

The force of neoliberal globalization and counter-hegemonic movements

Mario Candeias

The existing model of neoliberal globalization excludes four fifth of the global population. So in big parts of the world it is rejected openly with every of its economic, political and cultural moments. An international protest movement is emerging since Zapatistas called for resistance against neoliberalism. But resistance is not limited to the left. Right-wing parties are celebrating electoral victories. European social-democrats try to surpass them with repressive laws against unemployed people and immigrants, backing up chauvinist and racist attitudes. But the strongest resistance comes from radical islamist groups. I don't have to say at this point, that the brutal and disdainful attacks on World Trade Centre and Pentagon are not a simple result of US financial and military imperialism, although the roots of terror in global injustice can be addressed (Candeias 2000b).

Capitalism has lost (or defeated) his antagonist – state-socialism (how repressive it ever was). Without the spectre of socialism or an other idea standing on the ground of enlightenment there is little space left for developing countries, suppressed groups etc. to resist the pressures of increased competition. Models of import substitution failed under the conditions of increasing globalization. Now neoliberalism promotes itself as modernity, dismantling all traditional social relations. So looking forward to modernity for many peripheral countries is a totally frustrating activity. In these states counter-movements are often based on dividing ideologies contemptuous against human life – a very particular resistance to globalization is terrorism, an expression of contradictions of neoliberalism.¹

Fragmentation and radicalisation

The neoliberal form of globalization and finance-led accumulation leads to growing fragmentation of the world and weakens social regulatory mechanisms of the states, especially in the capitalist periphery (for example in former Yugoslavia, former Soviet Union, Indonesia, many African territories etc). “The new world order is characterised by a [...] tier of states, in fact the majority of present states, who apparently enjoy limited sovereignty. Their statehood becomes eroded” by economic and financial strategies in the course of globalisation, and is further politically diminished by the way US and its allies try to control the world market through military policy (Albrecht 1999, 570). People in the periphery often do not have the means to express themselves

¹ For Francis Fukuyama September 11 demonstrates the lack of achievable alternatives beyond acts of desperation (*Frankfurter Rundschau* 13.03.2002).

politically and if they could, they do not have the power to realize their ideas. That powerlessness leads to radicalisation, especially of those who still have to loose some power.² A social order suppressing the subjectivity of individuals in such a way produces hate and a spontaneous “will to destroy”, as Horkheimer and Adorno analysed under conditions of fascism (1947). What often follows is the erosion of these states, the emergence of authoritarian nationalist and/or religious regimes, the repression of subordinated social and/or ethnic groups. Intensifying struggles for economic and political distribution of wealth and power on ideological level produce nationalist, racist and fundamentalist *ressentiments*, which for their sake disguise the material causes. Power groups in the concerning countries, usually not the powerless ones in the deepest misery, use this situation to strengthen and expand their position – including the means of war – through the production of history and ethnic/religious symbolic orders. Al-Qaida and other radical Islamic groups are a good example – their members are mainly part of former power groups and the *Intelligenza* (often students), whose position is eroded (or in danger to be eroded) and whose knowledge is devaluated. The social fundament of these radicals is often very narrow, not anchored in the mass of working population – they are rather driven by a “fear of proletarianisation” (Alnasseri 2001, 572). But the Islamic discourse as such, represented by less radical, conservative political forces (in face of the defeat of the left) has taken up the every day problems of the population. In that sense the radicalisation of political forces and the emergence of corresponding ideologies is not a simple result of global tendencies towards neoliberalism, but also of an inability of the Arabian regimes: they fed the islamist discourse, trying to disguise their own failure to reform themselves, building a stable hegemonic block, including oppositional forces.

