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## A POSSIBLE HISTORY OF GLOBALIZATION AND THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY\*

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Globalization is a process that can be defined positively and in a relatively concrete manner.<sup>1</sup> Without any doubt, there exists a possibility of its positive definition, even if this definition, due to the universal and holistic character of the object, can be worked out not without serious scientific, logical and discursive problems.

After the first decade of the third millennium we sharply feel the necessity to learn about the *history* of globalization. It is necessary to emphasize that we are not interested in the past history of globalization or numerous historical analogies (from the Roman Empire to India) that have often been the objects of analysis in the recent decades. What we are interested in is the '*history of the present*', as we consider globalization a genuine recent phenomenon.

The spontaneous answer (to the question about the possibility of history of globalization in the strict sense of the word) must be *positive*. However, from the methodological point of view, a dilemma can appear already in this very moment of spontaneity. As the specific and fundamental feature of globalization is its functional character, the problem of its history should be considered within absolutely new context.

In fact, the functional character of existence is also historical, this historicity, however, differs much from the historical mode of existence of the non-functional dimension. The only fact that globalization as a whole is a further not defined *entirety of functional and non-functional dimensions* makes this dilemma solvable. So, it is likely that this simultaneously functional and non-functional dimension on the whole can have a history in a methodological sense.

The reflection on the answer to this question assumes choosing dimensions (thematic 'fields') in which we intended to investigate history of globalization comprehended in such a way. The actual *cognitive interest* (Erkenntnisinteresse), becoming here thematic, stipulates a priority of possible questioning with a certain clarity. This order is determined by the practical and even pragmatic relevance of specific problems.

Then, the question whether the so defined globalization had its own history (simply said, *history since 1989*), means then also the determination, in which concrete fields (dimensions, disciplines) we will inquire about this possible history.

In this sense, the following central problems of globalization history (in the sense we recommended) are proposed: 1) the *imperial* dimension (as the one of international politics and of the so-called *actoral* spheres, the issue of *decisivity* in the context of globalization, as well as the respective *poles* of the global power distribution); 2) the *economic* dimension (the specific structure of the global economy and monetary

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Kiss, E. *Monetarista globalizáció és posztzocialista rendszerváltás // Társadalomfilozófiai tanulmányok*. – Budapest, 2002; *Idem*. *Das Globale ist das Unmittelbarwerden des Absoluten? // Hegel-Jahrbuch*, 1996. – Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997. – Pp. 33–41.

world economy); 3) history of economic *cycles* (at the time of globalization), and, 4) history of intellectual, spiritual and ideological *value transfers* within global process. Speaking about global Europe, we should also inquire<sup>2</sup> about its history in the context of these four extensive problem domains.

The emergence of globalization (in the strict sense of the word – in 1989) also caused *the end of imperial world divided in two parts*. It is, therefore, clear that in the course of spontaneous processes of the budding nineties, the exact explanation of the imperial problematics seems to be absolutely sinking in the millennial harmony of new freedoms and global self-regulation. The eminent factor of the relative devaluation of political subsystems in the dynamically deploying globalization<sup>3</sup> also added to this general state which can be characterized as spontaneous.

Through this development, serious historical expectations appeared in a new post-imperial world. It is significant, that Huntington's theory which presented the first far-reaching analysis of the imperial agenda after 1989, formulated it from a new (and at the same time 'old-fashioned') point of view of 'civilizations', which are difficult to identify within traditional political approach.

Basing on this only fact, we can conclude that not only *anti-* but also *post-imperial* sentiments were strong and vital at those times. It shows that even the 'imperial' issue should be discussed only in a civilisatory circle of thinking. However, the clash of concrete empires differs from that of civilizations! It might have been simply impossible for Huntington to follow the traditional theory of political realism at that time! The analysis of 'civilization', or rather 'clash of civilizations' was obviously a genuine imperial research. However, it followed by no means the traditional discipline of international politics. Huntington most clearly refused the political mask and reconsidered the imperial order through the semi-political lens of the new civilisatory relations.<sup>4</sup>

The methodological aspect of history of the specifically global, that is monetary/money economy, consists above all in the fact that the global economy is a *holistic phenomenon*, for which it is very difficult to invent a specific and adequate *meta-language*.<sup>5</sup> This is, by the way, a far-reaching common phenomenon in the description of all holistic objects, not only those of globalization. This methodical problem does not come therefore from globalization as a new, but as a holistic phenomenon.

