

# **The United Nations and Globalization**

**Michel Schooyans**

Professor emeritus at Louvain University

September 2001

## **Exchange and interdependence**

The term *globalization* has become part today of our current vocabulary. On a very general level, the term has, so to speak, two meanings: political and economic. The two meanings indicate that, on the world level, *exchange* — something that has existed for a long time — has increased and that growth has taken place rapidly. Such is manifestly the case in the scientific, technical and cultural domains. This expansion of exchange has been made possible thanks to systems of communication that are more and more effective and often instantaneous. These systems provide a prospect of information growing without end and ready to be employed.

This first current meaning evokes the *interdependence* of human societies. An economic crisis in the U.S., the decisions of OPEC about the price of petroleum, the tensions between the Israelis and Palestinians — to cite but three examples — have repercussions of world-wide import. We are concerned, challenged and even affected by the catastrophes that occur far from us; we feel our responsibility for hunger and sickness everywhere in the world.

Religions themselves dialogue more. Even within the Catholic Church communication is intensified.

We have thus acquired an acute awareness of our belonging to the human community. In this first familiar sense we speak of an *integration*. In ordinary language we will say "distances don't count anymore"; "trips bring men closer"; "the world has become a village". The world tends toward greater unity: the Russians and Chinese, in their fashion, participate in this process. In principle, we cannot but be glad about this tendency. It is, moreover, normal that, in order to pursue this end, it is necessary to envision new political and economic structures capable of meeting the new needs — but not at any price or under any condition.

## **Political unification, economic integration**

For some years now the meaning of the word has become somewhat restricted and precise. By *globalization* is understood the

tendency toward organizing one sole world government. The emphasis is placed here on the *political* dimension of world unification. In its present form, this tendency has been developed in different current studies by the internationalists ever since Francisco de Victoria and Grotius. Within this framework it will suffice to cite two examples. The first model goes back to the end of the sixties and is due to Zbigniew Brzezinski<sup>1</sup>. According to this model, the U.S. must assume world leadership, reformulating its traditional messianism. Helped by the most developed countries, it must organize particular political societies by taking account of a typology classifying these societies according to their respective degree of development. Under the leadership of the U.S., the G7 (now become G8 with Russia's entry) incarnates the directorate advocated by Brzezinski. Here globalization is defined as beginning with a hegemonic project whose objective is huge: to impose the *Pax Americana* as an alternative to sinking into chaos.

At the end of the eighties, there arose another globalization project of which Willy Brandt was one of the principal architects. The North (developed) and the South (underdeveloped) needed each other; their interests were reciprocal. It was urgent to undertake new international initiatives to fill the gap separating them; they had to be directed first of all at the monetary systems, disarmament, hunger. According to the "program of survival" of Brandt's Report, "a high-level surveillance organism" had to be set up which would have the special mission of making the UN more effective and of consolidating the consensus that characterizes it<sup>2</sup>. The globalization conception that appears here is in no way attached to a hegemonic project. It is situated within the tradition of *socialist internationalism*. While the suppression of states was not to be recommended, their sovereignty would have to be limited and placed under the control of a world political power if the survival of humanity was to be guaranteed.

While the term globalization acquired a rather political connotation, it further acquired an economic one. The increase in exchange and the improvement in international communications led people to speak of an integration of world economic agents, i.e. of the market. Economic activities would be spread among different states or regions: work would be divided. To some would belong, for example, the task of mining, to others that of refining, transforming, to others finally the task of technological production, world coordination and decision-making.

This vision of globalization is the basis for the international division of work on the theory of the comparative advantages elaborated by Ricardo. Of a frankly liberal inspiration, this conception of globalization rests on the freedom of commerce and on perfect competition on the international level. It favours developed countries, rich in capital. Thanks to capital, in effect, the resources, wherever they

come from, can be exploited with greater productivity. This ultra-liberal conception of the international division of labor is, however, accompanied by a reservation: if it is mostly a matter of free circulation of goods and capital, it is less a matter of the free circulation of people<sup>3</sup>.

## **Globalization and holism**

In the recent documents of the UN, the economic meaning of globalization appears more frequently than the political, without, however, these themes running in competition. In 1955, for example, *The Report on Global Governance* was already published<sup>4</sup>.

