DEMOCRACY IN THE LIGHT OF GLOBALISATION

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This essay explores ways in which democracy must be reformed in order to meet the new requirements posed by globalisation. I will argue that the main problem is not how to conceive a blueprint of a global democratically structured government, and define its tasks. The main problem is rather to find out how we could come from here to there. To come closer to an answer, the chapter analyses who or what it is what blocks the road towards global democracy, and why. In concluding, it shall mention some new developments which possibly allow to open a new window of opportunity. European governments will have an especially important part to play here, together with civil society.

1. What is democracy?

Democracy can be defined as a certain way to organise collectively binding decisions. Most national constitutions include the relevant criteria:

- Everybody affected by a decision ought to have a chance to take part in it.
- The *raison d'être* of the nation state is to safeguard respect and enforce the fundamental rights and freedoms laid down in the constitution.
- The majority decides but also protects the legitimate rights and interests of minorities.
- Everybody’s freedom has its limits in the freedoms of all others.
- Tolerance and non-violence are fundamental principles of all social relations.
- Government will be determined in general, free, equal and secret elections, and can be changed.
- Political parties serve to organize, articulate and represent the interests of different social groups.
- The media provide, in an objective and uncensored way, the information necessary to arrive at rational decisions.
- Everybody has free access to information and is free to express his or her views and opinions.
- The legislative and the judiciary supervise government; government is accountable to them; therefore, both must be independent of the executive.
- All citizens are free to convene and to organise without any control by government.
- Government is called upon to care for social justice and to protect the weak of the greed of the strong.

Thus, democracy is a shorthand for a bundle of rules which have evolved in a long civilisation process since Habeas Corpus (1679) and the Bill of Rights (1689) were wrested from the rulers. People have fought for them against the feudal
and aristocratic powerful. They overcame charismatic and traditional rule and submitted might to law. The General Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 was adopted at a time when the most powerful signatories were still colonial powers. Still, they stated explicitly that these rights should be granted to all human beings irrespective of "race, colour, gender, language, religion, political conviction, national or social descent, property or other circumstances". Together with the Gandhian principle of non-violence, human rights constitute the most fundamental achievement of the 20th century.

The equality in value expressed in Art. 2 of the General Declaration of 1948 is the very essence of this civilisational achievement. We are humans only insofar as we respect our fellow humans like ourselves especially if they are weaker in some sense, handicapped, women, poor, children, immigrant, illiterate, criminal, defeated. They all should not be of minor right. We could suppress, torture, kill them and have often done so in the course of history, but today almost nobody in the civilised world seriously disputes that this violates human rights. That we all are of equal right and deserve equal respect is the very essence of civilisation. This emphasis seems especially important in times when ideologues of some sort tirelessly insist on the allegedly genetic minting of qualitative differences between humans in terms of intelligence, talents, or force. Never again should we forget that this sort of vulgar darwinistic misinterpretation had been used in the past to pave the way into the gas chambers. If the Nazi experience has any lasting sense then this: We might not be directly responsible for the crimes committed in our parent’s generation – but we are responsible to guarantee that such might never and nowhere happen again. Equal respect for all human beings is the basic prerequisite.

It follows from this that the exploitation of humans by humans – the use of someone’s freedom to the detriment of others – violates fundamental human rights, especially where others are denied the satisfaction of their basic needs. However, this happens daily on large scale when, e.g., people are being pushed into unemployment and poverty. The little amount of public outcry this arouses indicates the degree to which we have got used to common wrongfulness. Yet, we would have hundreds of good reasons for protest: polluted soil and water, genetically manipulated or poisoned food, acid rain and smog, exposure to radiation, the dramatic polarisation of rich versus poor, injustice, corruption, nepotism and white-collar crime, racism, extremism and violence and, of course, war - to mention only a few. The state must define and enforce regulations in order to tame rabid capitalism and warmongering, and to prevent exploitation.

