



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Conference on

# **Contemporary Globalisation and Hegemonies: Transformation of Nation-States – New Intercivilisational Visions**

8 and 9 May 2009  
Luxembourg

### **Introduction**

The Luxembourg Institute for European and International Studies (LIEIS) convened a conference on 'Contemporary Globalisation and Hegemonies: Transformation of Nation-States - New Intercivilisational Visions' on 8 and 9 May 2009 in Luxembourg. This meeting was based on an eponymous essay by Professor Shmuel N. Eisenstadt of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem who wrote it for this occasion. Approximately 20 participants from over 10 countries discussed in the course of six sessions the following topics: first, the major characteristics of contemporary economic, cultural and political globalisation; second, the social impact of globalisation; third, the search for alternative models of globalisation; fourth, changes in contemporary hegemonies; fifth, the transformation of political arenas and premises; sixth, the evolution of capitalism and world systems after the global 'credit crunch'. A further two sessions were devoted to a separate project on 'Reinventing Modernity and Modernisation' (cf. Appendix I). A detailed programme and list of participants and observers can be found in Appendix II.

This conference is part of a long-standing project of the LIEIS on the vitality of nations and cognate themes such as *Two Hegemonies* (1997), *The World We are Entering 2000-2050* (1998), *The Growth and Interaction in the World Economy: the West and the Rest, 1000-2000AD* (2002) and *Homo Europaeus – East and West* (2006). As before, the focus of the conference was on a lively exchange of ideas and a conceptual debate on the main ideas developed in, and arising from, S.N. Eisenstadt's essay.



In his introductory remarks, Armand Clesse, Director of the LIEIS, explained that the objective of the debates is to question the main assumptions and premises underpinning conventional theories of globalisation and to formulate new hypotheses and ideas in order to theorise the ongoing transformations of nation-states and the evolution of inter-civilisational visions. He encouraged the participants to raise new questions and also to think about a written contribution for a collection of essays that would be presented to Professor Shmuel N. Eisenstadt in his honour.

## **I. Introductory remarks by Prof. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt**

Due to ill health, S.N. Eisenstadt was unfortunately unable to attend the conference. At the start of the first session, he addressed the participants via a conference call and made some introductory remarks. First of all, he said that the process of globalisation is not new, but what has changed is that the world is now seeing an inter-globalisational transformation at all levels. Second, there is a single hegemon, but it is weak and unable to enforce unipolarity and regulate international affairs. The current hegemony is open to challenge, including from the very institutions created by the hegemon itself. Third, within the dynamic of the centre and the periphery, the power of small numbers (actors, networks, etc.) has grown, but so have new tensions and changes across the globe. Fourth, the relations between the global and the local are undergoing fundamental change, as is the link between democracy and capitalism.

Fifth, for the first time in the history of globalisation, there are strong global anti-globalisation movements that do not simply resist the hegemon(s) but argue for a different kind of globalisation. Sixth, the world is not seeing a 'clash of civilisations' but rather a clash between different groups and elites who contest different kinds of modernities and attempt to appropriate modernity. This clash is not just confined to the dichotomy between Western and anti-Western forces but also extends to multiple modernities, including Islamic, Latin American, etc. Seventh, there are unprecedented levels of instability, volatility and unknown outcomes that make any firm predictions about the continued power of the West or the rise to power of the East meaningless. As a result of the complex process of globalisation, the world is in flux and power configurations are likely to change rapidly. The emergence of all sorts of new non-state actors further complicates any forecasts.

In response to these opening remarks, a number of participants made comments or raised questions. Saskia Sassen asked about how to position, conceptually and politically, the periphery in relation to the hegemon. She also remarked that the stabilised meanings of centre-periphery are giving way to unstable meanings and that this is also true for religion. S.N. Eisenstadt replied that the hegemon is both stronger and more vulnerable than before, in the sense that the hegemon does not have a monopoly on legitimacy, yet at the same time disposes of unprecedented military capability. Moreover, there are not just states but also a multiplicity of other international non-state actors. Rajeev Bhargava argued that the Westphalian settlement of confessional states and privatised religion is breaking down. The very category of religion created by Westphalia is now being challenged by globalisation. There is a global rivalry between different religions, not a clash of civilisations but a 'scramble for souls'. The Christian model of hegemonic religion is no longer seen as normative. In response, S.N. Eisenstadt agreed with the thrust of this argument and said that it

is imperative to rethink religion in the framework of multiple modernities and the impact of globalisation on hegemonic structures and patterns.

This initial debate led to a wider discussion with the remaining conference participants on the topic of the first session – the major characteristics of contemporary economic, cultural and political globalisation. First, Pablo Gonzalez Casanova made a short presentation about what is possible and what is impossible in capitalism. New categories are needed to capture the new conceptual and phenomenal realities because our historical juncture marks the end of something and the creation of a different reality. Among the novelties, there is, first of all, the phenomenon of uncertainty and the impossible and, second, the reality of capitalism as ‘forbidden knowledge’. His main thesis is that the problem is about knowing exactly how decisions are made according to capitalism, as capitalist domination and accumulation are making human survival ultimately impossible. This problem raises a series of paradoxes, as evinced by Heisenberg’s research on uncertainty which also highlights the spaces of certainty (e.g. technology, social systems).

Among the essential features of capitalism is the maximisation of both profit and power. Over time, the expansion and extension of the capitalist logic will produce more lethal conflict and war against the poor in the ‘fourth world’. All this requires responsibility in decision-making, an imperative that cannot be equated with either moralism or eclecticism. If there is something like global economics, then we must also have something like global accounting. Given the human and ecological costs of capitalist globalisation (e.g. global warming, increasing poverty), what is required is a series of anti-systemic alternatives that are neither reduced to social reform nor to insurrectional action.

S. Sassen remarked that this contrast between global accounting and global accountability is an excellent framing of the issues. It raises a number of questions and points. First of all, what constitutes a systemic logic, say, at the level of the economy or the sources of authority? Second, how and why do the prevailing systemic logics maximise efficiency rather than distribution? What would be a good example of the latter? In response, P. Gonzalez Casanova said that new, global-local movements such as the Zapatista in Mexico are not traditional anarchists but combine horizontal and vertical dimensions of power.

A number of participants made different comments. Herman van Gunsteren spoke as a self-styled ‘evolutionary institutionalist’ and suggested that we must work with the remnants of the structures in place, including democracy and capitalism. As such, the question is less about systemic alternatives and more about possible developments and evolutionary patterns within a given system. In this context, some fundamental questions arise. First, what about the changing place of religion in democracies? Are religions a threat or force for pluralism and cohesion? Second, are we not constantly forced to revise our concepts in the face of pleasant and unpleasant surprises? What does this mean for arguments in favour of revolution or wholesale transformation of existing institutional structures?

The discussion then shifted to capitalism. It was said that capitalism has a remarkable capacity for self-destruction and reinvention. Indeed, after decades of ‘free-market’ fundamentalism, we are currently seeing not just a return of the state but also the rise of state monopolistic capitalism (Mario Hirsch). In fact, capitalism has the ability to benefit from its own contradictions. A recent headline in the American daily newspaper *U.S.A. Today* stated the

following: ‘how global warming can make you wealthy’! But beyond the constant production of novelty and re-innovation, what is required is a global, holistic approach. The real question is who has benefited from capitalism. For it should not be forgotten that capitalist markets have either kept or plunged hundreds of millions of people in poverty (François Houtart). Moreover, regular and frequent economic turmoil over the past forty years or so can legitimately be interpreted as one long global crisis of capitalism. There is thus a clear difference between two rival approaches: either a reformist, institutionalist ‘fix-it’ kind of strategy or else a strategy based on structural, transformative logics (Jan Aart Scholte).