The UN incorporates the current conceptions of the twofold economical and political theme we've just recalled. However, it uses the potent wave offered by the current conception of globalization to subject this word to a semantic alteration. *Globalization is now reinterpreted in the light of a new vision of the world and/or of man's place in it*. This new vision goes by the name of *holism*. Of Greek origin, this word means that the world constitutes a whole having more reality and value than the parts that make it up. In all of this, man is but an embodiment of the evolution of matter. Man has no reality except by reason of his belonging to matter and, upon death, he will return definitively to matter. The destiny of man is to be doomed to death, that is to disappear inevitably into Mother Earth whence he came.

The big whole, then (let us call it, for the sake of simplification, Mother Earth or Gaï a), transcends man. He must bend himself to the imperatives of *ecology*, to that which suits Nature. The influence of the New Age Movement is evident here. Man must accept, not only no longer emerging from the world about him, but he must also accept no longer being the center of the world. Judeo-Christian anthropocentrism, reinforced by that of the Renaissance, must be not only abandoned but combated. According to this reading of Nature and man, the "natural" law is no longer what is inscribed in the intelligence and heart of man; it is the implacable and violent law imposed by Nature on man. The ecological vulgate even presents him as a predator, and like all groups of predators, the human population must, they say, be contained within the limits of *sustainable development*. Man must, then, not only being sacrificed to the imperatives of Mother Gaï a; he also must agree to sacrifice himself to the imperative of the time to come. He must efface himself before the constraints of "sustainable development".

## **The Earth Charter**

The UN is in the process of concocting a very important document systematizing this holistic interpretation of globalization. It is the *Earth*

*Charter*, of which several drafts have already been disseminated, and whose editing is in its final stage. This document would not only be called to trump the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, but, according to some, it would have to supplant the Decalogue itself!

Here are some examples taken from the Charter:

"We are at a critical moment in the history of the Earth, the moment to choose its future... We must unite in order to found a sustainable global society, based on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice and the culture of peace..."

"Humanity is a part of a vast evolving universe... The global ambient, with its finite resources, is a preoccupation common to all peoples. The protection of the vitality, the diversity and the beauty of the Earth is a sacred duty..."

"An increase of human population without precedent has overloaded the economic and social systems..."

"Here is our choice: to form a global society to take care of the Earth and one another, or to expose ourselves to the risk of destroying ourselves and the diversity of life..."

"We have urgent need of a shared vision about the basic values that offer an ethical foundation to the emerging world community..."

## **Religions and globalism**

In order to consolidate this holistic vision of globalism, certain obstacles have to be smoothed out and *instruments* put to work.

Religions in general, and in the first place the Catholic religion, figure among the obstacles that have to be neutralized. It was toward this end that, among the celebrations of the Millennium, the *Summit of Spiritual and Religious Leaders* was organized. It was concerned with launching the "United Initiative of Religions" which has among its objectives that of watching over the health of the Earth and that of all living beings. Strongly influenced by the New Age, this project aims, in the end, at the creation of one unique new world religion that would entail right away the prohibition of proselytism on the part of all other religions. In sum, the UN is taking up a project similar to that of Goethe, who wanted to impose the cult of ancient Greece as the new religion of the West<sup>5</sup>.

In brief, according to the UN, globalization must not be concerned merely with the spheres of politics, economics, law; it must be concerned with the *global soul*. Representing the Holy See, Cardinal Arinze could not sign the final document that placed all religions on the same footing<sup>6</sup>.

## **The paradigm of health**

Here we are concerned with a new way of conceiving health, elaborated by the World Health Organization. This new "model" of health is also in line with the holistic perspective. It is a matter of spreading new models of health activity that permit the implementation of the health programs decided upon by the UN. The primary objective consists in watching over the health of the social body. And so, the Hippocratic model is abandoned that gave absolute primacy to the care of individuals, irrespective of their social condition.