Democracy is an ideal, a utopia. We all know that our institutions are not perfect, affected by incompetence, abuse, dishonesty, corruption and fraud. We have built in mechanisms of control and sanction to limit such deficiencies. They don’t work perfectly and in some situations they are overrun by plutocracy. Some institutions are less democratic than others (prisons, hospitals, the military, public administration, private enterprise, many families), and in some of them we have injected democratic elements to limit despotism (works councils in many companies, school councils, parents’ councils, students’ parliaments, self-governing organs in social security etc.).

However, there are also some far-reaching misunderstandings. Democracy is not a static paradise, achieved once and for ever, but rather a never-ending social process. It needs permanent rethinking, commitment and active involvement from all citizens to safeguard its virtues. Second, democracy is not, as some seem to pretend, identical, in fact not even logically tied to, capitalism. The contradiction is obvious in corporate capitalism: Democracy is based on the premise of equality while capitalism is based on the idea of inequality where some individuals are entitled to appropriate the surplus value worked out by others, i.e. on exploitation. Hence, they make use of their own freedom to restrict the freedom of others and subjugate them under their rule. We in the capitalist world pretend to be the most
enthusiastic defenders of human rights, and even more, that (corporate) capitalism and democracy should be seen as two inseparable sides of one coin. A concomitant of Cold War propaganda, this misinterpretation must not persist. That it does may be seen as an indicator that propaganda has not stopped. The logical trick tying the two together lies in the concept of private property. It abstracts from the wide variety of meanings which private property can assume, from one’s everyday belongings (which is, of course, part of individual autonomy and thus tied to democracy) to the private property of means of production, or capital (which is usually appropriated from others and therefore even contradicts democracy), which constitutes the difference between the two major social classes and the antagonism between them. This remains empirically correct even one hundred and thirty years after Karl Marx published Das Kapital. Equating democracy and capitalism is ideological, it serves the class interest of one social class, the capitalist, over the other. Therefore, capitalism needs politically defined rules to protect society from its potentially damaging character. The way democratic societies organise their economic system is not determined by natural law nor by economic science but rather an outcome of political debate and decision. Thus, we have seen in Europe all sorts of mixture between democracy on the one hand and a broad scale of state to market regulated economies on the other. There is no empirical evidence on which model would benefit society more. Finally, we should be aware of the fact that most violations of basic human rights and democratic principles happen indirectly, and sometimes are difficult to trace back to their origin. This is certainly the case in the International Monetary Fund’s structural adjustment policy, and to a lesser degree in the European Union’s acquis communautaire imposed on accession countries.

The late 1960s witnessed the climax of the welfare state in many countries, supported by a mostly liberal public, critical social scientists, and an impatient youth. The emergence of the economic crisis in 1974 (misinterpreted by some as only the first oil prize shock) was the lever used by right-wing politicians, capitalist oligarchs and ideologues to kick off the neo-conservative offensive, with huge sums of money invested to buy best-sellers and TV shows, intellectuals and journalists, university institutes and think tanks. They all sang the song of economic crisis resulting from state regulation, of a winner-gets-all and shareholder value logic. This was the beginning of large scale corporate crime and corruption, especially in the U.S., but quickly spreading to other countries as well.

2. What is new in globalisation?

The social model for which the concept of democracy has been worked out is the nation state. Democratic rights have been wrested from aristocratic rulers who had created the nation state as a unitary legal entity. Even if it had relations with other nation states ever since its emergence, we observe a qualitative change in this network of international relations, termed globalisation. International relations denotes a more or less systematic and persistent pattern of exchange (of people, goods, services, capital, information etc.) among a certain number of independent and relatively autonomous nation states. In the course of history, the pattern has changed and has become more dense. Globalisation means that the pattern of exchange dominates the independence and autonomy of the nation-states, and the gradual involvement of all nation-states. What we observe is the formation of a global society. The driving force behind this process is the globalising economy, especially its financial sector, with deep consequences in the ecological, political, social and cultural spheres.

