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HELMY SHARAWY*

**THE AMERICAN LED GLOBALIZATION
AS THE MAIN OBSTACLE TO THE
DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRACY
IN THE ARAB WORLD AND AFRICA**

IT IS WELL KNOWN how American imperialist capitalism adopted the neo-liberal trend of thought publicized by the extremely reactionary schools of ideology during the second half of the 20th century, and put in practice by the multinational companies, most of which are owned by American capital. Needless to reiterate the globalized neo-liberal practices in the sphere of military domination and territorial occupation on one hand, and the subjugation of the international legal instances as embodied in the United Nations and its various institutions to American imperialism, on the other hand. Indeed, we encounter numerous aspects of American arrogance and coercion, both in relation to the other capitalist powers in Europe and Asia, and to the dominated States in the Third World. Such arrogance is clearly manifested in the political and economic choices forced upon these states, or as concerns the right of these peoples to determine their own destinies, and safeguard their territorial integrity.

We shall study here, three aspects of the problem:

- The Political Framework of the Arab/African Region and how it is being readjusted to suit the American plans for globalization.

* Professor of Political Sociology and afro-arab studies. Director of the El Cairo Arab & African Research Center.

- How the various Imperialist Projects proposed for the Region distort its Democratic Development.
- The existing forms of Resistance in the Region, and the possibility of developing the framework of the Movement of the Countries of the South.

THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

The Region's contacts with the modern global system is not a recent occurrence, as the nationalist regimes in the Arab World (Mohammad Aly in Egypt, and Kheir Ed-Dine Pasha in Tunisia, etc.) tried to modernize their countries relying on the global movement of modernization. Hence, the first infiltration by Europeans into Egypt and the Levant, followed by European colonization in these Countries and the rest of Africa. However, soon the emerging Nationalist Movements and the Pan Arab and Pan African Movements, began their active opposition to this European led form of globalization, in particular with the onslaught of the world wars, and the emergence of the United States as the strongest economy after the second world war.

Thus, the US moved into the Middle East, taking advantage of the past projects of the European Powers in the region, in particular Britain. Hence the US went to the Gulf Area for its oil production in Iraq and Iran, then in Saudi Arabia, and also took advantage of the British projects of establishing new states on a religious basis in Pakistan, Israel and the Arab Peninsula. As a result, the US was able to establish its military presence in order to safeguard its interests, menaced by the communist "threat" and the rise of the Nationalist Movements in the region.

All through the 1950's and 1960's we find a proliferation of US led projects under the umbrella of the policy of containment to preserve the region under its hegemony, starting from the Truman Doctrine (1949), the quadri partite (Military) Command (1951), the Bagdad Pact (1955) and the Eisenhower Doctrine (1957) and afterwards to fill the void left by the retreat of Britain and France after their aggression on Egypt in 1956. All these projects were designed to give full support to the dictatorships, and reactionary regimes in Iran, Pakistan, the Gulf States and North Africa. This went hand in hand with the encouragement of the massive establishment of formal independent regimes in Africa, which were soon followed by military dictatorships, with "Coups" in key African Countries (Congo, Ghana, Nigeria, Mali) having full American support.

It is to be noted that for almost half a century, the US strived to push the Arab Countries into a series of wider pacts in order to resist nationalist trends, and the aspiration of the Arab peoples to establish

their national unity, and resist the Zionist Israeli State, the mainstay of all the imperialist projects in the region. It is also to be noted that the US did not mind whether the states it backed up were or were not democratic, as it had to face strong pan movements supported by Nationalist States (the Arab League and Organization of African Unity).

The resistance of these Nationalist States was further strengthened by the participation in the Movement of Non Aligned States, to be followed by the movement of the group of 77 (G 77), and the full support of the Soviet Union and People's Republic of China. Such resistance had the support of the popular masses that refused the American hegemony, and looked forward to more democratic social and political development as a corollary to the social concessions granted.