Other participants related the issue of capitalism to wider developments. Some asked whether the self-destruction of capitalism or liberalism is not a permanent feature of modernity – in fact, an in-built aspect of it (Maxim Khomyakov). Others argued that capitalism is only one of several universalist ideologies and belief systems among several, including Islam, Christianity and possibly Confucianism. In fact, capitalism is both the product and the highest stage of the development of secular liberalism which is coextensive with the rise of modernity. Since traditional religions are sceptical about the modernist narrative on the progress of science and technology, the main clash is not between static civilisations (à la Huntington) but rather between modern and non-modern worldviews. This divide is not between religions and secular ideologies but cuts across religious traditions, as capitalism and secular liberalism has the support and connivance of some strands of Christianity and Islam such as strands of Calvinism and liberal Catholicism as well as certain movements in Sunni Islam (Adrian Pabst).

In response to these comments and questions, P. Gonzalez Casanova said that global accounting encompasses both ethics and agency and therefore involves both responsibility and decision-making. We can discuss capitalism’s ‘creative destruction’ (Joseph Schumpeter), but now it is not and cannot be business as usual – capitalist domination and accumulation have changed everything, and resistance to global capitalism is different from past resistance movements since we are destroying the world. All the old categories and predictions have failed, but no new paradigm has thus far emerged.

## **II. Contemporary globalisation and its social impact**

At the outset of the second session, F. Houtart delivered an introductory presentation. He argued that there are at least four aspects of globalisation which have social consequences, especially in the current neo-liberal phase of capitalism. First of all, the predominance of financial capital and speculation over productive capital and human labour. Second, the liberalisation of exchange and the over-exploitation of natural resources (causing social dislocation and climate change). Third, the development of new technologies and the impact on the reorganisation of labour. Fourth, growing military control over natural resources and the militarisation of the national and the global economy. Beyond these general aspects, there are particular social effects. The ongoing financial crisis is really an economic crisis, causing the loss of over 50 million jobs worldwide, according to the latest estimates of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Here one needs to recognise both temporary and structural factors: the former concern mainly the hike in food prices caused by speculation, whereas the latter concern the destruction of peasant agriculture (especially the promotion of monoculture, the destruction of bio-diversity, growing water pollution, etc.). Moreover, rising

energy prices have driven on the carbon-based economy with disastrous environmental consequences.

For some time now, the capitalist system has proposed agro-fuel as a solution to the scarcity of energy resources. But this strategy would lead to the expulsion of hundreds of millions of peasants from their land, with catastrophic effects in terms of social dislocation, excessive urbanisation, etc. The worsening climate crisis is in large part responsible for the growing number of natural disasters, rising water levels (e.g. countries like Laos and Bangladesh could lose more than 17% of their territory if ocean levels rise by one meter), water shortages (because of rising river levels) as well as ‘climatic migrants’. The social and humanitarian crisis is not just accidental but the product of a capitalist logic of wealth distribution. According to the UNDP, the capitalist world economy has the shape of a champagne glass, with the richest 20% of humanity hoarding more than 85% of the world’s wealth, while the poorest 60% of humanity subsists on less than 5% percent of resources. The reason why the concentration of wealth progresses is because it is more profitable for capitalism to invest in the production of goods with added value that are purchased by the top 20% of the world population rather than cater to the needs of the many million poor (food, housing, health, education, etc.).

Thus, the dominant logic of the prevailing system is, first, to view capital accumulation as the foundation of the economy (making exchange value more important than use value) and, second, to ignore all the externalities (environmental, social, etc.) that are deliberately left out the market mechanism and thereby do not interfere with ‘natural prices’. There is therefore an urgent need for new parameters in order to stop and reverse the damage done by the artificial pricing system of capitalism which excludes negative externalities. The problem with many reformist efforts is that their critique of the current model simply does not go far enough. For example, the G193 Commission chaired by Joseph Stiglitz is staffed with Neo-Keynesian economists who are willing to surpass the meagre reforms proposed by the G20 but who are trapped in the ideology of markets and the disciplinary boundaries of economics. François Houtart, a member of the Stiglitz Commission, ended his presentation by expressing his regret that he is the only sociologist in this forum. It is unlikely that the world economy will be transformed by economists alone.

In her remarks, S. Sassen spoke of two distinct vectors of analysis. First, it is important to rethink powerlessness as an independent variable because the temporality of powerlessness is different from notions of power and empowerment that are fashionable in academic and political discourse. If we think of the curve that characterises corporate capitalism, then we can also see that at different junctures powerlessness interrupts the dominant process and emerges as a complex independent variable. The second vector of analysis concerns the question of foundational transformation. It is now increasingly clear that globalisation does not capture the entire spectrum of transformational possibilities. Neither the global nor the national are master-categories that cover all the available options. Moreover, neo-Keynesianism obscures more than it illuminates. In turn, this raises questions about what could be the conceptual foothold to avoid falling off the conceptual cliff.

In her own work, S. Sassen has opted to deconstruct and decode the master-category of sovereignty. This has led her to analyse in great detail the three distinct but related concepts of territory, authority and rights (TAR). All three are constructed and not given; they are trans-

historical, not just contingent. As such, transformations can be foundational, but tend to be partial. For example, globalisation has neither entirely destroyed nor fully rehabilitated the nation-state. Nation-states are not returning in the old guise. Rather, it is the executive branch of government that has become more powerful, bailing out the global financial system and acquiring new regulatory powers. As such, the national has been inserting itself into the prevailing logic of the global. What are the implications for the social and the powerless? Can the immobile and the powerless shape the global? Yes, to some extent there are novel assemblages within the national that have repercussions for the global, as evinced by a plethora of global non-state actors.

Finally, what emerges from this sort of account is a third analytical vector, which consists in disaggregating capabilities from the dominant organising logics like the national or the global. The question that arises from this conceptual angle is how to retrieve and re-deploy multiple capabilities for novel types of objectives (such as bio-diversity). The state could de-nationalise and re-gear objectives towards global justice and a global distribution of goods. In turn, this raises questions about whether we are living through real change or a revamp of the current logic and how we can recode master-categories such as sovereignty.

In the discussion that followed the two presentations, the participants made a number of comments. First, it was said that we must distinguish system- from actor-driven logics or analyses. The fluidity of systems (both at the national and the global level) favours conceptual frameworks that are centred on actors. One can even go as far as suggesting that actors now make or constitute systems, as illustrated by current campaigns to make water a human right (Harlan Koff). Second, new technologies seem to disempower citizens, so how do we recode and move to transformative action? (Andrej Krickovic). Third, globalisation is the legitimate child of capitalism and as such an extension and intensification of its logic, not a departure from it. Some statistics would say that we are better off at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in terms of longevity, household wealth and political freedoms. How does this alter our perception and analysis of the current models? (Viktor Kuvadin). Other participants contested this view, saying that capitalism and globalisation have greatly exacerbated poverty and inequality. In fact, existing slums are growing, new ones are emerging and millions of people living in slums are displaced by the authorities but never escape from the unspeakable squalor they were born into. We are witnessing something like the ‘slumisation’ of the world. (A. Clesse).

At the end of the second session, F. Houtart and S. Sassen responded to some of the comments and the debate. The former said that the question of poverty reduction concerns directly the cases of China and Vietnam. The World Bank views Vietnam as a success story because of the opening of the national economy to the global market. But this ignores everything that was done before market reforms were introduced. Moreover, it also ignores that previously Vietnam never abandoned its poor but offered universal health care and education, hence a life in relative poverty but in dignity. Similarly, the supranational institutions and most Western countries dismiss Cuba as an old-style dictatorship and forget that the Cuban health care system is universal and world-class as a result of rejecting the logic of proprietary relations: neither researchers nor companies are granted patents and exclusive rights to commercialise new discoveries. This goes against everything the current global model stands for.

