
REVOLUTIONARY TRANSFORMATION IN THE MACRO-REGIONAL MODERNITIES

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Abstract

The article analyses modern dimension of global interactions, specifically the relationships between various kinds of modernities in the different macro-regions of the world, and also the relationships between these kinds of modernities, on one side, and the global civilization, on the other. The article contributes to comparative analyses in order to show revolutionary transformations in the last decades. In this way, the article illuminates the meaning of multiple modernities, intercultural dialogue, and possibilities of the new global arrangement.

Keywords: macro-regional, modernities, revolution, transformation, global

1. Introduction

Transnational and global problems require, on one hand, local and national responses, and, on the other, macro-regional and global reactions [1]. However, most European social scientists and politicians still tend – naively – to harbour the hope that they will resolve conflicts and crises mostly with their local and national actions. It is not only inefficient but also socially unjust. Considering the fact that economies are transnationally and globally interlinked, people living in the West largely live on output and raw materials originating in developing countries, where the population is often impoverished. Supplies from the developing world to the developed countries have yet to be accompanied by information in the mass media about the inhuman conditions in which such raw materials and goods are frequently procured and produced. Knowledge of such global interactions and circumstances is fragmented and citizens of Western countries hardly know anything about them. Companies are not keen to disseminate such information because they wish to continue exploiting sources and labour in poor countries, while consumers do not care and are not interested in such issues.

Gradually, however, people in the affected areas, together with activists, social movements and social scientists, are making increasing headway in releasing mass media information about such injustices and, as such, are

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sometimes preventing at least the most pressing issues, such as child labour, brutal exploitation, inhuman working conditions and environmental devastation [2]. For the time being, though, the information is only coming through in dribs and drabs and merely shows the potential that can be harnessed, i.e. the stream of change is by no means in full flow now. The solution must extend beyond the local and national levels. Justice requires additional knowledge of the situation in developing areas of the world which are linked to Western countries. Global communication and social networks have increased an opportunity to criticize more sharply the current social and economic imbalances between the West and the rest, environmental destruction, and other problems, on the one hand, even if it has increased also the official propaganda, on the other hand. This development will probably go hand-in-hand with significant everyday resistance – demonstrations, strikes, and various everyday forms of protest against injustice.

In this contribution, I would like to outline this issue by stressing a modern dimension of global interactions, including conflicts, specifically the relationships between various kinds of modernities in the different macro-regions of the world, and also the relationships between these kinds of modernities, on one side, and global civilization, on the other [3]. In the last decades, global interactions have intensified contentious and chaotic contact between people from different modernities and cultures, resulting in more conflicts than before because various interests, values and institutions in different parts of the world are more transnationally and globally interconnected. Various xenophobic attitudes, the reinforcement of nationalism and the escalation of political conflicts are included here. In particular, while many people reflect mainly conflicts between the Western and Islamic countries, there are also interactions between the West and other macro-regions around the world which develop their own cultures and specific kinds of modernizations: China, Russia, South America, India, Sub-Saharan Africa, etc. Apparently, some of them are technically taken nations but they are also important macro-regions. These non-Western areas of the developing world are unwilling to be cowed into accepting the Western version of modernization, as Eisenstadt [4] explained by a concept of multiple modernities [5]. However, we have to be aware that the modernities are not isolated; they are partly mutually influenced and are to a certain extent a kind of hybrids. Moreover, the concept does not reflect cultures which have not been modernized [6], as it is articulated by various authors in the *Polylogue. Forum for Intercultural Philosophy*, for example. Nevertheless, the concept well indicates various paths, and that they need to be respected [7].

China is conducting its own experiment of ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’. Most countries in South America – especially Venezuela, Bolivia and Brazil – are endorsing experiments which are much more leftist than the politics and economy in Western countries at present. Russia and India are also shying away from blindly following the Western version of modernization, instead striving to blaze their own trail consistent with their historical and

contemporary cultural and economic specifics. This kind of significant changes can be called revolutionary transformations, as I will explain later.