In the public discourses of the west these ethnic/religious identities mostly are not seen as modern constructions corresponding to actual problems but as relict of a still continuing archaic history. But in fact very often they are a break with lived traditions. In times of increasing competition and inequality, when material conditions to participate in social life are out of reach for big parts of the population, radical ethnic/religious orientations take the place of traditional (often more tolerant) social relations and identities. Along new constructed identities a closed defensive community against outside threats is build up, demarcating themselves aggressively from others and conjuring up a mythical state of the ‘good old times’, free from crises. Such ethnic, religious or national and gender identities are easy to mobilize to oppress

² Of course we also can find this tendency in industrialized countries. But the degree is different. In the West there is a greater possibility to find ones thinking articulated in a wide media discourse, existence is not threatened that far and consumism absorbs part of dissatisfaction etc. Further on metropolises are more powerful to set in practice their political decisions – their ‘sovereignty’ is not that restricted by global markets as in the periphery

others – like for example the Taliban done it. In some cases the erosion of economic conditions of existence tend to the complete destruction or ‘anarchic implosion’ of state/political order. The state monopoly for legitimised use of force (Max Weber) is transformed into informal forms: reigns of warlords, clans, guerrillas, drug barons and mafia groups emerge, controlling not only military but also big parts of economic activities. We can observe this in many parts of the African continent, in Columbia, the Caucasian region or in Indonesia, Philippines etc. – social formations in which war is transformed into a regular social function. The destructive force of war is an important part for social reproduction in these areas, ‘controlling’ population growth in view of scarce resources (like land and food) (Mbembe 1999). This seems very obvious looking at the cyclical massacres as well as at plunder and raging groups of organized bandits as a ‘normal’ state of being – a mode of economic and social reproduction picking up the threat of raids in past centuries, but in fact a consequence of eroded economic and social conditions. Afghanistan is not a very special case: completely destroyed in a twenty-year long war between the soviets and US-financed mujahideen in a backwash of the Cold War era it was left to itself – people grew up without ever experiencing a dignified life, only violence, then (especially men) turning that violence to their own people (especially women).

These violent conflicts caused by economic and social destabilization often threaten the model of a neoliberal global economy.³ Investment decisions in these areas – often rich in raw materials like oil, gas, gold, diamonds, drugs etc. – are no longer secure, the ‘infection’ of other territories is feared. A host of migrants and refugees is standing at the gates of OECD-fortress – control over the mobility of international labour force gets lost. So military intervention under US dominance is the geopolitical twin in the new global disorder, and the human rights discourse provides the arguments for a new/old humanitarian imperialism. But this discourse is based on a reduced notion of freedom as freedom of the market, of democracy as pluralism, of human rights as protection of personal safety and property rights. Only through intervention the dominance of the West under US leadership could be provided. The existence and construction of dictators like Saddam Hussein or Milosevic or “rogue states” like North Korea and Libya legitimises such interventions. But up to September 11 the centres of global economy were not directly threatened violently. The aggression of destabilized states or groups was directed towards even weaker ones. But to do nothing against conditions in the so-called third world producing war and brutality means to take the risk, that that violence as all the „boomerangs” [this one armed by the CIA] comes home, as Susan George has written ten years ago (1992, 240). She expected that

³ This was not the case in Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Zaire/Congo and for many years in Afghanistan. Most obviously it was the case in the Gulf War.

the 'rich' would entrench themselves further in their fortress America or Europe (ibid., XXI). But the deadly boomerangs that hit the World Trade Centre cut off this way of retreat (Haug 2001, 435). Now the US and the West are pulled out of their virtual world of financial markets and cyber-spatial New Economy, confronted with the "desert of the real" (Žižek 2001).

The force of neoliberalism – military regulation of the world market

The US answer supported by "absolute solidarity" of the Europeans is the "total war against an vague peril" called terrorism (Le Monde Diplomatique).⁴

Costs for the militarization of society are financed through higher taxes (for example in the case of Germany),⁵ while welfare under austerity policy again has to be cut down. This is a process we already could observe at least since 1999 with the war in Kosovo – at that time the pressure to reduce military costs in consequence of the end of Cold war was abolished, pressure took a new direction for reorganisation of big defensive armies into smaller flexible and offensive crises-intervention forces. At the beginning reorganisation was promoted under the label of reducing costs. But pressures increase with the construction of new enemies. All major western countries (including Japan) increased their military and security budgets (see Candeias 2000b, 265). Pentagon exceeds 20 Billion Dollar more per year, that would mean a military budget of 329 Billion Dollar per year (not including the extra 17,5 Billion for the Afghanistan War).⁶ Again militarism becomes a field for capital accumulation, as Rosa Luxemburg pronounced (GS V, 404). In Germany this process is forced by social-democrats and green pacifists – they were the ones who for the first time since the Second World War made possible the armed forces participation in a war (in Kosovo) – impossible for conservatives without provoking big demonstrations. Germany has to take over its new responsibility in the world, even if war is needed to secure human rights anywhere in the world, said chancellor Schröder and his foreign minister Fischer (FR 2.1.2002) while sending the first German troops to Afghanistan. But they do not fight the disease; they fight the symptoms. Of course perpetrators have to be caught and that is not possible without violence. But the means to combat them