The renaissance and modernization projects in the Nationalist States, in the second half of the 20th century, were oriented towards the West, in an attempt to catch up with the progress made during the two previous centuries. This meant that the resistance of these states towards imperialist hegemony could not be radical. In the meantime, the imperialist development in alien regimes such as that of Israel, or the South African apartheid, or in fully reactionary regimes such as those of Iran and Pakistan, opened wide vistas for the imperialist projects in the region. The incessant strife between these regimes and the National Liberation States helped obstruct the normal evolution of these latter States into full democratic experiences. Hence, the explanation of the collapse of the National Liberation States is twofold, the shortcomings of the bourgeois leaderships, was coupled with foreign intervention, or covert intrigue. This remains true in the Arab World and Africa today.

With the onslaught of the hegemony of American capital, and the multi-nationals on the world economy, in particular from the 1970's on, such hegemony projects put an end to any national progress or independent development in the Third World Countries including the Arab World. Very little resistance now faces the reactionary or comprador regimes in the Arab World, while some cases of armed struggle are still discerned in various parts of Africa.

The widespread acceptance by the new classes in control of the region of the structural adjustment policies imposed by the international financial institutions (the IMF, the World Bank, etc.), has led to rampant pauperization and increased social injustice, paralyzing all nationalist, social or political action. The Gulf petrodollars and the accompanying consumerist models, were partly responsible for much of the social disorders. They also promoted waves of Salafi Fundamentalist Islam, which pervaded the Arab World, and opposed the Nasserist and Socialist trends and their social and political concepts.

Most of the Arab modernization process was also attached to the liberal political concepts, and was satisfied by the nominal forms of multi-party systems that were announced in Egypt, Tunisia, Senegal and Kenya, etc aiming at accepting the new economic policies. However, it was soon clear that the fast rising American influence would stifle all hopes of democratization of these regimes. The new American inspired economic policies were designed to promote the interests of both the dominant American capital, and its allies in the comprador regimes, which were employed to execute specific American tasks, as is illustrated by the following cases:

- The full support of the Sadat regime in Egypt, which under the guise of multi-party democracy, stifled all manner of opposition by the masses, and gave full rein to the Muslim fundamentalists, in order to stand up to the leftist opposition at the head of the mass movement. In the mean time, the regime coordinated its efforts with those of the reactionary regimes in the Gulf against the Soviet supported government in Afghanistan, and encouraged Egyptian Islamists to join the Bin Laden led groups there. The Sadat Regime also supported the US imperialist projects in Congo, Angola, Ethiopia and Sudan. It also aborted the partial victory of the Egyptian army against the Israeli occupation in 1973, by signing the Camp David peace agreements with Israel (1979).
- The support given to the non democratic regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq during his aggressive war against the Islamic Regime in Iran. Curiously enough, the US never noticed the dictatorial nature of the regime until the end of that war, when Saddam Hussein thought he had the approval of the US to annex Kuwait.
- By the 1990's, the hegemony of the imperialist capitalist system was consecrated by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the establishment of a uni-polar system dominated by the US. As a corollary, the IMF and the World Bank had successfully coerced all third world countries into adopting the structural adjustment policies. In the ensuing euphoria, the "victorious" dominant media crowed in praise of the "democratic" changes in Eastern Europe and the republics of the former Soviet Union, while full support was given to the dictatorial regimes in the Middle East and Africa, in order to safeguard the interests of the US and its imperialist allies by securing the flow of oil from the Gulf, and the stability of their lackeys in Egypt, and

elsewhere. Meanwhile, a country as Iraq was literally blockaded, while the rest of the Arab countries were drowned in their internal problems, such as to exclude any aspirations for any regional cooperation, or community of interests. This virtual blockade led to complete paralysis of all regional bodies such as the Arab League or the Organization of African Unity. This ideological siege and the absence of any real hope for progress, has left the ground free for all manner of fundamentalist religious trends to run loose in the Arab region (the terrorist attacks in Egypt and Algeria through out the 1990's).

In the world arena, the communist threat was replaced by the threat of Islam, or Islamic terrorism, and the struggle of civilizations became the favorite slogan. This obliged the vassal regimes in the region to combat fundamentalism in order to remain in power. More serious was the sanctification of the "market doctrine", to the extent that many onetime socialists adopted the discourse of the free market! Needless to say, that Islamic thought is essentially market oriented, in accordance with the Prophet's saying: "90% of all wealth comes from Trade". Another Islamic attribute is their innate abhorrence to democracy, and their enmity to the National State in favor of Pan Islamism. All this sends more water into the mill of the globalized system.