In her response, S. Sassen focused on the question of the law and on the concept of sovereignty. Where is the source of law? In the USA, there has been a marked shift from community to the central state, but how was this legitimatised and on what basis? For the nation-states, territory and rights are intimately intertwined. By contrast, in medieval times, authority was the source of the law. In terms of global human rights, neither territory nor authority provides an adequate foundation. For the global capital market, authority is clothed in the garb of utility, progress and ‘the greatest happiness of the greatest number’. Interestingly, there are new constitutions in Latin America and elsewhere which represent a rupture with the ‘achievements’ of the French and the American Revolution, because now the sovereign – even if it is the people – is not the exclusive representative of the nation in international fora. For example, the nation does not fully represent the rights of the indigenous people, and therefore they can now make direct claims directly at the international level. This is a clause for informal revolutions.

Similarly, sovereignty is so enormously complex that it requires de-coding. What are the institutional locations for sovereignty? The International Criminal Court, the global human rights regime and other instances show that sovereignty is no longer confined to the state but has multiple loci and is scattered in terms of authority and enforcement. In part, this is the result of profound technological change. For example, a vast range of activities from financial services to human rights activism use inter-active technology, including interconnectivity, decentred access and networks. This technology is not and cannot be controlled by states, whether acting alone or in concert. If the logic of finance is networked Collateralised Debt Securities (CDS), then the next step for activists is to form network formats and platforms which global finance has already mastered. In this sense, multinational corporations are already outmoded and a model of the past.

### **III. The search for alternative globalisations**

The third session on the search for alternative visions of globalisation began with an introductory presentation by J.A. Scholte. He argued that the predominant model of globalisation does not work for many and grievances are real and deep-seated. One dominant accusation is that the prevailing system is modern, Western, capitalist and market-centred and that alternatives have to break away from each of these four features. There are however other alternatives within the spectrum. Two are more reformist, whereas the third is transformative. The first alternative is the global social market project. It consists in fixing the market where it does not work, through regulation, carbon trading, transparency, etc. The second alternative is global social democracy, which argues for global and regional regulation and, above all, a democratic rather than a market society. The third alternative, which is transformative rather than reformist, includes global socialism and other movements. Global socialism is a project that is class-based, calls for an emancipatory struggle and creates new labour organisations (not the old TUs).

As already indicated, this category of transformative visions encompasses a vast array of movements, including faith-based religious revivalism (present in all world religions), eco-centrism, radical feminist ideas on a new care economy, post-modern identity and cultural politics (an intercultural democracy beyond ‘us’ and ‘them’) as well as various forms of anarchism (e.g. self-help, local associations). Asked about how these various movements

interact or confront each other, J.A. Scholte responded that there is some overlap (namely resistance against the dominant model of globalisation) and a variety of forms of action: for example, direct action (e.g. G20 protests), online networks, face-to-face platforms (e.g. social fora) and thematic cooperation (on issues as varied as debt cancellation and HIV/Aids) ranging from the Bretton Woods institutions via trade unions to new social movements.

In the course of the discussion, the following points were raised. First of all, it could be argued that examples of structural transformative alternatives are still fundamentally Western-centric (R. Bhargava). Second, where do movements such as alter-globalisation and the Eurasianists fit into J.A. Scholte's typology? (Robert Harmsen; A. Krickovic). Third, is it not preferable to speak of 'protagonist business' rather than the market? Moreover, revolutionary socialism appears to be mutating into populism. Can we speak of a globalisation of class struggle? Compared with more stable meaning in the past, the meaning of class is changing. For example, there are new class formations in places like Mexico where the Zapatista movement is neither fully Westernised nor purely indigenous. Rather, it is creating another, non-hegemonic culture (P. Gonzalez Casanova).

Responding to these comments and questions, J.A. Scholte argued that the distinction between anti- and alter-globalisation is important because the latter are not opposed to the global but instead to the predominant model. There are however some movements that want to defend local and national sovereignty against the hegemony of the global. As with all political phenomena, a number of movements are hybrid and represent the intertwining of different ideologies, especially in Latin America. For instance, the Bolivian President Evo Morales emerged out of indigenous movements but now defends many other causes. Lula, the Brazilian President, was a leader of the workers' movement before espousing the cause of the landless people and new social movements. The case of Chavez is less clear. Yes, current Western leaders, including President Obama, appear to favour some reformist adaptation (like the closure of tax havens). As for the business perspective, commercial actors also take a variety of approaches to globalisation, and some such as the fair trade movement could be classed as alter-globalisation forces.

These responses and clarifications sparked a further round of comments and discussions. Some participants focused on specific issues like Latin American attempts to re-appropriate national resources: where does this fit in with the typology? Or will it fail like previous projects, when the state diverted revenues, and rent-seeking corruption prevailed over social transformation? (M. Hirsch). On this issue, F. Houtart said that state re-appropriation of natural resources takes time and requires gradual steps, not an immediate final revolution. The more fundamental question is why this is happening predominantly in Latin America. It seems that Asia still views neo-liberalism as an opportunity. For its part, Africa is still trying to recover its own political identity. Moreover, the Arab world sees neo-liberalism as a cultural threat. By contrast, in Latin America neo-liberalism was ushered in on the back of military dictatorships. Neo-liberal structural reforms and monetarist policies caused mass unemployment and social dislocation. As a result, it gave rise to new political movements, inspired in part by the tradition of liberation theology. The colonialist and imperialist presence of the USA provoked fierce resistance to the project of ALCA (the Spanish acronym of the pan-American free-trade area). All this produced an unprecedented convergence between indigenous movements, peasants, parties, churches, social movements and new initiatives such as ALBA (*Alternativa Bolivariana de las Américas*, an alternative project of political



and economic integration among the countries of Latin America). Finally, it also gave additional impetus to new democratic, constitutional changes which are nevertheless internally vulnerable to coups d'état and subversion.

Other participants said that most alter-globalisation movements are intellectual and middle-class and as such different from the peasants' and workers' movements. Moreover, the financial crisis is a class struggle, between the elite in power and the middle classes who want to get into power, with the large majority of populations excluded from formal representation and public debate (Bernd Hamm). There are also numerous daily working class protests around the world, which are unconnected but not opposed to the global social movements that benefit from much greater visibility (Samir Amin).

In conclusion of this session, J.A. Scholte agreed that different class formations are involved in the complex phenomenon of alter-globalisation. These include but are not limited to middle classes, as members of the so-called underclass, social movements and NGOs are all present and active. All the local social fora involve many more classes than the middle classes (e.g. the *Forum des Peuples* in Mali). There are also state-centred social democratic attempts to re-appropriate natural resources. It might also be remembered that class is one of several core concepts for the analysis of globalisation and social change, alongside others such as gender, race and urban/rural divides.

#### **IV. Changes in contemporary hegemonies**

Christopher Coker introduced the fourth session on changes in contemporary hegemonies. He began his presentation with a reference to Herfried Münkler's work on asymmetric warfare (terrorism, insurgency). Under Donald Rumsfeld, the Pentagon was mired in conceptual confusion. From its inception, the Iraqi insurgency was networked and did not seek to control territory or seize the state. Fundamentally, this raises questions about why people wage war. On this question, it is instructive to draw on Hobbes who identified three motives for war and warfare: first, competition; second, diffidence or fear; third, glory or honour. First, after the state of nature, competition mutates into competitiveness but can also revert to competition (e.g. civil war, inter-state war, insurgency). The 'war of all against all' in Iraq in 2004-06 alienated the Sunni, which the subsequent 'surge' strategy exploited.