According to the new paradigm, the objective is "health for all". But this expression means that the sick will be treated according to two complementary criteria. On the one hand, the sick will be treated according to their purchasing power. On the other hand, it will take into account the individual's life expectancy without handicap or further sickness. In no case can the sick person be a burden to society. Thus, a sick person suffering from malaria runs a great risk of being a victim of this new paradigm. Since this illness often strikes poor populations of extremely limited purchasing power, and, with its unforeseen crises, renders the suffering person of little use in the labor market, the malaria will not be treated as are other illnesses more economically profitable and less burdensome to society. The criteria that will have been used to determine the treatment will also be used to determine the research that should be undertaken<sup>7</sup>.

## **The World Economic Pact**

Among the numerous *instruments* employed by the UN with a view to globalization, the *World Pact* should be mentioned here. At the time of his opening address for the Millennium Forum, Kofi Annan repeated the invitation given in 1999 to the Economic Forum of Davos. He proposed "adherence to certain essential values in the domains of norms for labor, of human rights, and of the environment". The UN's Secretary General gave the assurance that thereby the negative effects of globalization would be reduced.

More precisely, according to Annan, to fill up the gap between North and South, the UN would have to make a broad appeal to the private sector. It would concern obtaining adherence to the Pact of a great number of economic and social agents: companies, businessmen, unions, non-governmental organizations. This *Global* or *World Pact* would be needed to regulate world markets, to broaden access to vital technologies, to distribute information and know-how, to disseminate basic care in the field of health, etc. This Pact has already received

numerous supporters, among whom are Shell, Ted Turner, Bill Gates and very many international associations. The World Pact endorses the reinforcement and control of the media for the purpose of making "politically and economically correct" thought triumph.

The World Pact gives rise to some serious questions. Can we count on the large world-wide companies to resolve the problems which they could have helped resolve a long time ago had they wanted to? Does the increase of international economic exchanges justify the progressive establishment of a *centralized authority* charged with regulating world economic activity? What kind of freedom would the unions still enjoy, if labor legislation, incorporated into international law, has to submit to the "global" economic "imperatives"? What kind of power of intervention would, in the name of justice, the government of sovereign states still have in economic, monetary and social questions? More serious still, since the UN is always narrowly escaping bankruptcy, doesn't it risk becoming the victim of a take-over by a consortium of big world-wide companies?

The apprehensions aroused by the World Pact should be taken all the more into account since they resemble those already justified by the World Bank. Founded in 1944 in order to reconstruct a world of justice, solidarity and development after the Second World War, this institution has been little-by-little aligned with the rules of the market and with the aim of making a profit. Above all, it uses its power of intervention to impose pitiless plans of action on those who are not "economically correct". All of that takes place with the connivance of the wealthiest nations and is shielded from all control<sup>8</sup>. Everything leads one to believe that the World Pact, utilitarian in its criteria for decision-making, would be inclined to repeat the wrongdoing of authoritarian liberalism, the first article of the secularized credo of the Bank.

## **Commercializing of knowledge**

One of the most disquieting aspects of economic globalization is the galloping commercializing of teaching and education. Increasingly they become the object of mercantilism. Knowledge is commercialized just as is any other product. Even if they have the opportunity of access to instruction, the poor have access only to a quality of teaching that is mediocre. Discrimination and exclusion begin at the earliest level of schooling. They have the consequence of forbidding to children of poor families access to state-of-the-art knowledge and corresponding responsibilities. They block all possibility of social mobility. They definitively prevent children of poor families from having access to programs of continuing formation, essential for the acquisition of rapidly and incessantly evolving knowledge.

Moreover, the condition preliminary to economic globalization, as well as to political globalization, is access to literacy and basic education. It is absurd to seek to impose from on high a global society if more than 50% of those called to build it cannot master their own language, or the fundamental elements of knowledge. Without widespread access to basic education, any globalist project will but aggravate the *exclusion* of very many individuals as well as nations.

## **A political project served by law**

However, it is on the *political* and *juridical* level that the UN's project of globalization is the most disquieting. To the extent that, as we have seen, the UN, influenced by the New Age, develops a materialist and strictly evolutionary vision of man, it necessarily render ineffective the realist conception of man which underlies the 1948 Declaration. According to the materialist vision, man, pure matter, is definitely incapable of saying anything true about himself or the meaning of his life. He is reduced to an agnosticism of principle, to skepticism and moral relativism. *Why* doesn't make any sense; only *how* is important.