A methodological problem of another type arises due to the fact that monetarism of the *real* global economy is almost a complete manifestation of an altogether theoretical model. Then, there emerges a crucial proximity between the model and reality. This proximity creates a lot of new problems, particularly those, which increasingly conceal the effective *difference between model and reality*, which cause blurring of the lan-

<sup>2</sup> The problem domain 'Europe' is connected with a thousand threads with the overall problematic of globalization. For our research, the relevance of Europe underlines above all the fact, that for many citizens of the EU, globalization in the EU often appears as a consequence, insight, and challenge of the membership. Practically the challenges of the EU differ very much from the ones of the non-institutionalized globalization.

<sup>3</sup> On this issue see the following works: Kiss, E. *Monetarista globalizáció...*; Kiss, E. *Das Globale...*

<sup>4</sup> The civilisatory components of the post-socialist system have changed. See Gerlich, P. *et. al.* *From the Center Towards Europe and Back*. – Vienna – Poznan, 1997. – Pp. 117–125; Kiss, E. *A civilizációs összetevő a poszt-szocialista rendszerváltásban // Konfliktus, konszenzus, kooperáció. Tanulmánykötet. II. Országos Politológus Vándorgyűlés*. – Szerkesztette: Horváth Csaba Pécs, 1996–1997. – Pp. 228–230.

<sup>5</sup> Rudolf Carnap's scientific-theoretical stipulation is very useful: we can describe objects on a certain representational level, if only a language refers properly to this representational level; however, this language can not be on the same representational level like the one referring to these objects, which is called 'meta-language'. The mentioned problematic appears in the case of every object, or rather every representational level, that is in itself holistic and has a character of entirety, which is a systematic place of a possible meta-language for this object sphere always at the expense of additional big difficulties.

guages of theory and practice. In the case of a crisis, it will be more difficult to categorize this crisis as a more or less simple *realization of the model* or as a *traditional cyclic destabilization* of real economy.

However, the same difficulties emerge with the *actors* as well. In most cases, it is quite difficult to decide whether an event should be interpreted as a result of real actors' activities or as a well predictable consequence of an already fundamentally elaborated model. The most noticeable, but also decisive effect of global economy consists in revaluation, even in the fundamental change of the money function. This modification leads to the occurrence of widespread speculations or economic bubbles.

The other most determinant effect of this global economy is, however, only *implicitly* economical. This consequence is the state's indebtedness, after which globalization relatively (or also absolutely?) devalues the states under all circumstances. However, a state in debt also has its own logic of functioning which determines the economic life and generally its social existence: these two aspects in their turn define the global economy reflexively and in retrospection.

The world economic cycles unfold during particular periods of globalization, so it is always a very difficult task to distinguish large groups of causes from each other in the permanent economic dynamics. Thus, it becomes difficult to separate the dynamic-structural moments of globalization from the cyclic and conjunctural changes in the explanation of a crisis (also then, if both groups of causes are interdependent and determine each other at the level of a real causality). For these reasons, *it appears absolutely problematic to draw up a history of globalization in the framework of the economic system.*

The recognition of the circumstances and fundamental mental states of globalization was accomplished by the second half of the 1990s. Within this new frame, the present reveals also as a *new aggregation of the most diverse intellectual contents, values and innovations.* Undoubtedly, there has emerged a medial global world culture.

The mass culture anticipated this deployment process already in the 1970s, and the global mass culture undoubtedly also disposed qualitatively new traits. This now global (world) culture increases the importance of the 'other', that is of the 'virtual' world, it creates a permanent presence in the most different parts of the world and brings together all regions, and nevertheless (as an opposite process) moves away every region and every individual from its own space and origin. This global (world) mass culture gradually makes the society rootless and, at the same time, global and international. This culture realizes classical (though paradoxical) post-modern basic values (anti-totalitarianism, consumer attitude without any relevant consumption, individualism without any immanent primary value orientation) not only among masses, but effectively at the *global scale*.<sup>6</sup> It shows *how problematic it could also be to make an attempt to define the history of globalization in the context of the mass culture becoming global.*

When reconstructing the determinations of globalization, one more question arises: which structural and functional reasons have enhanced the status and the scale of the *imperial* discourses in the context of current globalization. Thus, we also inquire about the phase delay in the thematization of the imperial problematics.