Second, diffidence or fear can breed distrust. This means that those who are perceived to be weak can creep up on the strong and attack from unexpected angles – exactly what asymmetric warfare is. Moreover, fear can provoke pre-emptive strikes by great powers against smaller powers, causing civilian deaths and reinforcing popular support for the insurgency. Third, reputation or status or honour matter more than many in the modern Western world suspect. Glory and credibility were central to Russia in 1914, Britain in 1940 and also in a different way for President Nixon's actions in Vietnam. Richard Sennett's book *Respect* describes the importance of glory in society and culture today. Yet at the same time, the current crisis does not have sufficient critical mass to lead to a revolt by the powerless. Compared with slavery, the number of people living in slums is not sufficiently high to challenge or undermine the current power configuration. More specifically, military planning is switching its focus from aerial or ground wars to urban warfare or metro-war. The template for the 'war on terror' and for future strategies is based on policing in the 1980s and 1990s,

based on three principles: no tolerance, permanent surveillance and profiling. Within Western cities, this has been developed into a new approach to urban planning and regeneration. There is a curious analogy to *lex talionis* (the law of retribution or revenge), as modern states seem to have adopted something like ‘vindictive wrath’ (President Jackson). ‘Market-states’ tend to subcontract ‘vindictive wrath’ to the private sector (e.g. Blackwater) or to other countries (e.g. extraordinary rendition and torture).

This presentation sparked a lively exchange of ideas. S. Sassen argued that the city has for some time been a sort of laboratory for new concepts and practices. The prison at Abu Ghraib is based and modelled on the US domestic prison system and as such does not constitute an exception but rather the rule. In her current research on the city and the new wars, she is exploring how the city is becoming a kind of technology for unconventional actors and in this sense can serve as a complexified notion of powerlessness. This is so because the urban is both a space for state control and a space for contesting domination. There are thus multiple ways of viewing the city as a space of both power and powerlessness.

According to S. Amin, violence and warfare will basically be urban in the short- and possibly in the long-term future, as a majority of the world population lives in cities. The deeper reason is that the process of capital accumulation is a process of pauperisation, disempowerment and growing relative poverty (access to capital, labour, culture, etc.). Can this still be called a class struggle? Yes, but there is a need for turbulence and perhaps even violent resistance in order to move towards a renewed class struggle of the people against the oligopolists.

For A. Clesse, the ongoing wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine seem absurd from a rational point of view. Moreover, they lead to a further brutalisation of society, at home and abroad. Do certain societies need war in order to function? Do societies actually want peaceful co-existence? In 2009, have levels of violence declined or have forms of violence simply changed? R. Bhargava wondered whether C. Coker has really broken with Hobbes’ atomistic individualism. Is it not the case that both the elites and the ‘underclass’ have to rely on something like justice? After all, Osama bin Laden appeals to past and present injustices in order to legitimate and justify his violent struggle.

A. Pabst questioned some of the tenets of Hobbes’ political philosophy. In Hobbes we find the first modern fusion of juridical-constitutional models of supreme state authority (vis-à-vis the Christian empires, the papacy and the national churches) with a new, ‘biopolitical’ account of power whereby natural life itself and the living body of the individual are now the object of politics and are subject to state authority and control. This can only be understood in terms of Hobbes’ nominalist ontology. First of all, the denial of real universals means that both God and the created structures of the world remain hidden from human cognition. In line with Calvinist theology, Hobbes believes that the post-lapsarian condition is one of permanent violence. In the ‘state of nature’, life is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” because “man is a wolf to man” and there is a “war of all against all”. Even if this original threat of violent death does not describe an epoch in history but instead constitutes a principle that is internal to the State (evident only at the hypothetical moment of its dissolution), it remains the case that only Hobbes’ acceptance of a nominalist ontology can explain why he posits violence as more fundamental to life than peace – contrary to the theological tradition from St. Paul via St. Augustine and Dionysius the Areopagite to Aquinas and Meister Eckhart). Absent any knowledge about an originally peaceful ordering of creation, a natural state of disorder

calls forth imposition of an artificial order – the commonwealth – that merely regulates the violence of life (rather than resolving violence through peace by way of the creative perfection of a more fundamental natural, created order – as for Augustine or Aquinas). Even though Hobbes distinguishes the commonwealth by free, contractual institution from the commonwealth by forceful, violent acquisition, in either case the sovereign has supreme power to ‘give life’ or to withdraw it from his subjects. Similarly, obedience to the sovereign is always for fear of a violent death.

Because according to Hobbes we cannot know any alternative natural order either through reason or faith, human beings are compelled to submit obediently to the supreme sovereignty of the Leviathan. Once more, it is divine omnipotence that legitimates this arrangement and sanctifies the extension of central power to all realms of life and to the preservation or extinction of individual existences. Here we can clearly see the modern ‘biopolitical’ imperative. Finally, the absence of a proper body politic also explains how Hobbes’ nominalist ontology and anthropology leads him to view man as nothing but an owner of himself, an individual who does not stand in relations of mutuality or reciprocity with fellow human beings. As a result, Hobbes tends to define social relations in proprietary terms, largely independent of communal bonds governed by substantive values of peace and justice. Such values are unavailable to Hobbes because his nominalist denial of real universals in the world commits him to rely on fear and domination in order to impose an artificial order on mutually distrustful citizens.

C. Coker concluded session four by responding to these comments and questions. First of all, Hobbes was not cynical about the world or humanity. In fact, he was much more of a realist than he is often given credit for. His philosophy is now rescued by evolutionary biologists and atheist philosophers. This has led Neo-Hobbesians to reject both Hobbes’ atomistic individualism and Cartesian mechanics. As Stephen Toulmin argued in his book *Cosmopolis: The hidden agenda of modernity*, modernity went wrong when it turned from the philosophy of Montaigne to the mechanistic ontology of Descartes. Second, on this point Aldous Huxley is more important than Orwell because the former was more prescient, anticipating our happiness with submission and surveillance. Indeed, it seems that prisoners will welcome electronic tagging. This in turn rests on a profound cultural change – abandoning the modern belief in the rehabilitation of social deviants, a move that has led to the collapse of the liberal vision across the West in general and the Anglo-Saxon world in particular. Third and more fundamentally, we are a society that has banned unhappiness: instant self-gratification is the ultimate imperative. A famous dictum says that ‘a long-term investment is a short-term speculation gone horribly wrong’. Fourth, the phenomenon of smart crowds (drinking on the tube, social movements, the swarming of insurgents, patterns of crowd behaviour) now informs public policy-making on a growing range of issues. But questions arise with respect to new tools and strategies, e.g. a robotic control of urban areas: can you programme a robot with a warrior ethos or with a conscience? Finally, there appear to be three things that are unbearable for humans over long periods of time: injustice, tyranny (control without religious or moral legitimacy) and an absence of dignity.

## V. Transformation of political arenas and premises

The fifth session focused on the transformation of political arenas and premises at the local, national and global levels. H. van Gunsteren began his introductory remarks by asking how the main old political institutions of democracy like parliaments, parties and elections or of capitalism like businesses evolve in the current phase of history. After the end of the Cold War clash of ideologies in 1989, culture and identity became much more important (including religion). Another change was the rise in cross-border movements (crime, human rights activists, NGOs, etc.). Moreover, we saw a de-centring of domestic politics: the fiction of absolute national sovereignty (in terms of trust and legitimacy) is now an open secret. The old institutions have not disappeared, but their place in the global setting is changing. More recently, two developments have transformed politics. First of all, the return of the state in the current crisis and, secondly, the increase in self-organising cross-border movements. On the latter development, it is interesting to note which principles of self-organisation in very different fields of scientific discourse are related to emerging orders: diversity, multiple representations of this diversity, selection among this diversity according to some value and leadership through indirect control.