To be sure, these specific changes include various problems that need to be addressed, but that is no reason for the Western model of politics and economics – a model that, let us not forget, is in crisis – to be foisted on these areas of the world. The same could be said about the Islamic countries. These various parts of the world, then, especially BRICS, could be said to be following at least partly their own paths of development and, in foreign matters, are striving to replace the unipolar world, headed by the West, with a multipolar world in which a voice can be given to numerous perspectives. Intercultural and transcultural, and also intermodern and transmodern polylogue is required in many areas of the world, and authors from various cultures and modernities analyze and develop it in various ways [8-12].

The aim of this paper is not to analyze in detail individual modernities but to outline their specific differences, similarities, and mutual relations in a framework of important revolutionary transformations, which took place in the last decades, and a possible future revolutionary transformation on the global level. But of course, the possibility of peaceful revolutionary transformations can fail in case of serious armed conflicts in the macro-regional or global levels.

2. The comparative modernities of Russia and China

It is important to analyze relationships between individual kinds of modernities and cultures in the macro-regions of the world. First, we can approach the plurality of modernities by identifying and comparing two basic paths followed by the largest countries to experiment with socialism and communism in the 20th century. What is more, these are not just individual countries, but entire macro-regions with their own specific modern, cultural and long history.

Naturally, any new experiment requires a critique of the problems and necessary change. Especially because, obviously, these cases did not concern full versions of socialism, but only attempts at the introduction thereof, with various elements of authoritarianism. Both countries recognized the shortcomings in their organization and started to carry out transformation – China after Mao Zedong's death at the end of the 1970s, the Soviet Union starting in the mid-1980s after Brezhnev's death. Both countries endeavoured to make economic and political transformations, but each of them ultimately settled on only one as a priority. While the Soviet Union eventually went primarily the way of political transformation, China's preference was for economic transformation. This difference in the concept of change was to be an absolutely fundamental and decisive factor in further development of these countries.

If we were to personalize these policies, it would be fair to say that Gorbachev preferred *glasnost*, i.e. political openness, whereas Teng Xiaoping decided to rely on market solutions. As soon as Gorbachev started to lose control and influence over the transformation of the country through his political

reforms, he also became unable to manage the economic transformation and ultimately the system collapsed [13]. The resultant disorder destroyed the largest social experiment of the 20th century, which was not given a chance to transform. Teng Xiaoping went in the opposite direction. He kept hold of political power and used it as a vehicle to launch the necessary economic reform. However, he was unwilling to abandon the key features of the then state version of socialism, i.e. a planned economy and societal ownership. At the same time though, he opened the door to elements of capitalism, i.e. the market and private ownership [14]. That is not to say that he wanted capitalism to prevail over socialism.

Teng was well versed with Marx's argument that, for the transition to socialism, a country's economy must be well developed in order to prevent the system from crumbling and regressing to a previous stage of development. Aware of the fact that China was a backward feudal country unprepared for the transition to socialism, he believed that Mao Zedong had made the switch prematurely. Teng attempted to resolve this flaw by allowing elements to enter Chinese socialism that would be able to fill in the gaps in the Chinese economy's historical development which should have taken place before the arrival of socialism. He was aware of Marx's idea of not only negative but also civilizing tendencies of capital. Furthermore, Teng knew that Marx's classic model of economy and politics was merely an initial sketch of socialism and that a functioning economy, politics and society required a more intensive and more topical paradigm. He believed that socialism, in its given stage of historical development, should be based on the following conditions: first, on a lesser degree of central planning, accompanied (but not controlled) by the market; and, second, on societal ownership, which should encompass not only state ownership, but also provincial, municipal, village, cooperative, etc., ownership, accompanied (but not controlled) by private ownership. In this respect, the political philosopher Wei Xiaoping mentions that China stands on an important crossroads in terms of maintaining this balance between the main and supplementary elements in the future as well as in terms of developing each element [14]. It is crucial. In China, this model is modestly named "socialism with Chinese characteristics" [15], but it is essentially a broader concept [16] that, to a certain degree, is also partly applied in other countries [17], as documented in various experiments, for example, in Africa.