The above considerations have paved the way for the dramatic events at the start of the new century, while a social base favorable to the hegemony of the single pole, was crystallized by the prevalence of the consumerist tendencies among the bourgeoisie and even among many popular masses, and the infatuation of the intellectuals with American computers, science and technology. The situation is worsened by the influx of the rural population into the urban centers, which undermines the resistance possibilities of the working classes. No wonder then if such weakness of the social and political organizations has left the field open for the imperialist projects to be implemented, and to give much precedence to its Israeli advance post in the region.

THE IMPERIALIST PROJECTS IN THE REGION DISTORT ITS DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT

After 11 September 2001, the US global strategy became more aggressive, and more stress was given to the Middle East region. The imperialist political discourse gave great attention to the supposed Iraqi infractions of UN resolutions, the grave violations of human rights in Afghanistan, or the troubled situations in Algeria or in the African great lakes region. It was clear that the Americans as the leaders of the politi-

cal and military globalization process, were using their domination of NATO, their transnational monopolies, and their upper hand in the global media, to secure their vested interests in the sources of oil and other raw materials, and their political influence in the zones of conflict. This meant weakening the positions of their European “Allies” on one hand, subjugating all UN institutions and even bodies of regional standing on the other hand, and finally supporting subservient regimes in their sphere of influence, irrespective of their being democratic or not.

The events of 11 September 2001, were a boon in that respect, as they gave American Imperialism the opportunity to adopt the role of the “victim” of Islamic aggression, and to take up the role of the defender of the camp of democracy all over the world. It was assumed that “terrorism” was the enemy of democracy in the first place, and indeed, there was no mention in the terrorist discourse of any enmity to capitalism as such.

The important document issued in September 2002 under the title “The National Security Strategy of the United States”, was very revealing in this respect. It tried to cloak the aims of the American Leadership in moral terms, glorifying the “democracy” of the Free Market, and the American way of life. Followed by the Bush vision in the strategy of March 2006, U.S extolled the Global Leadership, stressing the unity of interests of the (international) community, and those of the (American) individual, and pinpointed the public enemy of the civilized world, embodied in the axis of evil, and the rogue states. This meant the US had a “Spiritual Mission” defined by the New Conservatives and entrusted by them to President George W. Bush, who would then start his “Crusade” against religious terror (Islamic, of course), and the Dictatorships that support such terrorism (yet Saddam had no relations with such terrorism!).

We should point out to two main tenets of this American Strategy: The Democracy of the Market, and The American Internationalism.

The first was the main basic tenet for imposing its sphere of influence through the World Trade Organization in order to open all vistas for the American economy. The second was the framework within which it would be able to impose a “democratic” regime here, or get rid of an unwanted regime there, phrasing it as “building the infrastructure of Democracy”. For the purpose of competition with European influence, it was necessary to implement certain projects of collective organizations under its wing, and combating other projects it frowned down upon.

It may be argued that the logic of the market economy enhances the chances of liberal democracy, in the case of liberal capitalist development. But in a region like the Middle East where such development

is absent because of the supremacy of the Rent “tributary” economy (oil rent in many countries), and a history of despotic rule, nearer to the Asiatic mode of production, such a market economy leads to despotism rather than democracy. Under these conditions, the despotic regimes in the region, air a formal discourse about the “liberation of Palestine”, or the imperatives of the Arab Israeli conflict, or the threat of Islamic fundamentalism jumping into power, etc. On the level of the African Continent, the regimes try to justify their despotism by a discourse on ethnic strife, or the burden of foreign debts, or the injustice of the world trade conditions, etc.

Under the guise of the world war on terrorism, at the beginning of the 21st century, various forms of regional collectives were promoted, the ugliest being the “broader” Middle East imposed on the Arab World. In sub Saharan Africa, no such collective was proposed, precedence being given to the spread of formal liberal democracy, in order to promote market economy, and the traffic of lethal arms to intensify ethnic strife. In both regions however, the aim is to prop up regimes loyal to the US, and block any attempt at a South/South dialogue, or coalition.