One question that arises from this is whether those four principles can be applied to democracy. Most would say no, arguing that democracy is self-evidently true. The problem is that democracies are associated with procedures and not the quality of outcomes. But if you apply these four principles, then you strengthen the self-organising aspects of democracy and you improve the quality of decisions. In this respect, group behaviour can be seen as either passive herd instinct or active contestation. Both can undermine self-organising democratic systems, though for different reasons and with different outcomes. As for capitalism, Marx thought that it would destroy all cultures whereas others claim that it is all about new technology, but neither seems entirely true. Evolutionary institutionalism tries to work on the basis of existing theories and present structures. As such, this approach rejects the idea of *tabula rasa* and total pre-determination: the former exaggerates the power of human agency, whereas the latter denies it. Evolutionary institutionalism, by contrast, charts a middle course.

S. Amin argued that the main challenge, which we confront since the nineteenth century, is basically the same: how to combine, and not to separate, the democratisation of politics, social progress and respect for diversity? The dominant liberal ideology – the representation of reality – dissociates these three goals from one another, leading to exclusion and social regression. We have to be very modest about democratisation because not all societies have good traditions. Social progress ultimately requires socialism in the sense of socialising private oligopolies. The role of the state is ambiguous: it can advance social progress or halt it, depending on whether it distributes wealth or captures it for itself. Sovereignty tends to be linked to the state, but it applies to other structures too, including the economy and the people.

The discussion then turned to the notion of sovereignty. In his intervention, J.A. Scholte talked about the traditional sources of sovereignty: God, the monarch, the state, parliament and the people. Four qualities or attributes characterise old forms of sovereign power: supreme, absolute, singular and comprehensive. Today, sovereignty is associated with terms such as scattered, pooled or multiple. As such, sovereignty is a modern concept, which was not used in the Middle Ages. If democracy is about people taking decisions non-coercively, then in an age of accelerated globalisation there are questions about *loci* and multiple *demoi*.

S. Sassen described sovereignty as a master category that is powerful and serves an important heuristic function but also obscures important aspects. For example, sovereignty tends to locate power and authority in a single source. As such, it risks ignoring diverse representations and a distributed type of sovereignty. Nor has it much to say about the need to democratise democracy or to restore the balance of power: what kinds of aspects of state sovereignty are now overseen by the courts?

A. Pabst argued that modern models of sovereignty are best understood as the fusion of juridical-constitutional models of supreme state authority (vis-à-vis the Christian empires, the papacy and the national churches) with a new, 'biopolitical' account of power whereby natural life itself and the living body of the individual are now the object of politics and are subject to state authority and control. Because it views life as fundamentally violent (Hobbes' state of nature) and void of any transcendent finality (from Newton's physics to Darwin's biology), modern 'biopolitics' restricts the church to care for peoples' souls and hands their physical bodies over to the state and, increasingly, the market. In practice, modern sovereign power takes the form of coercion for the purposes of what Michel Foucault calls the subjective individualisation of 'each' (*singulatum*) and the objective totalisation of 'all' (*omnes*). By this, he refers to the state's dual control of human beings as bare individuals (rather than members of communities) and of society as a uniform collective – rather than a social and political body that blends communality with individuation. On this basis, Foucault exposes the falsity of the myth that modernity is wholly progressive and that it replaced medieval monism with a new pluralism secured by the authority of the national state and the freedom of the transnational market. Foucault's distinction of 'all' and 'every single one' (*omnes et singulatum*) is significant for the question of sovereignty for another reason. The mutually reinforcing tendency of the state to reduce human beings to bare individuals and to subject them to uniformising practices (by creating and expanding centralised medical, educational and penal institutions) indicates that the duality between the individual and the collective is also internal to the logic of modernity.

Here one can suggest that modern sovereign power is even more problematic than Foucault suspected. For the modern state and the market weakened the mediation of 'the few' at the local level in favour of 'the one' at the sovereign centre and 'the many' linked by a social contract or collective unity. In the long and uneven process of modernisation, intermediary institutions were progressively stripped of their autonomy and their cooperative fraternity with other intermediary institutions within and across borders. Since modern states and markets asserted their unitary sovereign power over and against both universal religious bodies and local self-organisation, the double duality of the modern (individual-collective and national-transnational) can therefore be said to be inscribed into a wider dialectic between 'the one' and 'the many'. Both these poles are 'nominalist' in the sense that they deny primary real relations between the ruler and the ruled and they also deny the reality of the universal common good in which all can share by participating in mediating institutions. Since these nominalist poles and the spectrum of possibilities which they contain tend to privilege abstract individuality over embodied communality, it is now possible to suggest that other foundational categories of modern politics and international relations are also linked from the outset to this dialectic of 'the one' and the 'many'. The 'left' and the 'right', 'liberals' and 'conservatives', 'the private' and 'public' or 'authoritarianism' and 'democracy' have all been defined in terms of either unity or diversity, but without any reference to the real relations that characterise the natural and the human realm. In other words, modernity defines itself in term

of a closed and purely immanent formalism that denies reality in all its mysterious depth and symbolic intimations of abiding truths and hierarchical values.

According to F. Houtart, the task is now to apply the concept of sovereignty to different fields: first of all, the economy and natural resources; second, food sovereignty (as opposed to food security); third, the environment and biodiversity. Specificities of sovereign power in different fields can help elucidate the concept of sovereignty itself. On these questions, capitalism raises a complex range of issues: capitalism instrumentalises the passage from symbolic to analytical thinking, marginalizing other cultures. The logic of capitalism is to introduce its own value into all realms of human activity. By contrast, a broader notion of sovereignty can interrupt this logic and pluralise the concept of power and authority.

Subsequently, the debates focused on contemporary forms of sovereignty. M. Hirsch said that shared sovereignty itself is undergoing something like an evolutionary process, with perhaps at the end of it a loss of the essence of sovereign power. But paradoxically, small states have seen their sovereignty restored in some instances. For example, Luxembourg gained its monetary sovereignty by joining the Euro (whereas before the country had no influence as part of the monetary union with Belgium). P. Gonzalez Casanova spoke about a universal phenomenon of new networks of communes, soviets, local councils that can rival the networks of imperialists, colonialists and big business. For R. Harmsen, parliaments have lost out in favour of the executive, but the judiciary has also gained in influence. Within the European context, sovereignty has been put under the authority of the law. Moreover, there are various forms of ‘soft power’ that are not wholly un-institutionalised (complex structures of agency, transparency and accountability). J.A. Scholte remarked that sovereignty is alive but that we now use it in ways it has never been used before.

In response, H. van Gunsteren said that all these comments and arguments raise the question of representation and what is excluded by representation. It seems that spontaneity is bounded, as rules govern conflict and all human activities, including play, as Johan Huizinga showed in his *Homo ludens*. Rather than a grand conservative alternative, the more modest proposal is to repair and redress injustice and to restore sovereignty where it has been monopolised.

A. Clesse concluded the fifth session by referring to Mancur Olson’s concept of rational ignorance. He also wondered whether despair can be translated into resistance? How relevant is our discourse? (How) Can theories match the reality of suffering?

## **VI. The evolution of capitalism and world systems after the ‘credit crunch’**

The sixth and final session focused on the evolution of capitalism amidst the current crisis. S. Amin initiated the discussions with a presentation. He put forward four key points. First of all, the current crisis is not a financial crisis. Nor is it the beginning or the cause of a new trajectory but instead the consequence of a much larger crisis, which is not an addition of smaller crises (food, energy etc.) but the fundamental crisis of late oligopolistic capitalism. Second, the immediate and mediate origins of this crisis must be traced to 1971, when the abandonment of dollar gold standards triggered a wholesale change: henceforth, the rate of annual GDP growth was significantly lower than in the period 1945-71 and since then growth

has never recovered. How did capital react to this? As always, the concentration of wealth and ownership (oligopolies) at the national and the international level proceeded apace. Coupled with the demise of the USSR and the beginning of wars against the people of the South (starting with the Middle East), all this favoured the process of globalisation and the financialisation of the economy, giving rise to the second *belle époque* of capitalism (1973/79-2007/8). Indeed, we have witnessed an unprecedented oligopolisation of the economy: about 5,000 businesses dominate everything (the economy, politics, culture, etc.). The global real economy generates a massive surplus which is almost entirely appropriated by the oligopolies. Their share of wealth has risen exponentially, whereas the income of workers has declined and their share in national wealth has fallen. François Morin already published figures as early as 2002 on the discrepancy between global finance and the real economy, but few if any conventional economists or politicians took notice.