With respect to the political sphere which is of primary interest here, the mesh of institutions and regimes has become so dense and decisive that it widely determines the political action of all national governments. Besides and beyond that there was and there remains the network of political relations in bilateral, multilateral and supranational agreements and conventions in their own regional or sectoral
relevance. It is important here, however, to emphasise the national basis of political actors, as governments continue to depend on their national electorate or clientel which significantly impact on their chances for manoeuvre, together with the influence exerted by national non-governmental organisations. Their perception of global problems and their behaviour on the international scene is, however, largely shaped by an executive attitude, with little insinuation from democratic mechanism and control. In a double-bind situation, they will tend to limit the insight and influence of national democratic routines while on the other hand justifying their behaviour by unavoidable global necessities. A typical diplomatic outcome of this situation is the package solution negotiated on the global level (like, e.g., in the WTO) where national parliaments have only a yes or no vote but no voice in the details if they don’t want the entire package to fail. The United Nations have been shaped, from their very onset, by the interests, problem perceptions and power constellations of the Anti-Hitler Coalition and the beginning confrontation between East and West. This explains the nature of the UN Security Council. It also explains the character of the Bretton Woods institutions which resided under the roof of the UN but did not accept accountability to, nor instructions from the General Assembly, nor did they obey to the one nation-one vote rule. In UN history, three structural fractures can be made out:

First, the end of decolonisation in the 1960s added some one hundred new formally independent member states (the “Group of 77”; the developing countries) to the world body, thus changing major positions in the General Assembly to the disadvantage of the western capitalist countries. Their most important forum became UNCTAD, their greatest success was the adoption of the New World Economic Order in 1974, coinciding with the beginning economic crisis and a still-born baby from the beginning. The West in fact disapproved the integrated commodity agreement and the code of conduct for transnational corporations and rendered UNCTAD almost insignificant. To the fore came GATT (transformed with the conclusion of the Uruguay round, in 1995, into the World Trade Organisation).

1975 saw the beginning of the World Economic Summits of the most important (Western) industrial nations, resulting in the G 7 and, later with the partial inclusion of Russia, the G 8. The importance of this step has often been underestimated. It was the beginning of systematic obstruction of the UN by the United States government, at least tacitly supported by its Western allies. The U.S. government refused to pay its full constitutional dues and reduced its payments to the minimum necessary not to loose its right to vote. It used its veto in the Security Council again and again in order to protect her own egoistic interests, and her closest ally, Israel, from critical resolutions of the General Assembly. It pulled out of the International Labour Organisation (1975) and later of UNESCO (1984) in an attempt to bring the UN under tighter control. The U.S. refused to sign a great number of international agreements, mostly on disarmament and weapons control, and boycotted international negotiations (as in the entire post-Rio process, or the International Court of Criminal Justice) and, with impunity, violated a great number of international conventions. When they did not succeed, the U.S. resorted to build up a new global power centre, the G 7, outside of any democratic control. Not only does the G 7 govern the UN Security Council (if Russia can be pulled into the boat, and a Chinese veto avoided); it also controls the IMF and the World Bank by a majority of votes. It exerts overwhelming power over the WTO; and last but not least it has a military arm, NATO (especially after the new mandate was adopted of defending common interests instead of common territory).

The third structural fracture followed the collapse of the socialist regimes. Not only
did the number of UN member states increase again. The first Iraq war of 1990/91 immediately signalled the U.S. governments’ will to act unilaterally (the 28 country-coalition and the majority for Security Council resolutions have been bought together). The nomination of a declared UN adversary as Permanent Representative of the U.S. to the UN in 2005 indicates the persisting intention to fully dismantle the world organisation.

It is important here to mention how the new wave of globalisation has changed the role of the nation state from the mid 1970s on. Democratic procedures and control have remained fragmented on the national level while more and more decisions are being hammered out, if not formally made, on the global scale. In the course of this process, the IMF and the WTO have emerged as the primary instruments of U.S. world policy to enforce the neo-conservative agenda (i.e. the interests of American big business and financial circles).

The lifting of customs and trade barriers in GATT and WTO, accompanied by the almost total liberalisation of international capital, helped big transnational corporations to dwarf many national governments. TNCs have no national roots, they shift their locations and subsidiaries at will to profit from favourable taxes, low environmental and safety standards, non-existent trade unions and wage disputes, and externalise costs at great measure. National governments, unwilling or unable to exert control, see themselves at service to the TNCs.