⁴ The International Coalition Against Terror – including Arabian states and former enemies like China and Pakistan (and the Northern Coalition)– acts (instead of UN) as the new legitimising subject. As Madeleine Albright once said, "the US acts multilaterally when it can, and unilaterally when it must". The 'evidence' against the terrorists was shared amongst friends in the western coalition, as it was the case in Yugoslavia, when NATO took over 'responsibility'. This way the 'success' of the German government to bind in the US into a multilateral coalition is an easy one – the US would have done their revenge without them either. (For an analysis of dialectical relations between uni- and multilateralism see Young/Hegelich 2001).

⁵ Just to finance the internal fight against terrorism German government raises taxes on cigarettes and insurance to get the needed 1,5 Billion Euro per year.

⁶ See *New York Times* 7.1.2002.

are not adequate. The war against terrorism is kept in a “trap of realism” (Candeias 1999a, 181) – a mechanism in which a concrete situation is produced (consciously or unconsciously) in a way that ‘realistically’ only one option to (re)act is left. Long-term economic and social measures that really try to combat the underlying conditions in this situation of actual conflict are easy to postpone into an indefinite future. Nothing is heard about the indivisibility of human rights including social rights as dignity, work, education and participation in social life and wealth – as written down in Article 2 of the UN-Charta on *The Right for Development*. Little is heard about the slow killing of over 500 million on this globalized globe (Suvin) on their way to die soon from chronic malnourishment and preventable diseases, while over 800 million people live in absolute poverty, that is on the borders of famine and dying a bit more slowly (Human Development Report 1998, 20). As the cardinal of Milan, Carlo Maria Martini – surely not a Marxist – commented: “Poverty and injustice are not the immediate cause for terrorism, whereas in manifold ways the root.” (Frankfurter Rundschau 24.12.2001, 3)⁷

Inside the western countries the events of September 11 also accelerated a process already going on before – a trend towards the restriction of civil rights and expansion of a neoliberal security state. An international constellation is turned repressively inwards (Brand 2001, 886). Bush’s executive order of November 13 allows the unlimited detention of foreign suspects and the setting up of military tribunals to judge people accused of terrorism, and moreover demanding the right for those tribunals to judge anybody anywhere in the world: a move towards a global security state. Britain, Spain, Italy and others execute new security laws – difficult to implement in the past. In Germany⁸ the anti-terrorist laws were approved with an extraordinary speed, passing all stages of formal legislation, limiting democratic public discussions to a minimum – promoted by minister Schily, a former member of the Green party and lawyer of the famous-notorious German-terrorists Baader and Meinhoff.

⁷ The 1990 Report on National Security Strategy of the US contains a similar warning about “the growth of threats like [...] terrorism, which are often fed by poverty, injustice, and ethnic or religious strife” (cited in Young/Hegelich 2001, 524).

⁸ Germany for example expanded authority of the federal police and secret service (above all inside the country) blurring the division between the two.⁸ They are allowed to demand information from private banks and telecommunication-, Internet- and postal-services and to observe all groups that are suspicious to reject “the idea of peoples international understanding”. Foreigners rights under the pretext to catch ‘sleepers’ and terrorist sympathizers are restricted. Just a suspicion is enough to refuse the entry or a visa for Germany. Those who get the entry permission should be identified through their fingerprints. Residence permit could be withdrawn when a foreigner has committed a criminal offence in connection with political activities or is acting against the “liberal-democratic order of the Federal Republic of Germany” – a very elastic notion. European Union compiled a list of terrorist groups, approved by the UN, tied with specific controls of capital flows. –The US already freezed accounts of Irish terrorist supporting organizations, Spain and France did the same in case of ETA-near groups. But not always it focus only terrorist organisations as in the case of small development banks in Somalia (see Al-Barakaat Bank in Sweden, *Frankfurter Rundschau* 4.1.2002).