Third, the previous crisis was 1873, when growth fell and capital reacted in the same way: there was a concentration of wealth in the 1880s and a wave of colonisation and globalisation, first analysed by Rudolf Hilferding and later by Lenin who was right about looming wars and revolution. All of which led to the first *belle époque*. Among the economists only Keynes saw the problems in the 1920s, which eventually culminated in the crisis of 1929-33.

What is different between the two long crises is that the First World War was a war between imperialist powers, whereas now we are faced with the collective imperialism of the triad (USA, Europe and Japan). The other difference is the relative scarcity of natural resources in today's world. What are the implications of these two differences? Instead of an inter-imperialist struggle, the current conflict is between the imperialist triad (backed by supranational organisations like the IMF and the World Bank and political tools and military instruments such as the G7 and NATO) and the countries of the South. In addition, war has already started (since 1991 US imperialism has been at work in the Middle East) and will continue to develop into a global conflict between North and South. The G20 merely tries to restore the *status quo ante* and to rebuild the existing system. A further massive injection of capital into the global economy and the pillars of global finance will have disastrous consequences for the South and the former East. For all these reasons, if nothing less than systemic restoration is pursued, then an even greater crisis will occur in a few years.

The fourth and final thesis concerns the socialisation of oligopolies and the termination of US hegemony. The Chinese President Hu Jintao mentioned the end of the US Dollar as world reserve currency. More fundamentally, real change will only come from the peripheries. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and other similar groupings could affect the current dynamics and help bring back national sovereignty. Historical precedents include Russian and Chinese revolutions. However, it remains to be seen whether the societies of the West will move towards democratisation, social progress and respect for diversity. The first best alternative would be an alliance to reduce the huge inequalities and the unprecedented pauperisation, now on a scale not even imagined by Marx. The second best is a kind of re-run of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with a contest between the North and the South. The third 'best' is a global genocide against all the people who are deemed useless, whereas it is the system that is useless and must be replaced.

In his remarks, V. Kuvaldin argued that the current crisis is neither financial nor economic but in fact a crisis of globalisation. In terms of cycles of hegemony, one can refer to Fareed

Zakaria who said that in the transition from the British to the American phase of hegemony, the British Empire was politically strong but economically weakening. By contrast, the current US Empire is economically strong (or at least was until recently) but is politically weakening. In the past, the British decided that they would not obstruct the rise of a new hegemon, allowing them to maintain their influence and domination long after economic sickness had set in. By contrast, the US had a very long economic hegemony, from 1870 until now, with the share of US GDP in the world economy being remarkably stable. But between the 1990s and now, three major changes have intervened. First of all, the USA went from being a creditor to being a debtor: sovereign, personal and corporate debt now amount to 33 trillion US Dollars, which will take at least a generation to pay back. The USA has thus mortgaged its own future. Second, US military power is the strongest in the world, and no one will challenge it, but are they of any use? Washington has increasingly limited ability to affect political outcomes (Iraq, Afghanistan but also Iran, North Korea, Cuba and Venezuela). Third, US 'soft power' is in decline, with diplomacy and culture less popular and influential than before. Are therefore the days of US hegemony numbered? No, the US is already involved in regional networks. Moreover, new blocs and alliances such as the BRIC, plus Indonesia and South Africa are becoming more powerful on the international stage. Fourth, it is not clear where we will see a move from the G20 to the G2 (US and China), as China is in no hurry to establish more power and influence across the globe. Moreover, the global system is neither unipolar nor bipolar nor multipolar but rather a combination of a single hegemonic power and regional powers. Finally, contemporary Russian capitalism is more like 19<sup>th</sup>-century European capitalism.

According to C. Coker, the sinew of hegemonic power is communication: satellites in the case of the US, and also listening and processing information. The power of information needs of course to be translated into real effective power, but informational advantage is indispensable to hegemony in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Second, declining hegemonic powers are a great deal more dangerous than aspiring ones. As P.J. O'Rourke said: 'remember that Iraq is our mess and that it is a mess with a message: don't mess with us'! Third, the USA also has an edge in terms of immigration: there is a permanent regular flux of 50-60 million to the US (predominantly Hispanics). By contrast, Europe needs much more immigration even to maintain the widening demographic gap at the current level. Finally, will we see another generational change - for example, Ortega y Gasset and Karl Mannheim, after 1918 for the British and after 1941 for the Americans? Will this crisis be sufficient to prompt another generational change?

A. Pabst argued that the old opposition between the modern national state and the transnational market is largely obsolete, as the dominant form of political organisation has evolved from a warfare state via a welfare state to being a 'market-state' (coined by Philip Bobbitt in his book *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History*). Instead of being centred on dominion over territory and population or the central provision of universal welfare, now the state's mission is to maximise client and consumer choice by tying national economies to global trade and global finance. As such, state and market are converging and colluding at the expense of intermediary, self-regulating institutions and local government. This is not the only duality which has entered a zone of 'in-distinction'. The same is true for capitalism, which used to be associated with the 'free market'. What we are seeing now however is that capitalism can be either predominantly market-driven, like in many Western countries, or more strongly state-sponsored, like in Russia and China. More fundamentally,



the origins of capitalism are secular because a capitalist system could emerge when not just labour but also life and land were commodified, as Karl Polanyi first argued in his seminal book *The Great Transformation*. Capitalism became dominant once the sanctity of life and land became subordinated to the quasi-sacrality of state and the market. Only religion can interrupt the capitalist process of commodification and defend the sacred against the secular.

In the subsequent discussion, the following comments were made. First of all, it was said that the Governor of the Chinese Central Bank put forward ideas on abandoning the US Dollar in favour of Special Drawing Rights (SDR). One question, which arises in this context, is whether the hegemon needs to be a state. All the evidence suggests that there is no single hegemon in itself or as such but that instead hegemony takes the form of networked structures (S. Sassen). Second, the extent and the nature of commodification differ between the first and the second phase of globalisation mentioned by S. Amin. Contemporary global capitalism is marked by different patterns of commodification than the global capitalism of the late nineteenth century. Today there are significant commodifications of finance, mass consumer goods, communications, information and even genetic material that were minor or entirely absent a hundred years ago. Moreover, the conflicts identified by S. Amin involving the imperialist triad and the global war between North and South are all couched in terms of the centre and the periphery, but there are many exceptions such as China and the Gulf states (J.A. Scholte). Third, there are inner contradictions of the triad that could affect the evolution of globalisation and the North-South conflict. Moreover, there are few chances for change because the process of pauperisation marginalizes the many (the hungry don't revolt) and capitalism co-opts the intellectual middle classes which in the past have tended to lead revolutions, so pessimism seems to be the order of the day (B. Hamm).

S. Amin sought to address these comments and questions by making a number of concluding remarks. He began by saying that the past is dead but the future is not yet born. Hegemony without a national state can be envisaged, but it will be the club of the 5,000 big businesses that will be in charge which would lack military capacity. At the same time, war always brings the state back in (to which S. Sassen said that states tend increasingly to sub-contract military functions and there are new spaces of conflict). With reference to the work of Giovanni Arrighi, S. Amin contested the claim that there are successions of long hegemonies. Instead, hegemonies are short and interspersed with long periods of conflict between tentative hegemonies. The Chinese have replaced imperialism with hegemony: SDRs must be seen in this context, but more importantly China has opened negotiations with South-East Asia, Argentina and (soon) Brazil. Beijing could be a counter-pole and together with the SCO could provide a counter-weight to NATO (which is expanding in 'AfPak' and the former Soviet space). However, China is a stato-cracy, different from both triad oligopolies and the Russian form of stato-cratic oligarchic capitalism, whereas in Latin America we are dealing with a comprador bourgeoisie. All of which seems to portend a decline of democracy and the rise of populism, authoritarianism and dictatorship.