This is the one side of globalisation. But there is a second side of the coin:

It begins with the World Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, June 1992 (UNCED). It had gathered around the concept of Sustainable Development and is based on two pillars: the United Nations on the one hand, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and social movements on the other. The UN played an important part in defining global problems and the necessary actions to solve them in the entire series of world conferences of the 1990s: environment and development 1992, human rights 1993, population 1994, social development 1995, women 1995, shelter and urban development 1996, the social role of science 1998. Each of these events concluded with a declaration of principles and an action plan. Altogether they read like an inventory of rational and human world consciousness, signed by the majority of national governments even if not followed-up by according action. It is correct to see the UN as the solicitor of a better world. Existing evaluation, however, forces to conclude that national governments while signing those documents are far from committing themselves to their implementation, first of all many OECD members.

At these world conferences, NGOs made their appearance on the global level. While not really new in the UN system, UNCED was the first time for them to organise a counter summit and establish themselves as a global actor. Since then, they made increasingly spectacular events not only at UN conferences, but even more so at the summits of the IMF/World Bank, the WTO, or the G 7. Their highlight was, in 1998, the publication of secret documents on the planned Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) which were worked out in the WTO, but then shifted to the OECD in order to exclude developing countries from the negotiations, and would have beheaded nation states in favour of TNCs but vanished, like Dracula, when it came to public light. INGOs have played an increasingly important role in assisting developing countries in such negotiations. It might not be exaggerated to assume that they were instrumental to help the Third World resist the impositions of the rich countries and develop an own strat-
egy to block the actual WTO Doha round. 
Moreover, at the national level they re-
mined national governments of what they 
had themselves committed to with their 
signatures under world conference docu-
ments, and insisted that they keep up to 
their promises (like, e.g., the multiplicity of 
Local Agenda 21 movements). Important 
as this is, it still has little to do with democ-

cracy as NGOs have no legitimate public 
mmandate. But civil society is moving. The 
World Social Fora, beginning in Porto Ale-
gre, Brazil, have dissipated on continental, 
national, and regional scales. Their 
movement, with Le Monde Diplomatique 
as their most important megaphone and 
Attac as one of their most important con-
fiant to the broad stream, is mostly 
based on Western, or Western educated, 
middle class intellectuals.

3. Global democracy?

From both its sides, globalisation has not 
really been in favour of democracy but 
rather helped to undermine and leverage 
democratic procedures. It has, however, 
strengthened the important insight into the 
descending capacity of nation states to 
cope with current problems in a democ-

ratic way.

If nation states transfer regulatory com-
petence to higher levels of government 
like, e.g., the European Union), then 
democratic institutions and procedures 
have to be invented and implemented to 
make sure that, on this new level, not the 
egoistic will of the few might succeed over the 
common good of the many. In fact, it 
does not seem too difficult to figure out 
what a possible majority of the global 
population would demand of a world gov-
ernment: peace, disarmament and secu-

rity, the safeguard of the natural life sup-
port system, the enforcement of human 
rights for all human beings, some control 
over international capital movements, 
transparency, information and participation in 
those decisions which affect their lives 
or, in one word, democracy.

How could we imagine a democratic world 
government? Many people on earth would 
possibly support a model which accepts 
the United Nations as its nucleus. A new 
(directly elected) World Parliament (con-
strued, e.g., according to propositions 
made by Georges Monbiot, with one di-
rectly elected deputy to represent ten mil-

lion people) could become the first 
chamber, the present General Assembly 
the second chamber of a global legislative. 
Whether or not a third chamber (a House 
of Counsellors according to proposals 
made by the World Constitution and Par-
liament Association) would be advisable 
might be left to a decision by the World 
Parliament. The international courts would 
constitute the judiciary. The executive 
could be formed out of the present secre-
tariat, possibly assisted by some revised 
version of the ECOSOC (the Economic 
and Social Council), with an administrative 
basis built from the existing special or-

ganisations as departments: UNESCO 
would become the department of culture, 
education, and science; UNEP the de-
partment of the environment and of com-
modities; WTO, possibly joined by UNCT-

AD, the new department of economics; 
ILO a new department of work and social 
security; FAO a new department of food 
and agriculture; WHO an department of 
public health; and UNDP a department of 
development. Keynes propositions for a 
International Clearing Union could be used 
to design a new department of finance, as 
the IMF and the World Bank will turn out to 
be not reformable; and a new department 
of disarmament and conflict resolution 
might replace today's Security Council 
which, again, should not survive in its pre-

sent logic.