Neoliberal liberalization is now restricted to economic activities and goes hand in hand with a de-liberalization of other social relations.⁹ The savage force of competition makes more social control necessary to cope the disintegrating tendencies. As it is known from neoliberal thinkers like Friedman and Hayek neoliberalism and authoritarianism fit together very well – proved in the first laboratory experiment of the Chicago Boys in Chile.

Coercion producing consensus

The „practice of hegemony“ is a „combination of coercion and consensus“ without coercion predominating the latter (Gramsci 1991ff., 1610). Coercion always was and is part of hegemony. Based on the consensus of the majority potential and real force is directed against those, who are not willing to accept or try to resist. On a global scale the International Coalition against Terror assembles countries never expected before to support US military intervention. China and Russia for example in the case of Kosovo were very critical to NATO bombings. Pakistan, Tajikistan, Iran and others authoritarian regimes were treated as “rogue states” before. Then, for a short period, they are all allies against `terror`; this strengthens and legitimises their autocratic regimes in a previously unknown degree (Alnasser 2001, 576). The international exchange and cooperation in the field of investigation of terrorist networks is enforced from Europe, the Near East and Somalia, to Japan and the Philippines. Yemen, Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan (under Indian pressure) and others in their anticipating obedience are arresting hundreds of radical Muslim. Under the pretext to help national governments against terrorists US troops erect a series of new military bases: in the Gulf region, in Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Philippines, Columbia etc. The US intervention again (as Gulf and Kosovo War) is seen as success: although the US did not reach the primary target – to get Bin Laden¹⁰ – they deprive the Taliban-regime from power.¹¹ The US again proved that they are able to build up a coalition to pursue

⁹ This thinking is deeply rooted in the neoliberal and even liberal thinking. The economic sphere, driven by purely `rational` interests has to be free of state intervention and – in theory – of any form of violence, but the state has to guarantee minimum security standards and the adherence of property rights and contractual rights using its force when it is necessary. In consequence freedom is limited to the sphere of market relations.

¹⁰ As it was the case with Saddam Hussein and Milosevic (the last was handed over by the new Yugoslav government some time later). In case of Bin Laden and his Al-Qaida-Net the task will be more difficult. It is not a state apparatus like the one in former Yugoslavia or in the Iraqi-case, but a private network with small groups dispersed all over the world. There is no rigid hierarchical structure – although Bin Laden might be their ideological leader, the groups coordinate their activities without a centre and operate relatively independent from the head. If the US destroy a single node of the net, the net is still able to operate (Arquilla/Ronfeldt 2001). Moreover, the responsible groups for the September 11 attacks were situated inside the Western countries, in Germany, Spain and the US, far from the US-military field of operation in Afghanistan.

¹¹ About decades Afghanistan has been provided with weapons from East and West and left to combating Worldlords. Only when conflict escalates and western security and other interests were concerned, the region (as alleged basis of Al-Qaida) gets into the centre of military plans. Then `liberation` (*enduring freedom*) follows. The ruling regime is overthrown and an protectorate dependent from the West is erected (under British and German leadership). Financial help for the reconstruction of fundamental state function is organized, for the next

their own interests, including many Arab and Muslim countries (“uniting the world” as Bush euphemistically says). In this neoliberal-imperial world order, established step by step since the Gulf War, the US take up the international ‘monopoly of legitimate violence’, sometimes sharing this task with some allies. Drunken from their rigorous actions facing any resistance, Bush declares potential allies of yesterday as potential enemies: China, Iran (and North Korea). The philosopher Michael Walzer explains: “A just war can not be directed against those whose support is important for military victory”:¹² civilians and potential allies – when they are no longer necessary, we could add, force can be directed against them. Now the Bush administration is looking for new territories to continue its war against international terrorism. Somalia with its comparable conditions to Afghanistan – a totally destroyed country, mainly Muslim, divided between hostile warlords – seems to be a good target. Even more attractive is the paying of old bills: to overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq.¹³