Polanyi's thesis on commodification is crucial because 40% of world population are peasants and the ongoing dislocation of peasant agriculture is a major threat. But religion is not and cannot be the solution to this problem. For one, Islamic movements are totally in favour of the present economic system. The revival of religious traditions is not entirely negative and in any case very complex. Marx himself thought that the religion of capitalism would replace God with the law of supply and demand, but man has an irreducibly metaphysical dimension. In

some sense, we have gone from monotheism to monetism, but a return to monotheism is undesirable and unfeasible. In fact, modernity originated in China in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when the state was separated from religion and the free, neutral public space was invented. This project moved to Persia, the Mediterranean and Italy. As a result, capitalism was not a Protestant invention at all, but historical capitalism conquered the world and replaced everything else. Actual religion became totally entangled with historical capitalism, something which liberation theology has noted and rejected.

What V. Kuvaldin says is the likely short-term perspective, but the current system is not sustainable, and there will be another perhaps greater crisis – a low-growth model. Some of the key questions are, first, whether the USA will accept a decline in living standards for a long time; second, whether Europe and Japan will follow the USA on this path; third, whether Europe will be able to maintain the Euro. The future shape of the global hegemonic system will in large part depend on the answers to these questions.

### **Conclusion**

The conference proceeding ended with a series of questions addressed by the participants to S.N. Eisenstadt. First of all, does the hegemon have to be a country? In response, he said in the course of a second telephone conference call that hegemony tends to be concentrated in states but that it can also be operated as part of networks. Historically, the Dutch case shows how important networks are. Second, are hegemonies primarily grounded in economic or in political power? He agreed with S. Amin's point about oligopolies, saying that hegemonic arrangements tend to need political arrangements. If the latter are composite and not unitary, this can mitigate hegemonic power. Third, is there is a need for new categories beyond the old notions of democracy, imperialism and socialism? Yes, he thought that today genuinely global dynamics are at work and force us to innovate and to formulate new conceptual frameworks.

A. Pabst  
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June 2009

## Appendix I

### Breakout sessions on ‘Reinventing Modernity and Modernisation’

At the start of the two breakout sessions, A. Krickovic briefly explained that this project on ‘Reinventing Modernity and Modernisation’ has a theoretical and a practical angle. Theoretically, it will explore different conceptions of the origins and evolution of modernity from around the world. The aim is to provide a comparative analysis of the dominant Western and other accounts. Practically, it will focus on how these different conceptions shape policy-making in areas such as the environment, security and global governance.

The breakout sessions consisted of a number of short presentations and debate with the remaining participants. The objective is to explore the main conceptual and thematic issues and to operationalise this project.

M. Khomyakov outlined a number of conceptual issues. First, among the classical theories of modernisation after the Second World War, one dominant theory views modernisation as Americanisation. In turn, the origins of this approach can be traced to the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in particular the run-up to the Enlightenment and the emphasis on technological change, political transformation and scientific revolutions. There are many strands of the Enlightenment tradition (Scottish, English, French and German) and each exhibits specificities in terms of political, economic and epistemological issues. According to Cornelius Castoriades, it is useful to speak of a double imaginary structure, centred on autonomy and rationalisation. Political modernisation predominantly focuses on democratisation and the defence of individual rights. One can also distinguish structures and institutions from discourses and narratives, but there is no logical or dialectical link but instead it is best described in terms of metonymy (calling a thing or a concept, not by its own name, but by a closely related name). What this approach provides is a move from monolithic, singular meanings to a greater diversity of descriptions and definitions.

Following this short presentation, some of the comments by the participants related to the origins of modernity. According to S. Amin, modernity began in China in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and consisted in a break with the ancient world associated with a strong sense of liberation, the separation of state and church and the creation of a free, neutral public space. Others disagreed, saying that the dominant model of modernity and modernisation originated in Europe in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century. Broadly speaking, Western modernity emerged in Europe with the nominalist denial of universals and the voluntarist assertion of the will over and above the intellect – two shifts whose origins can be traced to 14<sup>th</sup>-century shifts within theology and controversies between Dominicans like St. Thomas Aquinas and later Meister Eckhart who defended realism and intellectualism and Franciscans such as John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham who argued in favour of nominalism and voluntarism. As the Swiss philosopher Alain de Murald has shown in his book *L’unité de la philosophie politique: De Scot, Occam et Suarez au libéralisme contemporain*, modern thought as a whole and liberalism in particular draw on late medieval voluntaristic and nominalist conceptions of being and power (A. Pabst).

Yet other participants also rejected these two rival accounts, contending that the presentations and interventions so far have offered different descriptions of modernity but no definitions. A preferable approach is to view modernity as a series of myths directing us to the future. Until the late 17<sup>th</sup> and the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, cultures tended to be concerned with the past. From Plato onwards, the focus was on injustice in the past which was seen in terms of returning to a golden age. After the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there was a radical shift, away from the past and from faith towards the future and reason. However, this is not to suggest that modernity was or is monolithic. As Stephen Toulmin showed, there are profound differences between Montaigne and Descartes. Nowadays, we are seeing the failure of pure reason and there is a need to recover and extend notions of reasonableness and humanising modernity. Rebelling against Western or in fact Anglo-Saxon modernity (from 1688 until now) is real, as is the need to introduce reasonableness into instrumental rationality, e.g. the work of Dewey and other pragmatists (C. Coker).

The second presentation was delivered by A. Krickovic. He drew on S. Eisenstadt's concept of multiple modernities in order to explore Chinese theories of modernity and modernisation. First of all, there can be little doubt that (Neo-)Confucianism has had a lasting influence on Chinese modernity. Confucianism and its developments put the emphasis on the community over and above the individual, as well as on a series of values such as compassion, empathy, sympathy, benevolence and the refusal to tolerate or be indifferent to suffering. The individual is only fulfilled by service to the community. As such, Neo-Confucianism promotes a fiduciary self and individual duties towards community rather than an atomistic self endowed with inalienable rights. The distinctness of the Chinese variant of modernity is to focus on a web of inter-personal and inter-communal relationships and not on the individual in itself and as such.

One concrete difference is that conflict and litigation are avoided in favour of consensus and cohesion. The family is the basic unit of society and property is not an individual's asset but a communal one. In consequence, civil society is where family and the state come together. There is also a much stronger emphasis on inter-generational ties, especially respect for the elderly and for parents. According to Chin Chang, the modern Chinese attempts to institutionalise responsibility of the ruler towards the ruled are based on these principles. Chinese models of modernity do not represent a closed system but instead are open-ended, flexible and tolerant, as evinced by the recent assimilation of other forces, values (Taoism, Buddhism) and ideologies like Marxism and liberalism.

In response, C. Coker mentioned Nietzsche's idea of the will-to-power. In modernity, human agency to craft a future is based on the past, not on repudiating the past. Instead, it is a matter of revaluing perennial values. When John Dewey was in Japan, he promoted a forward-looking vision, but the Japanese invented a mythical past (the so-called *Bushido* ethos) and Zen national religion, thereby dragging the future back to the past. As such, one can find in Asia (and elsewhere) various examples of reactionary modernism (including in Cambodia). Nor is this reserved to Asia. Moreover, notions of obligations, right, and family honour are central to Asian and other modern projects. Even Augustus' reinvention of Rome relied on Vergil's defence of piety towards ancestors.