On the one hand, such a proposition 
would allow to make use of the high ex-
pertise acquired in the existing institutions. 
Moreover, it could rely on the long experi-
ence of multiculturally staffed organisa-

tions, with their unavoidable problems and 
frictions. All these institutions would be 
subjected to international law, and to the 
decisions of the World Parliament. Legally 
binding decisions could pass the World 
Parliament with a qualified majority of 85 
per cent (as, e.g., in today's IMF), there 
would be no blocking minority. A way 
would have to be found to enforce deci-
sions world-wide, even against the resis-
tance of individual nation states. The world
government should be, legitimated by a vote of the world parliament, in a position to impose, e.g., disarmament on nuclear powers. Beyond doubt, it must therefore be gradually conceded the monopoly of physical violence. The world government should be located in one of the poorest nations, Bangladesh, or Sudan, for reasons of regional economic impact. It could be financed, besides contributions of member states, by some sort of Tobin tax levelled on capital movements, thus at the same time slowing down international financial speculation.

The tasks of the world government could be defined according to the principle of subsidiarity enshrined, e.g., in European constitutional law. Only in case the world parliament defines a problem as globally relevant while not-solvable on the national and regional scales, it would come under custody of the world government. Most probably, peace and disarmament, environmental protection and the regulation of global financial streams and transnational corporations, would figure among its first tasks.

4. Why does global democracy fail?

Why then, one will ask, is the solution so far away if the problems are so pressing and so many constructive proposals are on the table? Why is the debate being stuck in so many minor technical details of little importance relative to the general goal? The answer demands looking back some decades just before the end of WWII:

As a matter of fact, the Bretton Woods negotiations had been held between only two governments, British and American. The head of the British delegation, John Maynard Keynes, had worked out a widely applauded proposal in favour of a globally just order. However, he failed. The American delegate, Harold Dexter White, succeeded in pushing through a new global currency system based on the U.S. dollar as the world reserve currency, based on the promise of being unlimitly covered by gold. Thus, the task of levelling out the balance of payments would one-sidedly rest on the shoulders of other countries while permitting the U.S. a relatively free monetary policy, the export of its own inflation, and the purchase of foreign products at the price of printing costs of the U.S. dollar.

When, on 15 august 1971, the U.S. government cancelled the exchangeability of the U.S. dollar against gold, and after the U.S. found herself increasingly in a minority position in the UN General Assembly after the end of decolonisation, it began the systematic dismantling of the UN. The nomination of John Bolton as U.S. permanent representative to the UN marked the temporary end of this process. Merely three weeks in office, Bolton submitted to the UN 750 proposals for reform (including the dismissal of the Commission on Human Rights, the end of all disarmament negotiations, the end of development aid, the end to all post-Rio negotiations, etc.), including in case of non-compliance the risk of loss of all U.S. payments to the organisation.

The major instruments of U.S. power after 1945 were the dollar and the Pentagon, especially if we include covert actions and, after the Mexican debt crisis, the IMF’s structural adjustment policy. The Washington Consensus on which this policy was based was never formally consented, and certainly not by indebted countries, but worked out by a small group of people in the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the IMF, and tacitly supported by the other major IMF member states. Recently we learned by the Confessions of an Economic Hit Man how intelligence was used to drive developing countries into the debt trap and gain control over their economic policy and development.

The G 8 became strained to the extreme by the Bush administrations’ uncompromising unilateralism. It was not before the second Iraq war that G 8 members refused their consent in the Security Council, and most members of the coalition of the willing supported the U.S. government against the clear will of their populations.