In order to implement its new World Strategy, the US let loose all its arsenal of projects, and proposed policies. The observer will certainly note the following:

- Many sessions of the World Economic Forum of Davos outside Europe were held in Arab countries (Egypt, Qatar, Jordan, Morocco and Bahrein), also an important session of the WTO was held in Qatar (Doha).
- The proposed projects for regional collectives under the various headings of the Broader or New Middle East, or other denominations, all emanate directly from the American leadership (Colin Powel, or Condoleeza Rice). All such projects were proposed after severe blows to the Arab Countries were handed down by the US and their forward post of Israel, to Iraq, Palestine, Sudan and now, Lebanon.
- These proposed American projects compete with older European projects of integration of the Arab Countries with their European counterparts (The Lisbon or the Euromed initiatives). They also aim at dislodging all previous Arab projects of cooperation or integration (The common Arab market, Afro Arab cooperation, the non aligned nations or the group of 77).

These US sponsored projects were preceded by an ideological barrage of propaganda about terrorism being an innate product of the

Region (due to the nature of Islam, or the nature of the Arabs). The aim was to put pressure on the Arab peoples and governments, and influence their intellectuals, to prove the fallacy of the accusation of terrorism by accepting the proposed projects. Thus it managed not only to promote projects that secure political dominance, but also enlist the intellectuals, and civil society, and even the “liberal” left, for its implementation. Hence, the American projects called for the ideological “dialogue” with Arab Intellectuals, and managed to mobilize some representatives of the intellectual movements, and civil society, into colloques for “political reform” and “promotion of democracy” in conformity with the American agenda, and not the real answer to the crisis of democracy in the region.

We shall monitor here some of the proposed initiatives as examples of the tireless efforts of US diplomacy in this respect, but a comprehensive study of such projects is indicated for more specialized fora.

After President Bush announced his “Strategic Vision of the US” (Sept. 2002), his Secretary of State, Colin Powell, announced his initiative for “partnership US/Middle East, for Hope Building” in December 2002. This initiative specified a vast Middle East to include the countries from Pakistan to the Maghreb (but later, other plans were envisaged for the greater Maghreb). In this huge area, that includes Israel, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan, reminiscent of the old Middle East Pacts of the 1950’s, the Arab group would be a minority, and would find itself cooperating with Israel, and virtually under its hegemony, without any mention of a just solution of the core of the Arab Israeli conflict, i.e. the Palestinian Problem. However, the hidden implication was the right to eliminate “rogue” regimes, such as the Taliban in Afghanistan, and a few months later, the invasion of Iraq (March 2003). Here, the US imposed its arbitrary right to destroy any regime it considers inimical to its hegemony (and that of its main ally in the region, Israel), and that by brute force, irrespective of all its discourse about democracy and human rights.

Two years later, the initiative was renamed the “Broader Middle East”, to include the same region minus the francophone North African, which was to be negotiated with France and Western Europe. The project is not confined to the political reform of the region, but also economic reform (private entrepreneurs, and micro projects), social reform (empowerment of women), and intellectual reform (re-appraisal of education). The overall ideological framework, aims at reforming the system of values to combat the fundamental heritage that develops into terrorism. The project was announced in February 2004, and was expected to be endorsed by the Arab Summit in March, and approved by the G-8 in April of the same year. However, the Arab

Summit failed to endorse the project, claiming refutation of the “imported reform!” and tried to conciliate the Americans by regimenting some intellectuals in order to “authenticate political reform and democracy”. One such meeting was held in the Biblioteca Alexandrina, attended by some one hundred intellectuals who formulated “The Alexandria Declaration”. This Declaration adopted the plans for political reform, so as to become a local aspiration, but its economic agenda was nothing more than the neo-liberal agenda of market economy and dismantling of all public sector projects. This belied its pious advocacy of the values of liberties, democracy and peace, reiterated ad nauseum by the American discourse. As American globalization is not confined to the announcement of some vague projects, it tries to instill its concepts deeply into society, to preempt any unforeseen steps in pursuit of real democratic reform. Hence the hasty participation of its “friends” in various formations such as the “Future Forum” active in a wide area from Maghreb to Bahrain and Qatar, through Jordan. Similarly, there are projects of so called promotion of democracy, financed openly by American Embassies.