It is clear that the professionals' intellectual consciousness itself needed a considerable time to understand the following obvious contrast and then to elaborate it. On the one hand, the international politics developed apparently without any problems and

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<sup>6</sup> About these concepts see Kiss, E. A posztmodern elemei a misszionálás szemszögéből // Magyar Filozófiai Szemle. – 1999. – Num. 6. – Pp. 719–731; Kiss, E. A posztmodern filozófia mint metafizika // Világosság. – 1999. – Num. 10. – Pp. 14–28.

changes, keeping its traditional imperial character even in the era of globalization, whilst, on the other hand, the political subsystem was not globalizing for a simple reason: *that it is not functionally determined and led, and so it could not be determined and led functionally.*

It means that in the era of the universally acknowledged globalization, the interpretation of political system may not be subjected to any fundamentally new norms. The difference between the experience of a new global world and the objective view that the political system is a phenomenon that cannot globalize on the basis of a quite abstract insight, might constitute a difficulty, certainly not easy to dispel in this learning process.

This undoubtedly applies to the *abstract* and *theoretical* thinking; however, it would not be difficult to prove it also with empirical data. We should realize then, that *in the era of globalization no essentially new political institution was born.* It means that politics as a system and subsystem *persists its system-theoretical difference from the functional world of globalization without any problem and for a long time.*

The scale of the imperial issue in the era of globalization most likely increased due to the extreme, extraordinary enhancement of the *actors'* dimension. It can be easily comprehended that the actors' possibilities and *the use of the increased action radius in many cases directly leads to imperial problems.* For example, in the pre-global time, one could hardly imagine that a European prime-minister could influence global processes in such a direct way, as was the case with Tony Blair.

With respect to the increasing relevance of the imperial problematic the *decisivity* is also generally characteristic of globalization. The importance of the *direct* and *indirect* decision is growing. The critical thrust of decisivity leads to a problem which is hardly enough recognized up to the present. *Whereas globalization and liberal democracy are interdependent and interdetermined.* The rapid growth of the relevant decisivity already signals a systematic failure in the universe of globalization: there is a clearly perceptible contradiction between the *founding principles* (liberal democracy as basic condition) and the *reality* (actors' decisions). By the way, the systemic and theoretical difference between globalization and political system can show up at this point.

The functional processes of globalization in many respects bring together individual states and regions. In their intensity, the significantly increasing *imperial interactions* obviously also belong to the numerous new qualities of globalization. The imperial processes permanently re-qualify individual states and regions according to their power. The constantly repositioned *club of empires* shows itself *downwards* closed, whilst it is always *upwards* breaking out again.

The increasing importance of the imperial discourse is considered as an integral part of history of globalization. Can this question, however, also be reversed? *Is it possible to reinterpret the former history of globalization in the context of imperial discourse?*

We suppose that history of globalization can be positively developed in the context of imperial discourse.

During the first period of globalization the imperial question hardly appears in an explicit way. The preceding period when the world was divided into two parts had drastically improved the validity of imperial reflections. It is anything but surprising that Francis Fukuyama's theory of the end of the history – maybe even against the author's own wish – envisaged the model of *universal post-imperial democracy* (or, as formerly Alexandre Kojeve has noted in this context, of *universal democratic world-state*). Exclusively in this context Samuel S. Huntington's works can be interpreted as conforming to reality. There is no doubt that his ideas were aimed at cooling down the optimistic

expectations towards a post-imperial new world order. He wanted to bring public opinion back to 'reality'. The more significant fact is that even Huntington himself did not want, with these objectives, to call this new imperial start by its proper name (or did not dare to do it?). He formulates his new message not in political, but in partly political terms of 'civilization'. In the context of 'civilization', the international politics will then recall the realism of Kissinger who openly rehabilitates Metternich.