A. Pabst highlighted a number of parallels between Confucianism and Adam Smith, in particular the emphasis on the moral foundations of economic and social activity and on

values such as sympathy, benevolence, empathy and ‘fellow-feeling’. This matters for current debates on Chinese alternatives to Western capitalism and democracy. For instance, Giovanni Arrighi has argued in his most recent book *Adam Smith in Beijing* that China’s economic miracle over the last thirty years comes close to the Industrious Revolution advocated by Adam Smith (as opposed to the actual Industrial Revolution) because it combines the reduction of poverty with social progress and the protection of a ‘moral economy’. As such, China’s economic rise represents the late fulfilment of the equalisation among Western and Eastern countries which Smith prophesied in the *Wealth of Nations*.

The third presentation focused on Russian versions of modernity. V. Kuvaldin spoke about the Russian paradox of ‘de-modernisation’. In the USSR, in the past the biggest part of the economy was of course the military-industrial complex whereas today it is the energy sector (though Russia is not a petro-state). Crucially, many other sectors have become or been made obsolete, including public education, science and health. In this process, there has been a rejection of fundamental aspects of modernity such as social progress and the potential of science and technology to improve living conditions. The problem is that there is a growing pre-dominance of the state in the economy, with monopoly markets and an increasingly strong presidential administration that meddles in all sorts of affairs. At the same time, Russia is a relatively free country, with a generation of people growing up without coercion (individual freedom and personal privacy). Western and East-Asian theories of modernisation are the two (main) conceptions of modernity and Russia seems to have taken to the Eastern model of modernity.

C. Coker remarked that it has been shown how the Forbidden City was protected from Red Guards. Thus, the Cultural Revolution was both Chinese (going back to year zero) and modern. In fact, modernity can be seen as a stage of development. As Segal said, there are no Asian values because values are the same across different cultures. What differs are norms, i.e. how values are translated into institutions and practices. Crucially, if you repudiate your past, you will produce a reactionary, left- or right-wing modernism.

In his intervention, P. Gonzalez Casanova spoke about building alternatives based on universal values. Universality implies unity-in-diversity. Plato and Plotinus put forward unitary definitions of the highest principles – the Good or the One. By contrast, the struggle for modernity has focused on plural definitions of universal (or universally acceptable) values. One example is the interaction between indigenous and other cultures. Beyond both the old Western-centric humanism that grew out of Antiquity and the Renaissance and the equally Western-centric utilitarian rationalism, there are now attempts to build alternatives that also overcome the old divide between the religious and the secular. Among the many conditions for such alternatives, there is the need to reaffirm and defend the autonomy of university, vis-à-vis both religion and the state.

In conclusion of the breakaway sessions, two questions were raised. First of all, does it make more sense to speak of alternative, multiple modernities or is it preferable to frame the debate on modernity in terms of rival belief systems? Second, can we approach the complex question of modernity and modernisation based on a single working definition or do we require competing ones?

## Appendix II

*Luxembourg Institute for European and International Studies (LIEIS)*

Conference on

### **Contemporary Globalisation and Hegemonies: Transformation of Nation-States - New Intercivilisational Visions**

*8 and 9 May 2009*

*Conference Centre*

*Monastery of the Franciscan Congregation  
Luxembourg*

## Programme

### **Friday, 8 May 2009**

- 09.00 – 09.15      Welcome remarks by Armand Clesse  
Introductory remarks by Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (by phone)
- 09.15 – 10.45      **Session 1: The Major Characteristics of Contemporary Economic, Cultural and Political Globalisation:** Structure of Hegemonies and Legitimation  
*Introductory remarks:* Pablo Gonzalez Casanova
- 11.15 – 13.00      **Session 2: Contemporary Globalisation and its Social Impact:** the Continual Permeation of Peripheries into Hegemonic Centres; Social Dispossession and Dislocation; New Patterns of Formations of Classes and Class Struggles  
*Introductory remarks:* François Houtart, Saskia Sassen
- 14.30 – 16.00      **Session 3: The Search for Alternative Globalisations:** Anti-globalisation; Global Movements; the Power of Small Numbers  
*Introductory remarks:* Jan Aart Scholte
- 16.30 – 18.00      **Session 4: Changes in Contemporary Hegemonies:** New International Constellations, the New World Disorder; Movements of Resistance; Non-Symmetric Warfare  
*Introductory remarks:* Christopher Coker

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**Saturday, 9 May 2009**

09.00 – 10.45     **Session 5: Transformation of Political Arenas and Premises:** Beyond Representative Democracy; New Patterns of Legitimation and Justification and Accountability in Political Parties  
*Introductory remarks:* Herman van Gunsteren,

11.15 – 13.00     **Session 6: The Evolution of Capitalism and World Systems after the ‘Credit Crunch’:** the Impact of Reforms; Conditions for Systemic Transformation  
*Introductory remarks:* Viktor Kuvaldin

**Reinventing Modernity – A New International Research and Policy Project**

14.30 – 16.00     **Breakout Session 1:**  
*Presentations:*  
Viktor Kuvaldin: Modernity and Economic Modernisation in Russia  
Maxim Khomyakov: Some Methodological Issues in the Study of Modernity  
Adrian Pabst: Secular Modernity – Origins and Consequences  
Andrej Krickovic: Multiple Modernities and Chinese Perspectives on Modernity

16.30 – 18.00     **Breakout Session 2:**  
Round-table discussion

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*Luxembourg Institute for European and International Studies (LIEIS)*

**Conference on**  
**Contemporary Globalisation and Hegemonies:**  
**Transformation of Nation-States - New Intercivilisational Visions**

*8 and 9 May 2009*

*Luxembourg*

**List of participants**

**Georges Als**, Honorary Director, STATEC; Professor Emerit. of Economics, University of Brussels

**Samir Amin**, Director, Third World Forum, Dakar

**Rajeev Bhargava**, Professor, Director, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi

**Armand Clesse**, Director, Luxembourg Institute for European and International Studies

**Christopher Coker**, Professor of International Relations, London School of Economics and Political Science

**Pablo Gonzalez Casanova**, Director, Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Ciencias y Humanidades, University of Mexico

**Herman van Gunsteren**, Professor of Political Theory and Philosophy of Law, Dept. of Political Science, Leiden University

**Maria Guzikova**, Associate Professor; Head of International Office; Chair of European Studies, Gorky Ural State University, Yekaterinburg

**Bernd Hamm**, Professor Emerit. of Sociology, University of Trier

**Robert Harmsen**, Professor of Political Science, University of Luxembourg

**Mario Hirsch**, Director, Pierre Werner Institute, Luxembourg

**François Houtart**, Professor Emerit. of Sociology at the University of Louvain-la-Neuve; Founder and former Director, Tricontinental Centre, Louvain-la-Neuve

**Maxim Khomyakov**, Professor of History and Philosophy, Department of Philosophy; Vice-Rector on International Relations, Gorky Ural State University, Yekaterinburg

**Harlan Koff**, Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Luxembourg

**Andrej Krickovic**, PhD Candidate Political Science; Research Fellow, Institute of International Studies, University of Berkeley



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**Viktor B. Kuvaldin**, Professor, Head of Department Social and Political Sciences, Moscow School of Economics, Lomonosov Moscow State University

**Jean-Paul Lehnens**, Professor of Global History; former Vice-rector of Academic Affairs, University of Luxembourg

**Adrian Pabst**, Leverhulme Research Fellow in Theology and Politics, University of Nottingham; Research Fellow, Luxembourg Institute for European and International Studies

**Saskia Sassen**, Professor of Sociology, Dept. of Sociology and Committee on Global Thought, Columbia University, New York; Visiting Professor, London School of Economics and Political Science

**Jan Aart Scholte**, Professor, Director, Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation, University of Warwick