The way the US puts in practice its anti-terrorist war is a prototype for others. China, Russia and the former soviet-republics in Central-Asia agreed a closer cooperation against ‘their terrorists’ – the guerrilla in Chechnya, Tibetan people and Muslim minorities, oppositional forces – as “important part of the international campaign against terrorism”.¹⁴ Although the US is calling for peace and negotiations in Palestine and Kashmir, their acting in Afghanistan speaks an other language. Their justification for the bombing of Afghanistan is used by Sharon and Vajpayee to legitimise their violence in the respective regions. Sharon declares Arafat “enemy of the civilised world”. Enforcing the spiral of violence, each further step into Palestinian territory is followed by a new suicidal bomber and vice versa. Negotiations and politics are substituted by a military logic – defeating the enemy is the actual goal. Sharon seems to prepare the reoccupation of Westbank and Gaza, while Palestinians might think, that they have no other weapon than giving their life to kill some Jews and thereby become a martyr.

On a national scale the majority of the people accept a restriction of civil rights to get more ‘security’ and fight terrorists. The fight against the enemy is more important than personal freedom. Of course it is right that hegemony is the strongest when coercion steps behind consensus - but coercion corresponds to the “‘spontaneous’ consensus of

five years to come about 4,5 billion Dollar, just a small part of the money spent for the few weeks of war. But the conflicts in Afghanistan are not resolved, security outside of Kabul is still unreliable.

¹² Quote in *Frankfurter Rundschau* 13.03.2002.

¹³ The justification is grounded on the suspicion that Iraq is threatening the civilised world with nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Although UN inspectors report that Iraq has fulfilled the UN-resolution 687, plants for biological and chemical weapons were destroyed, just a small part of ballistic missiles left. In December last year the Washington Center for Strategic and International Studies reported, that Iraq disposes of not a single nuclear weapon (*Frankfurter Rundschau* 18.03.2002).

¹⁴ *Frankfurter Rundschau* 8.01.2002.

the masses”, as Gramsci said (1991ff, 1637) – and “coercion it is only for those who do not accept it, not for those who accept”, he concludes (1688). Repressive or compulsive moments always carry with them a strong ideological aspect – this way coercion helps producing consensus, while repressing the ones outside that consensus. Today this is achieved by the military regulation of the world market and the construction of a global security state under US dominance. The use of force and military in western societies is widely accepted as political means. Intellectuals, ‘left’ and ‘right’ ones, like Michael Walzer, Amitai Etzioni, Samuel Huntington, Francis Fukuyama and others hurry to formulate philosophical arguments to support US force, building a “popular front” (Walzer)¹⁵.

Repression is not limited to state or military apparatus. Civil society itself exercises coercion on those who criticize. The reaction on the attacks of September 11 is in part in itself fundamentalist.¹⁶ It strengthens the notion of a fight of good and evil, of the civilized against barbarian world, of a clash of cultures, carrying racism with it. Nationalism in the public opinion – mainly in the US but not only – becomes a civic duty. The invocation of the national (Althusser 1977) rearranges the chaotic changes in a reductionist worldview, building an essentialist identity and some sort of illusory “self coherence” (Scharenberg 2002). The society constructs a picture of itself as defensive community (speak: *nation*). Those who criticize President Bush’s policy offend against the commandment of national unity. Just a few remember the strange circumstances Bush gets his job. Voted by a minority of the public he now has an unquestionable position. There is a strong public pressure for conformity, coming from the state apparatus but moreover from civil society itself. Who disagrees in the first place is not punished with jail, but with distrust, coldness and exclusion, with the possible loss of job (especially in the media and education sectors),¹⁷ or with menacing psychological and physiological violence. The uniformization of public opinion is not limited to the media and its anticipating obedience, but is founded in every day thinking. We can see similar tendencies in other countries like Spain, Britain and others (with a lower degree of effect). It is again acute what Adorno (1959, 565) has written: “In current times nationalism is the only long-established and psychologically so occupied notion [...] with enough power to harness hundred of millions for purposes, which they could not consider directly as theirs.” So this seems to be the

¹⁵ *Frankfurter Rundschau* 20.02.2002.

¹⁶ Especially when you look at the Christian fundamentalism and its influence on governmental departments in the US.