The 1949 Declaration presented us with a prodigious originality, namely, that of basing *new international relations on the universal extension of human rights*. Such must be the foundation of peace and development. Such had to be the basis legitimizing the *existence* of the UN and justifying its *mission*. World order had to be built on foundational *truths* acknowledged by all, protected and progressively promoted by the legislation of all the states.

The UN today has rendered ineffective these foundational references. Today the rights of man are no longer founded on a *truth* seen as necessary by all and acknowledged freely by all: the equal dignity of all men. Henceforth the rights of man are the result of *consensual procedures*. Since we are not capable, they say, of reaching a solid truth about man, and since such a truth is not even accessible or existent, we must confer together and decide, by means of an act of pure will, what is just conduct, since the need for action is pressing. However, we are no longer going to decide by referring everything to the exigencies of values imposed on all by the sole force of their truth. We are going to engage in a procedure of discussion, and after having heard the opinion of each person, we are going to cut it short and make a decision. This decision will be regarded as just because it will be the actual result of consensual procedure. We can recognize here the influence of John Rawls.

According to the present UN, the "new rights of man" result from consensual procedures that can be revived indefinitely. They are no longer the expression of a truth concerning man; *they are expressions*

*of the will of those who decide.* Henceforth, at the end of this procedure, it doesn't matter what is presented as the "new rights" of man: right to different sexual unions, to renouncing a spouse, to one-parent homes, to euthanasia — while waiting infanticide (already practised) — elimination of the handicapped, eugenic programs, etc. It is for this reason that in the international meetings organized by the UN its functionaries apply themselves with all their might to arriving at a consensus. In effect, once achieved, the consensus is invoked to make adoption of the international conventions which acquire the force of law in those states that have ratified them.

### **A system of positive international law**

Such is the crux of the problem posed by globalization according to the UN. By its conventions and its normative treaties, the UN is in the process of setting up a system of purely positive supra-state law which bears the strong stamp of Kelsen. The object of right is not justice; it is the law. A fundamental tendency is progressively observable: the norms of *state* law are not valid unless validated by *supra-state* law. As Kelsen had anticipated in his famous *Pure Theory*, the power of the UN is concentrated like a pyramid<sup>9</sup>. All, whether individuals or states, must obey the fundamental norm emanating from the will of those who define international law. This purely positive international law, rid of all reference to the 1948 Declaration, is the instrument used by the UN to impose on the world the vision of globalization that would allow it to pose as the subject of supra-state power sovereignly regulating world society.

### **An International Criminal Tribunal**

Controlling the law, by going so far as to pose as the definitive sole source of law, and being able to verify at every moment whether this law is respected by *executive* authorities, the UN is enthroning a Unique Thought system. It equips itself with a tribunal in accordance with its appetite for power. Thus crimes against the "new rights" of man could be judged by the International Criminal Court established at Rome in 1998. For examples, to the extent that abortion remained illegal in this or that state, the state in question could be excluded from the "global society"; to the extent that a religious group opposes homosexuality or euthanasia, that group could be condemned by the International Criminal Court for attacking the "new rights of man". There we have one of the gravest threats to the Church as a visible community, and to Christians as citizens of the global village.

### **Global governance**

We are, then, in the presence of a gigantic project that has the ambition of realizing the utopia of Kelsen by setting up and legitimizing on a sole world government, for which the UN's agencies could become the ministers. It is urgent, they say, to create a new world political and legal order and for us to hasten in finding the funds for realizing this project.

This global governance had already been the topic of a boxed insert in the Report of the United Nations Development Programme in 1994. This text, drawn up at the insistence of UNDP by Jan Tinbergen, Nobel prize-winner for economics (1969), has all the earmarks of a manifesto commanded by and for the UN. Here is an extract:

"Mankind's problems can no longer be solved by national governments. What is needed is a World Government. This can best be achieved by strengthening the United Nations system. In some cases, this would mean changing the role of UN agencies from advice-giving to implementation. Thus, the FAO would become the World Ministry of Agriculture, UNIDO would become the World Ministry of Industry, and the ILO the World Ministry of Social Affairs. In other cases, completely new institutions would be needed. These could include, for example, a permanent World Police which would have the power to subpoena nations to appear before the International Court of Justice, or before other specially created courts. If nations do not abide by the Court's judgement, it should be possible to apply sanctions, both non-military and military".