Such progress for this Middle East initiative, must be linked to the “American Internationalism”, which was announced several years before. Thus, some pro American organizations and personalities, from Poland, Chile, Mali, South Africa, India and Mexico, announced in 2000, a so called “Community of Democracies”. A typical “Democratic Internationalism” reminiscent of the second internationale of old times, or the Atlantic organizations after World War II, to oppose the socialist camp.

This “Internationalism” held its preparatory meetings in Warsaw, and was attended by 110 Countries, including the former Soviet Republics, Third World Countries, and presided by the United States. This International proceeded actively after the announcement of the US Strategy in 2002, and chose a Council in Chile, and an executive Secretariat from the State Department and some member States, The Secretariat helped create the “World Forum for Democracy”, and a civil society forum for the member states. The literature of this Forum is published in Chile under the heading “Participa”.

Thus we are confronted by a private international organization, more encompassing in its scope than the Davos Forum, or the G-8, and directed against popular activities and the World Social Forum. As it includes many third world countries, including India, South Africa and Mexico, which have special preponderance within the third world, it presents a real obstacle to any South/South dialogue. By such means, the US are not containing the Arab World and Africa alone, but the whole World Wide Movement for freedom and real democ-

racy. Despite all these efforts to dupe Third World Peoples, the US exonerate themselves from all restrictions on their activities against humanity or the environment, as is manifested by excepting their citizens from all responsibility of their acts violating the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, or the Kyoto agreement on the Environment, or even the rules of the World Trade Organization. As for the American Invasion of Iraq, or the Israeli criminal aggression on Lebanon, no comment is needed.

CURRENT RESISTANCE AND ITS DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE SOUTH/SOUTH FRAMEWORK

From the above, we realize that the American globalization project is not merely a project of economic domination by world capitalism, nor is it the use of military might to dominate one region or another in the third world, but it is also an ideological project, to be implemented in the spheres of information, education and values. It is aimed at the spirit and life of our peoples, hence a serious effort must be deployed by the intellectuals of the third world to combat such projects.

As the Arab World and Africa make up a region of extreme strategic importance, and an essential source of oil and mineral raw materials, American imperialism tries to paralyze the movement of the peoples of the region, as well as any cooperation with outside forces. In the meantime, it does not hesitate to use brute military force directly or through its main allies to stifle any attempt at independence. Witness its aggression in Iraq, its blatant threats to Syria, Iran, or the Israeli sustained aggression on the Palestinian People, and its destruction of Lebanon. Under such conditions, Condoleeza Rice reiterates the discourse about the “New” Middle East, meaning by that qualification, building it out of communal, religious and ethnic fragments, to fit what she once called, the policy of constructive chaos.

We can note that the masses are strongly aware of the imperialist plans but they are still uprising spontaneously in many countries of the South. The social movements and political parties do not express a strong resistance, specially in the Arab world; where they are more present on issues related to national questions or at the international level.

Under such conditions, the intellectuals of the South should reassess their analysis of the regional systems, the developmental state, and the concept of limited sovereignty, and international legitimacy. They should also reassess the concept of liberal democracy in the South, in the absence of any real market economy.

In light of such reassessment, we believe the obvious aim will be the reactivation of the three continent’s movement started in 1965, in

pursuit of whose first conference in 1966, Mehdi Bin Barka was assassinated. I believe the time is ripe for reinvigorating this community of nations in the presence of the following elements:

- The current vigor of the mass movement in Latin America, with its Bolivarian or socialist trends.
- The probable reactivation of the Arab mass movement, in the light of the stand of the Palestinian and Lebanese Peoples to Israeli aggression, and the manifestations of solidarity with them from the Peoples of the Third World.
- The sustained activity of the World Social Forum in Africa, in the light of the Durban session (July 2006), and the Nairobi session (January 2007).

Thus an alternative democratic globalization to replace the dominant American led globalization, may be possible.