includes universalistic demands for equality, in terms of gender, class, and cultural identity. The NGOs involved in the United Nations process from the 1992 Rio Summit to the 2001 World Conference on Racism could provide an initial group which can expand to include the large community of peoples and multitude without access to the United Nation process.

The anti-colonial common front has to base itself on mobilizing the voice of the voiceless peoples and multitudes, who have been marginalized and “occulted” by the Western modernity, especially its terminal form of the global age. Colonialism has been a safety valve absorbing the basic contradictions existing between the universalistic values of the Enlightenment and the two ideal types of the homo economicus and homo politicus, which provided the grounds for the modern political-economic ethical base of the world order, or the lack thereof.

Homo economicus commodifies everything and everybody, and homo politicus legitimizes might as a guardian of rights. Progress was thus made possible by the legitimization of greed and thirst for power, which have been proclaimed as un-ethical by the axial religions. Secularism was a process, which enabled the States to become the regulatory agencies taming these un-ethical virtues under the universal rule of human rights.

This combination of the two secular human types with the secular ethics based on individual dignity has permitted the modern world system to develop a material civilization without comparison in the traditional world empires. This prosperity was, nevertheless, based on a colonialist exploitation of the multitude, i.e. the discriminated peoples unprotected by the States, in terms of gender, class and cultural identity. This colonial situation, however, was believed to be only a transitory stage in a process of liberation, which was assumed to lead to an egalitarian world, at the end of “progress”=“development”=“modernization”.

Now that the casino global economy combined with the War on Terror military hegemony come to negate such expectation, it is essential to develop a global process of dialogue, involving the transformative political economic movements representing the Western modern civil societies, in their search for equality in terms of gender, class and cultural identity, and the cultural-civilizational movements of the colonized non-Western societies.

Through this process of multi-ideological and multi-cultural dialogue, we must oppose, on one hand, the global “rogue” hegemon attempts to nullify the achievements of the modern civilization made so elaborately during the past centuries, and on the other hand, develop a multi-cultural process where the negative aspects of the Western modern civilization, e.g. its xenophobic colonialism, excluding and exploiting the multitudes, are overcome by the contribution of the non-Western civilizations, through a global dialogue between the citizens and multitudes of different religions and cultural traditions.

In this dialogue, we must combine two ethical attitudes, which can guide us beyond the Western Enlightenment. The Latin American wisdom of the “pedagogy of the oppressed” and the Ghandian wisdom of “antiodia” or the “Absolute priority of the smallest child”.