However, on February 5, 2003, the date of Colin Powell’s infamous presentation in...
the SC (the event he later called the darkest spot on his biography; remember that the “compelling evidence” he presented was copied from a decade old student’s article without even correcting for typos), the war had already been under way as we could learn from the Downing Street Memorandum. The bombings which in fact never really stopped after 1991 had been intensified to war level already in December 2002. Even in March 2003 when the war had been going on for three months, Bush told the TV audience there were no plans for war and he was doing everything to prevent war.

In its domestic policy, no administration has gone as far as Bush 2 in polarising rich and poor, and in using the war on terror after 9/11 as a pretext to restrict basic human and democratic rights and to control and supervise the American people. The failure of democratic control mechanisms has often been deplored. Many journalists observed a new fascism emerging: U.S. governments’ detention centres were called American Gulag, and the neo-conservative power elite compared with the Nazis. The liberal, educated, critical opposition does exist but appears as highly fragmented and unable, or prevented, to join forces.

Now, a new step in the great game is being made: The UN is being left out, only very few of the old allies are around, notably Israel who takes part in the warmongering against Iran. Again, the only evidence available for Iran’s alleged strive for nuclear weapons is dubious intelligence, after the U.S. has blocked all possible compromise offered. India will receive great amounts of weaponry in compensation for its vote against Iran in the IAEA. The establishment of a number of permanent military bases in Central Asia (and of the biggest embassy in Bagdad, at cost of 450 Mio U.S.$) leave little doubt of U.S. governments’ intentions.

The truly strange point, a paradox in indeed, is the following: In case the U.S. would really be striving at world dominance, it would be much easier, very much cheaper and extremely more credible to others if the government would reform American society into a really just and democratic role model, and accept its position as primus inter pares, with a clearly defined democratic program, in the world community, throughout the UN family and beyond. The U.S. could indeed be the credible spearhead of democratic reform if it would stop to apply double standards and if it would follow its own propagated criteria of social justice and the rule of law domestically and internationally. Peoples around the world would love the U.S. model and urge their own governments to follow it. That this is not the case cannot be attributed to a lack of intellectual capacity. Just opposite: The present power elite and its belligerent attitude give clear proof of an intention to service its corporate clientele of oil and arms industries without any serious regard to the future of its own society, nor of the world community.

All this is not really new but carried to the extreme by the present U.S. administration. It certainly is not new to European governments. Their argument that only close alliance with the U.S. would allow to have some influence on its course is simply, and empirically evident, naive. Their vasall loyalty makes them accomplices and they should not be surprised if others perceive them as such. It is high time to thoroughly think over and revise European positions. The UN Security Council, IMF and World Bank, the WTO and the IAEA would be the places to send new signals.

5. What could be done?

Basically, there are three new elements which, seen in their combination and mutual enforcement, might open a window of opportunity: (1) The scepticism growing all around the world against U.S. unilateralism and power claim, as against the neo-conservative mantra; (2) the dawning economic and social crisis in the U.S. itself; (3) the new self-consciousness of the developing countries in the international financial and economic institutions.

For the growing scepticism and even hatred, they are almost self-understanding in the Arab world after the general demonis-
ing of Islam in the U.S. and in the West. A better indicator would be Latin America, the decade long backyard of the U.S. and privileged victim of structural adjustment dictates. Brazil and Argentina, Venezuela and Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Chile have voted leftist and installed U.S. critical governments – too many already to solve the problem, as in 1973, by murdering one of their leaders. In Asia, the Shanghai Cooperation Group was demanding information as to when the U.S. thought to close their military bases. Scepticism is growing among the Balkan countries, and certainly in Georgia and the Ukraine where U.S. sponsored, financed and organised “democratic” revolutions where supposed to bring U.S. friendly governments and market fundamentalists into power while the majority of the populations suffer more than ever before. In the UK Tony Blair’s position is more than shaky. A number of countries have announced they will shift their currency reserves from the dollar to the euro, and some oil exporting countries have signalled they might sell oil no longer in dollars but against the European currency (or, Russia, in Roubles).