Although the people's access to decision-making on societal ownership, planning and other issues is very indirect, China has benefited from its economic version of transformation. Almost 400 million Chinese have started to enjoy the same living standards as those in the EU, another 400 million have climbed out of poverty, and the remainder is also projected to do so. Even conservative calculations make China the second largest economy in the world, and its influence in the global environment continues to grow stronger. In contrast, the political version of transformation in the Soviet Union saw the state collapse, and its successor, Russia – in the wake of Yeltsin's neoliberal shock therapy – needed one and a half decades to work its way among the relatively influential

BRICS countries, albeit largely by relying on oil and gas exports. While China draws its strength mainly from being a factory for the world and, to a sizable degree, by redistributing profits in favour of the socially needy. Russia, on the other hand, is unstable because of its dependence on the current prices of the oil and gas it exports, and the socially disadvantaged in Russia are not well supported by liberal conservative state programs. It is not yet clear how political transformation will continue. At this point in time, we could limit ourselves to one point by saying that, in Russia's case, it is still an open issue whether the transfer of political power to successors will trigger a destabilization problem, whereas China has managed to pass on the leadership of the country seamlessly to the fifth generation by adhering to established rules. So far the specific Chinese model of (a potential revolutionary) transformation, with its preference for economic over political transformation, while championing a combination of planning and the market and a combination of societal and private ownership, is an engine for further development in China and for bulking up its influence in the world, despite numerous shortcomings. It remains to be seen how political transformation will proceed.

If we examine their global role, both countries – Russia and China – are evidently striving to make decent contributions to the breakup of the unilateral world in which West-centric politics and economy are predominant, and to form a more balanced multilateral global order in which major influence is wielded by China, Russia, India, Brazil and other countries.

3. The specific modernities in India and South America

When contemplating modernization specific to India and South America, I would start by highlighting two characteristic concepts: the first one refers to *revolutionary transformation*, and the second one concerns the not fully but only *partially autonomous types of modernization*. Revolutionary transformation is a gradual change with an essential importance rather than merely smooth shallow transformation or outright revolution. As for the second point, returning to my previous comparison, although Russia and China were influenced by the concept of socialism and are influenced to some extent by the Western concept of capitalist politics and economy, they were distinct and relatively independent modernization alternatives to the West in the 20th century. In contrast, India and the Latin American countries were fully colonized by Western superpowers, which forced the basic pillars of Western economic and political order upon them. In this respect, at first glance, they do not constitute entirely autonomous alternatives, even though they have their own rich and long history and culture. More detailed investigation reveals that, despite colonialism, they have come up with their own types of modernization and, in the future, could be followed by other parts of the world. But whether they will follow good or bad models is unknown.

Although, at the time of colonialism, Britain controlled India with its own repressive political order and, once this collapsed, a formal political democracy prevailed there. Hinduist, Islamic and other cultural historical traditions have infused this structure with their own specific character. Furthermore, since gaining independence, India has gone through a unique stage in search for its own version of socialist development which, following the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, started subtly being replaced by a capitalist path in the early 1990s. There was no visible revolution standing as a milestone at the given time. Rather, we could say that revolutionary transformation gradually asserted itself. Just as, following the fall of colonialism, Gandhi pushed for socialist, secularly-oriented Indian home rule *Hind Swaraj* [18], and Nehru [19] then built on this with his socialist revolutionary transformation. In the 20 years since the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, a capitalist revolutionary transformation in India has steadily come to the fore which exhibits all known problems. India people's Bharatiya Janata Party has bit by bit established a neoliberal capitalism legitimized by means of Hindutva and cultural and religious conservatism, as recently witnessed in particular under Modi's leadership. Therefore, there currently seems little hope that the slums in downtown Delhi, Kolkata or the countryside will stop haunting us any time soon [20].

In the macro-region of South America, we can trace the opposite process, from right to left, again by means of a path of transformation which, in certain cases, verged on revolutionary transformation. Therefore, I will limit my reply to South America, because in Central America and Mexico developments have been very complex and ambiguous.