Without doubt, insofar as they exist and accomplish their role well, particular nations protect their citizens; they bring about respect for human rights, and use appropriate means towards this end. Presently, in the milieu of the UN, *the destruction of nations appears as an objective to be sought if one wishes definitively to smother the anthropocentric conception of man's rights*. By doing away with the intermediate body called the national state, one puts an end to subsidiarity, since a centralized world state will have been put in place. The way will be open, then, for the arrival of the globalizing technocrats and other aspirants to world governance.

### **Reaffirming the principle of subsidiarity**

Thus positive international law is the instrument used by the UN to organize the global world society. Under cover of globalization, the UN organizes world "governance" for its own benefit. Under cover of "shared responsibility", it has invited the states to limit their proper sovereignty. The UN globalizes by increasingly posing as a world-wide

super-state. It is tending to regulate all the dimensions of life, of thought and human activity by establishing a progressively centralized control of information, of knowledge and techniques, of foodstuffs, of human life, of health and of population, of surfaces and sub-soil resources, of world commerce and union organizations, finally and above all, of politics and law. Its power is not only increasingly expanded; it integrates the factors — political, economic, psychosocial and military — that constitute it, as in the doctrine of national security<sup>10</sup>. Exalting the neo-pagan cult of Mother Earth, it deprives man of the central place accorded him in the great traditions of philosophy, law, politics and religion.

Faced with such a globalism built on sand, we must reaffirm the urgent need of founding international society on the recognition of the equal dignity of all men. The juridical system that predominates at the UN makes this universal recognition strictly impossible, since the law and the rights of man cannot proceed except from voluntarist determinations. We must also reaffirm the primacy of the principle of subsidiarity correctly understood. That means that international organizations must not deny to states, or intermediate bodies, in particular the family, their natural competence and their rights, but on the contrary, that they must assist their exercise.

As for the Church, she cannot but rise up against such a globalization that implies a concentration of power that hints at totalitarianism. Before the impossible "cohesion" and "globalization" that the UN is striving to impose by inciting an always precarious "consensus", the Church must appear, following Christ's example, as a *sign of division*<sup>11</sup>. She cannot support either a "unity" or a "universality" that would depend on the subjective wishes of individuals, or one imposed by any authority, public or private. Before the emergence of a new Leviathan, we cannot remain mute, inactive or indifferent.

- 
1. Between Two Ages. America's Role in the Technetronic Era, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970.
  2. Cf. *North-South: A Program for Survival*, London: Pan Books, 1980; esp. chapter 16, pp. 257-266.
  3. Among the first "modern" theorists of this conception we can mention Francisco de Victoria (with his interpretation of the universal destination of goods) and Hugo Grotius (with his doctrine of the freedom of navigation).
  4. Cf. *Our Global Neighbourhood. The Report of the Commission on Global Governance*, Oxford University Press, 1995.
  5. On this subject see David GRESS, *From Plato to Nato. The Idea of the West and its Opponents*, New York: The Free Press, 1998; esp. p. 86.
  6. This was the occasion on which the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published its declaration *Dominus Jesus*.

7. We analyze in detail this “new paradigm of health” in *The Gospel Confronting World Disorder*, St. Louis: Central Bureau, 1999, pp. 29-48.
8. Regarding this, see Susan GEORGE and Fabrizio SABELLI, *Crédits sans frontières. La religion séculière de la Banque Mondiale*, Paris: Découverte, 1994.
9. Hans KELSEN, *The Pure Theory of Law*, Berkeley, Ca: University Press, 1967; a 1999 new French translation by Charles Eisenmann is available at Paris: LGDJ.
10. On this doctrine see our work *Destin du Brésil. La technocratie militaire et son idéologie*, Gembloux: Duculot, 1973; on the factors constitutive of power, see esp. pp. 59-65.
11. Cf. Lk 2:33 f.; 12:51-53; 21:12-19; Mt 10:34-36,31 f.; Jn 1:6; 1 Jn 3:22-4:6.