Within the U.S., while the Christian Right seems to stand firmly, socio-economic polarisation cannot be overseen. Forty million people below poverty line, the highest proportion of any country of the young male population in jail or under judicial supervision, the spy, corruption, and lobby affairs, the assault on human rights and fundamental freedoms under Patriot Acts 1 and 2, public demands for impeachment – they all combine to create a adversial atmosphere which could lead to sudden changes, especially if the consequences of the double deficit and the further decline of the dollar will make themselves felt. Never before has an administration succeeded in splitting society into two opposing camps.

WTO’s Doha round, declared to be a development round, has turned out to be a full scale flop after the Hong Kong ministerial meeting in December 2005. The new element here is that developing countries begin building coalitions and blocking decisions, and in turn demand that Western countries cease paying subventions to their farmers and lift trade barriers for processed products prior to further negotiations. Some have already declared the WTO dead. It is certainly no longer possible to use it exclusively to safeguard the rich countries’ supply with cheap raw materials. Imagine what would happen if the developing countries jointly decide to no longer service their external debts! They are just beginning to understand their real power.

If we understand all these as elements forming a bigger mosaic, then the cards might fall in place. Europeans must understand the signs, and act accordingly. The next elections – in the Netherlands, in France, in the UK - will demonstrate that people are more mature than their governments.

On the one hand, action is required from European governments. In meetings like the recent EU-Mercosur summit in Vienna, but even more important in organisations like the Security Council, IMF/World Bank and WTO, they should be more emphatic and signal greater understanding for the developing countries’ positions and necessities. They should give up double standards (as in the debate on Iran’s nuclear research) and lower unjust barriers against Third World imports. They should actively and convincingly demonstrate that they do not share the egomaniac positions of the present U.S. government. Instead, they should honestly assist in developing new models for a democratic and just world order. Thus, the “European Dream” might have a realistic chance to materialise.

Against the stage set of the neo-conservative great game, we the people usually feel helpless and victimised. However, there are chances for concrete action. They might be described within the three broad concepts of localisation, self-organisation, and saving natural resources. We need not continue to submit ourselves to the dictate of transnational corporations, their offerings and their temptations but should rather strengthen local and regional autonomy. The weakness of the nation-state might turn out to be the opportunity for civil society to self-
organise and develop ideas, projects, infrastructures, and tools. In all these, we should not forget the global imperative of safeguarding the natural life support system. Of course, there are thousands of small scale projects all around our societies, productive, democratic and imaginative answers to the disastrous world situation. More and more people should be encouraged to join these forces and build a real market and cooperative economy from below in a democratic setting.

We all must definitely resist the neoconservative agenda which aims at devastating the inner coherence and solidarity of society in the egomaniac and unscrupulous interest of the few, and support all those who do. European enlightenment, and the painful defeat of the bloody 20th century must guide our ways. As a matter of fact, the Scandinavian societies contributed a lot to sign this path.

We are at the crossroads. There are good reasons not to give up hope in a more democratic world, even if powerful signs look adverse. In fact, we have no choice: We must begin paving the way towards global democracy – because the alternative might be war. World war.

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Notes

1 http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article13135.htm
4 While mainstream sociological theory informs us that the cleavage between two antagonistic social classes may have been historically correct but is no longer valid to describe today’s inequality patterns, I do insist that neocorporatists have continuously worked toward a new class struggle from above and brought back social class in a Marxian sense. This is, however, not the place to elaborate on the argument
10 Hamm, Bernd (2002): Internationale Verflechtung und Globalisierung, in: Handwörterbuch der Gesellschaft Deutschlands, hg. von Bernhard Schäfers and Wolfgang Zapf. Leske & Budrich, Opladen, S. 339-51. Certainly, other factors like, e.g., science and technology, etc. also play an important part in this process; the basic driving force, the énergie motrice, seems to lie in financial flows. We should not forget elements of globalization
overarching the sectoral spheres like, e.g., the Bilderberg group (since 1954), or the Trilateral Commission (1973), and others. They all tend to surpass democratic control and they all explicitly exclude developing countries. It has been observed that, e.g., the Bilderbergers have come to meet only days before the G 8 summits – *honi soit qui mal y pense*.