Then, in the context of the imperial discourse, the first period of globalization revealed itself as the time of prude discussions and activities. The attention was focused on the only enemy of this very confident era – on fundamentalism.

The second period of globalization, developing in the context of imperial discourse, defines the international politics again. However, based on some arguments one can suggest that this period failed to identify any relevant difference between the specific functionalism of globalization and non-functionally founded mode of existence of the political subsystem in general. The central idea of this second period was (obviously in the context of the imperial discourse) the fact that in this phase of the post-communist democracy and neoliberal politics, a possible international conflict could be legitimized *only morally*.

The large working force of the 1989 turn is also still noticeable in this context. The realization of imperial motives and causes was legitimate in public only if it could be planned as an answer to a qualified violation of human rights. The problems of international rights, always arising immediately through this reality, were systematically ignored. It means that the intervention initiators, starting slowly, should make considerable efforts to present to the public the actual strategic objectives as a *generous and universal answer* to the violation of human rights.<sup>7</sup>

The approaches of 1989 were applied in international politics and demonstrated in the interventions of the 1990s. The typical event of this second period was the Kuwait's war against Saddam Hussein that can be perfectly well classified in this frame. This prude discourse led to the wars and also made serious international conflicts possible. At the same time, we could estimate how successful were the new criteria of the concept of the enemy – *new criteria created new concepts of the enemy*.

The third period of globalization, developing in the context of imperial discourse, started on September 11, 2001. From that time the contours of a new bipolarity became visible. In this still unipolar global world, the concrete and at that vague phenomenon of terrorism hold the position of a structural enemy violating human rights.

The full reconstruction of real historical phenomena is not the main purpose of this paper. Anyway, the Irak war of 2004 during this new period was largely and extensively legitimized already in terms of terrorism. For us, Osama bin Laden's death in 2011 brought the natural end of that period of globalization (in the context of the imperial issue).

Osama's death became a *symbol*, too. It incarnates the change of great historical periods of new globalization. The bipolarity of this third period (which came to the end with the death of the terrorists' leader and symbol) consisted in two poles 'we' and 'terrorists' and built up a whole range of new contacts and alliances and was obviously used in many other cases. In this way, a combination of a new *virtual* and a *real* bipolar world emerged.

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<sup>7</sup> Kiss, E. Menschenrechte und Menschen im Strome der Globalisierung // Völkerrecht und Rechtsbewusstsein für eine Globale Friedensordnung. / Ed. by E. Voit, J. Klopfer. – Dresden, 2000. – Pp. 55–64.

In terms of the prevailing bipolarity, one should consider the alliances' activities that generated free circular structures. First, the circular alliance activity converged with respect to the common enemy – terrorism. The other activity of this structure was oriented (in many different and sometimes even inexplicable forms) against the superiority of a single superpower (independent of the fact that the same power could no longer constitute, in formal sight, the only pole in this bipolarity).

The third period of globalization (in the context of the imperial discourse) created the *bipolarity anew (and at the same time a new type of it)*, completed with these two circular alliance activities. It is characteristic that this very complex structure became really possible just because the prevailing bipolarity was to a great extent also *virtual and asymmetrical*.

At present we already observe the fourth period starting. The basic structure of this new situation points out again at bipolarity with corresponding accompanying substructures. All the time globalization was structurally more or less built around 'one' pole, as opposed to the 'bipolarity' in the fight against terrorism.

The situation developing now contains in the very early stage a contradiction, if not just a paradox with theoretical consequences. On the one hand, we reasonably assume that China articulates its *long-term* interests (particular or also universal) and will aspire to realize them also in the long run. At the same time, we think that the whole previous period of globalization may be characterized only through the short term interests of important actors. *A long term in the global world of the short term introduces elements of universalism in the universe of particularity.*

China's particular interests might be under no circumstances interpreted as universal. It is, however, noticeable that these ideas, emerging in international literature in connection with China's international activities, are based on 'mutual confidence', 'non-interference in internal affairs' of others and realization of 'mutual benefits'. Under certain circumstances, the objectives particular in themselves can show universal elements as well, although they deliberately do not contain, if not even intentionally avoid, open ideological intervention, new definition of the framework of international politics, and the identity transfer or missionary intentions.