¹⁷ But also for the many American and non-American citizens who were arrested under suspicion to support terrorist groups because of their ‘Islamic’ appearance. 977 persons were arrested, most of them with origins in the Middle East or Central Asia – civil right campaigners speak of an “racial profiling-campaign” (Mayer/Greven 2001, 547ff.). Many more has been arrested since, about 600 without possibility to concern a lawyer (AI, *FR* v. 14.3.2002).

third period of neoliberalism, the combination of global economic liberalization and a new kind of authoritarian nationalism.).¹⁸

That hegemony of an authoritarian free market capitalism does not mean a removal or effective control of contradictions, but to give them a specific form under certain circumstances (Demirovic 1987, 63). In a crises situation like this that means shift the vertical social line of conflict and struggle (between rich and poor, employer and employees, ruling classes and subordinated subjects etc.) – shift this ideologically to a horizontal perception of conflicts (Revelli 1999) between productive locations (*Standorte*), nations, civilisations, cultures, races – founding a national consensus. This is not an easy thing. Therefore – from a neoliberal perspective – it is necessary that consensus is „armoured with coercion” (Gramsci 1991ff., 783).¹⁹ Social groups and discourses that are not limited to the hegemonic frame were pushed at the margin, discredited as irrational, non-realistic, dangerous etc., driven out of the public field of perception, therefore de-named [*entnannt*]. The international movement of protestors against neoliberal globalization is delegitimized by the dominant media reports focusing only on the violent potential of these groups, – while trying to divide the movement by cooptation of the “good”, less radical parts of the movement (Brand 2001, 886). Radical critique is confronted with strong repression – Genoa 2001 was a first example. September 11 directed public perception towards the radical globalization critique from the right. Differentiation of these critiques in the mainstream media is at risk. Any protest against war can easily been accused of letting the terrorists unpunished, of being a naïve pacifist who tacitly accepts the violence, of being sympathetic to the terrorists and to any ‘revolutionary’ anti-American movement. The one-sided reports of violence on anti-globalization demonstrations make it possible to expand the notion of terrorism to protestors. Silvio Berlusconi, host of the G-8 meeting in Genoa, imputes a congenial connection between the two. That a part of international protestors call themselves “Attac” is seen as impertinent. Joseph Stiglitz, ex-chief-economist of the world bank, now acting as critical renegade, characterizes the movement of global protestors as “war against globalization” (2002, 35). Room for manoeuvres is getting smaller for the left. Neoliberalism continues to succeed in de-legitimising alternatives, repressing critique and reproducing consensus.

¹⁸ “A remarkable new consensus emerged: Americans of all people can least afford to be embarrassed by the idea of moral truth” as it founded at the roots of the American Nation” (Robert George, www.americanvalues.org).

¹⁹ This also implies that when hegemony is more stable and crises situation is over coercion will step back again – of course not automatically but through the activities of more liberal forces. The reestablishment of the *status quo ante* can hardly be expected, but a withdrawal of the worst aggravations. The discourse will change; but the new laws will stay.

But hegemony never is a stable state you can reach. It is an open process, always contradictory, opening up thin rifts. That opens up possibilities for long term activities of the left. Under the new circumstances of neoliberal hegemony it would be more difficult to elaborate critique and alternative ideas. But there is also a chance, if people feel, that neoliberalism itself provokes increasing inequalities, and violence produces counter-violence that brings danger for our all lives. There is no easy way out – but a war against terrorism cannot be won. Force does not isolate terrorists but on the contrary makes of them national heroes or martyrs.²⁰ In many cases it has strengthened their support in the concerning population. Thus, Avnery (2001) is right to say that: “Since it is always a political instrument, terrorism has to be always fought politically.” It can only be durably cured by removing its root causes, the psychological, political, and finally economical ones (Suvin 2002). An alternative therefore depends on an analysis of the roots of terror – a Marxian critique of today’s transnational political economy and its social contradictions is not the worst way to provide one.

²⁰ You can see this in Iraq, Somalia, the whole Near East, in Sri Lanka, on the Philippines, in Columbia and Peru, in Chechnya, in Northern Ireland and in the case of ETA.