11 The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank Group, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

12 the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

13 Beheading the UN: How did this institution, with its historic mandate to end all wars and promote peace and development around the world, come to such a sorry pass?
http://207.44.245.159/article7032.htm

14 30 Years Of U.S. UN Vetoes: How the U.S. has Voted/Vetoed
http://www.informationclearghouse.info/article2000.htm; see also List Of U.S. Vetoes of UN Resolutions

Critical of Israel: (1972-2004),
http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/UN/usvetoes.html; a list of UN Resolutions against "Israel" 1955-1992,
http://www.middleeastnews.com/unresolutionslist.html

15 this was especially obvious in the case of UNESCO where the U.S. government put forward a proposal to introduce a 85 p.c. qualified majority as in the IMF which would have resulted in a factual U.S. veto right

16 U.S. finds strange bedfellows in UN vote on torture, Christian Science Monitor, April 19, 2002; UN Veto Reveals Bush Administration's Contempt for Human Rights,
http://www.commodorenews.com/views01/0404-03.htm; 179 countries vote against the Cuban blockade: For the 13th consecutive time, the UN General Assembly has passed a resolution calling for an end to the U.S. blockade of Cuba. The voting on the resolution was 179 countries in favor and four against (The United States, Israel, the Marshall Islands and Palau),

17 Bush Faces Major Test at UN on Exemption from War Crimes Court,


19 Pigs at the trough: Dems Charge GOP Has Corrupted Congress: "Lobbyists are now writing the bills passed by Congress," she contended. "They have infiltrated every aspect of our government. Their money and donations shape the opinions of corrupt lawmakers in a way that public opinion no longer does." http://tinyurl.com/9w3y6

20 All official documents can easily be found on the websites of the respective secretariats

21 While official MAI negotiations have been discontinued, the issue is of course still on the table under other titles


23 World Constitution and Parliament Association,
http://www.worldparliamentgov.net

24 There have been dozens of such proposals; my purpose here is not to synthesize them but simply to illustrate that rational solutions to the problem of a world government are easily imaginable. Needless to say, it would be a long way to go in a process of gradual reform

25 for a short history of the Bretton Woods institutions, see Monbiot (2003) op. cit.


27 http://news.independent.co.uk/world/americas/article308269.ece; Bolton threatens U.S. funding for U.N., http://tinyurl.com/7rvxs; Sidney Blumenthal: The enemy within: How an Americanist devoted to destroying international alliances became the U.S. envoy to the UN
http://207.44.245.159/article8230.htm

28 Frank, Andre Gunder (2004), op. cit.


32 Dossier, cited by Powell, called "a sham", *The Nation*, February 24, 2003

33 *The Times*, May 1, 2005


35 See, e.g., the very enlightening analysis in Robert Kuttner, America as a One Party-State, *The American Prospect* Volume 15, Issue 2. February 1, 2004; also Charles Sullivan,
A full-time minimum-wage worker earns $10,500 a year, too little to afford an average single bedroom apartment, while "last year the CEO of Wal-Mart earned $3,500 an hour. The CEO of Halliburton earned about $8,300 an hour. And the CEO of ExxonMobil earned about $13,700 an hour", The Nation, 04/18/2006; "In the 435-member House of Representatives, 123 elected officials earned at least one million dollars last year, according to recently released financial records made public each year. Next door in the ornate Senate, whose blue-blooded pedigree includes a Kennedy and a Rockefeller, one in three people are millionaires. By comparison, less than one per cent of Americans make seven-figure incomes", Jean Luis Santini, Agence France Press, 07/01/2004; "President Bush has quietly claimed the authority to disobey more than 750 laws enacted since he took office, asserting that he has the power to set aside any statute passed by Congress when it conflicts with his interpretation of the Constitution"; http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/04/30/america/web.0430bush.php; “The number of Americans subject to eavesdropping by the NSA could be in the millions if the full range of secret NSA programs is used”, 01/10/2006 ABC News Internet Ventures; Domestic Spying Program Is Sign the U.S. is Decaying Into a Police State, Democracy Now, 01/03/2005