*The mutual symmetry of values of particularism and universalism begins to remarkably shape both poles of the new world that becomes bipolar again.* Particularism can contain numerous universal elements, while the neo-liberalism, initially announced as universal, often reveals just the disillusioning particularism.

In this unfolding new situation, the system of individuation will lead to certain historical consequences. In this case, we will deal with the issue of *neutral values and evaluation*. We can stand against it neither from the philosophical point of a positive view on individuation, nor from that of a negative attitude.

Presently, the Chinese culture and society is opposed to the complete and definite individuation of the American pole. This is a society that stands at the very beginning of its individuation process. China is considered as a society, in which this type of individuation does not absolutely correspond to people's personal needs.

A process of individuation currently occurring in China cannot be *homogeneous any longer*. Perhaps, three important parallel tendencies will be developed, namely:

- 1) reproduction of the classical European individualization;
- 2) 'individualization' of the new mass culture following American pattern;
- 3) almost a uniform post-modern individualization.

The processes of individualization can have different effect on the two newly crystallizing global poles. It is not only because processes of individualization have finished at one of the poles and are still in progress at the other one. It is so because both sets of

principles constitute the basis of functioning of their own system. Both philosophical bases (finished individualization *versus* starting individualization) are the actual principles of organization of both conglomerates.

From this comparison there comes a new asymmetry. Although these three individuation processes will probably influence China, but China in its turn will not probably have a similar influence on the other pole. The other pole will not probably consider a disindividualizing or anti-individualizing tendency as an attractive alternative, even if the actual sources of individuation do not work productively any more. It means that the same process will proceed, on the one side, actively, and on the other side, passively.

We have only outlined some points of cultural traditions in the usual sense. Nobody will doubt the scale of differences in cultural traditions and transmissions. Nevertheless, we do not want to repeat<sup>8</sup> the fatal error of Samuel S. Huntington, who reflected these enormous differences through wrong and unproven actualizations into the present time and also used them in a de-historizing manner in the theoretical interpretation of the current global situation.

To preserve the effective characteristics of the Chinese civilization and society as they are, it is necessary to embed them first of all in the economical and political system, and only within these spheres it is possible to influence the formation and interpretation of contemporary history.<sup>9</sup>

The elements of cultural tradition, in the wide sense of the word, will be able, at the most, to have some limited influence in the new bipolar world. So one can suppose that the current *American civilization* (culture) that combines the Weberian positivistic absence of values and evaluation (*Wertfreiheit*) with religious fundamentalism and the strong *Chinese civilization* (culture) that can hardly return to absolute rules and values in everyday life regulation, will constitute a determinant and in many ways still tacit opposition.

Anyway, the guiding principle of the Chinese politics, appearing absolutely functional in some aspects, seems hardly able to confirm the tremendous and often mythological background of the Chinese peculiar characteristics. One of the key issues of the future is whether the American (Euro-American) or the Chinese philosophy of organization will appear more realistic in comparison with the historicism of the others.

The further point of comparison in terms of new bipolarity will probably be the *labour culture* or rather the *labour philosophy*. The Chinese concept of labour culture aggravates basic problems of the globalizing world in an unexpectedly large number of factual contexts. Extreme individualism and other social issues are suddenly rethematized. So, industrialism and post-industrialism appear in a new light again, not to mention the contradictions of a non-consuming post-modern society that must appear with consumption ideas (like on the American pole) in dazzling light. This coexistence of values seems absurd in comparison with the Chinese labour culture, and this model endangers many societies, since they will certainly be unable to balance this contradiction by their own force.<sup>10</sup>

In our opinion, globalization already has its history. Our aim was to prove it by the example of the imperial discourse. The era of a new bipolarity (with corresponding accompanying phenomena) is really only starting now.

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<sup>8</sup> Kiss, E. *The Civilisatory Components of the Post-socialist System Change*, a. a. O.

<sup>9</sup> Individual relevant aspects of Chinese culture (that partly remind of the Protestant and Jewish religions), as well as the practical characteristics of this civilisatory tradition regulating the everyday life seem to us as being of some relevance.

<sup>10</sup> The destabilization of the U.S. industrial society in the 1970s when the work achievements of the former Far East paved new ways for the American society can be a relevant analogy.