Following the collapse of right-wing dictatorships in South American countries in recent decades, more social movements and left-wing governments have started to make headway than is usual in Western countries. This has not been a return to state centralism based on the model of the Soviet Union but the democratic cooperation of people active in civil society and social movements with administration on local, national and macro-regional levels. First, more radical democratic socialist projects came to the fore, inspired by Chávez's low-intensity revolution in Venezuela, in particular under Morales in Bolivia and Lugo in Paraguay. Chávez's project of 21st century socialism had an effect which spread beyond those countries and influenced more or less most of the countries in South America. Secondly, Lula established numerous social programmes in Brazil at state and national levels and promoted the grassroots participatory democratic projects of citizens, which then had a filter-through effect on the upper echelons. For example, the participation of citizens and social movements in the introduction of a social forum in Porto Alegre subsequently had far-reaching consequences which saw the social forum spreading to other countries and macro-regions and the organization of global social forums. Similarly, a participatory budget was deployed in Porto Alegre, enabling citizens to have a say in the municipal budget. This type of economic democracy then spread to hundreds of towns and states in Brazil and beyond, across South America and even into certain countries in Europe and other parts

of the planet. In recent years, I have seen an entire participatory system interlinking economic and political democracy in multiple places in Brazil. Sociologist Emil Sobottka from Porto Alegre has shown that participation must be institutionally intensively organized to prevent it from being abused by people who wish to essentially restrict participatory democracy [21].

Elements of participation have been supported by the Brazilian government from Lula through to Dilma Rousseff today. The same applies to cooperation between countries in South America, especially Venezuela and Brazil, in the establishment of the Bank of the South, that made it possible to break away from the World Bank and its asocial neoliberal imperatives. The fact that Brazil itself is the largest South American economy and political arena and one of the BRICS countries has had a major impact on the spread of these progressive elements throughout South America and, to some extent, the world. Another significant influence has been the fact that at least Brazil and Venezuela have been able to finance their social projects from relatively large oil reserves. And South American countries do not act in isolation because their political leaders are aware that, especially in a global era, it is the large countries and groupings that hold the power. This is why they have set up various macro-regional groups: the Union of South American Nations, Alba, Mercosur, and Celac.

4. A dispute between the West and the Islam

We can add a complement concerning relationships between the West and the Islam which have been at the centre of attention especially since 2001. Aside from the history of European colonialism in Islamic countries and the internal transformations of Islamic countries, the kernel of the problem between the West and the Islam is that, at present, the military forces of the U.S.A. and other Western countries maintain a presence in every other Islamic country. *Instead of intercultural dialogue, we have intercultural war.* Imagine the hypothetical opposite situation, with an Islamic occupying force in every other country of NATO. I suppose that many people in the West would fight against this.

In the wake of 9/11, the U.S.A. was itching for vengeance. Never mind the fact that Afghanistan had nothing to do with 9/11, war was for long-standing reasons in the cards there. The U.S.A. had bankrolled and made allies of the fundamental Islamic extremists there in order to use them to fight against the Soviets in the 1980s. However, Al Qaeda then started to break away, and this became a thorn in their side.

Moreover, authoritarian Saudi Arabia, which is where the 9/11 attackers were from, supports extremist Islamists in many Arab countries. American support is there, too. This interpretation is not only an external critique but also an internal critique. In response to the current pathological project in parts of Iraq and Syria, for example, United States General Thomas McInerney has explained that the U.S.A. made a major contribution to the creation of the Islamic State. He was referring not only to exercises at a base in Jordan and

elsewhere but also to the weapons supplied to the Islamists from Libya, i.e. the previous military conflict.

It is well documented that the U.S.A. administration itself had to confess that it had made a mistake concerning the war in Iraq and that, in fact, Iraqis had no weapons of mass destruction. The main targets in Iraq were actually oil and the sphere of influence.

This has not been the only mistake to have been admitted. The war in Libya was also a confirmed error. The U.S.A. intelligence services have come clean that they were wrong and that, in 2011, there were no attempts at genocide in Libya. Yet, it was this very argument of genocide that Hillary Clinton used as the main excuse to bomb Libya. Libya enjoyed the highest standard of living in Africa. Now it lies in ruins. It is possible to mention other problematic cases as well, as apparent in *Guantánamo Diary* by an imprisoned detainee Mohamedou Ould Slahi, for example [22].

The U.S.A.'s military budget for this year is in excess of USD 800 billion, which, as in every year, is many times larger than the budget of any other country in the world [*US Military Spending*, http://www.usgovernmentspending.com/us_military_spending_30.html]. Such a concentration of military funding is, in itself, problematic. The U.S.A. is just one of the world's nearly 200 countries and there is no reason for it to have such a military budget and to have the right to play the world's policeman [23]. Global order should be secured by the institution intended for this purpose: the United Nations.

5. Revolutionary transformations and the global poor

Now we can try to draft a general thesis on major developmental tendencies of recent decades. Building on political philosopher Jerry Cohen [24], generally speaking, we could say that revolutions have delivered usually violent, unconstitutional, rapid, and fundamental change, whereas transformations have been characterized by non-violent, constitutional, steady, and moderate change. Pivotal social and political change in the modern times took place often against a backdrop of revolution but recently more complex changes have prevailed. On a path of transformation, fundamental – it means revolutionary – changes take place over the longer time, hence this is revolutionary transformation. In the Soviet Union, we first saw an attempt at such a way forward in the 1980s but ultimately this speeded up the collapse of the entire system and the country. Transformation (probably a transformation of revolutionary importance if it is completed in the future) has been under way in China since the end of the 1970s. The transitional development between revolution and transformation has also been under way in India and South America. This does not necessarily mean that a target revolutionary situation has been achieved everywhere but that developments are in progress in this direction. On the contrary, in the countries of the Arab Spring, revolutions quickly emerged but they were not particularly successful and in the end they resulted in no truly fundamental and positive change. Thus, it is important to see that the mentioned relevant sustainable

economic and political changes of multiple modernities of recent decades are revolutionary transformations, not revolutions.

However, I would avoid throwing my weight behind just one of these paths. Whether a given situation is ultimately a revolution, transformation, or revolutionary transformation depends, when all is said and done, on the resistance put up by the holders of illegitimate power. If the resistance is very significant and the population is already very frustrated, the result is revolution. If resistance is low key but persistent, there generally tends to be change based only on transformation. If relatively radical changes are successfully enforced during the longer time period, this is a revolutionary transformation.

In many places throughout the world, the global poor really do have experience that differs from that faced by the marginalized people in Western countries. Different forms of development in non-Western countries result in different forms of misrecognition and recognition, although some historical parallels can also be identified. At any rate, at least one billion poor people in developing countries are struggling for everyday survival in extreme poverty where they need to secure at least the most necessary food and a roof over their heads, and have no means to engage in effective demonstrations in the streets and on the squares against the current economic and political order. Most of them live in remote areas and do not have the funds to travel, for example, to the capital of the country. Having said that, even if they did have the money to cover the cost of travel and other expenses, it would be of little use to them because decisions on fundamental matters of the global economy and politics, including marginal areas with many poor people, are often taken elsewhere, usually in wealthy Western cities where transnational corporations are established. Therefore, expecting poor people in developing countries to use conventional forms of protest, such as demonstrations, strikes, etc., is a West-centric attitude stemming either from ignorance or arrogance. Classic forms of the Western type of protest can be expected in developing countries only marginally. Just as in the past when slaves were invisible as agents of protest because they were not recognized as human beings and their resistance was overlooked, today the global poor are misrecognized and their everyday struggle for survival is virtually invisible to people in Western and other countries.

I would say that the global poor are potentially a new subject of social change. This is also an opportunity for many women, especially in developing countries, because approximately 70% of the global poor are women [25]. Their work in the household or in the field, where they grow food to feed their families, is not at all recognized on the labour market – as if it did not exist. And yet this work accounts for an enormous proportion of all the work carried out by people across the world. Furthermore, housework is a basis of and condition for all other work because, in the absence of a domestic background, people would generally be unable to engage in any other work at all, and it would be impossible to bring up children and reproduce future generations. And in those cases when women do find a job, they generally find themselves working two shifts, i.e. they have their day job, and they have the housework. Employers are

aware of this and are afraid that they will often stay at home to look after small and sick children. In this light, they are often reluctant to employ women, or they discriminate against them by paying them less money. All of this also holds true, of course, in Western countries. Therefore, the eradication of poverty and the guarantee of the gender-just redistribution of labour in the household are essential for the emancipation of women.

Various global interactions can be problematic for the poor because they are damaged by transnational companies in global capitalism. On the other hand, global opportunities to prevent such injustice may also emerge. Non-profit organizations and agents, involved in global social movements, cooperate with the poor who have been damaged by transnational corporations, whether this concerns exploited workers or, for example, the rural population which has to scrape by in extreme poverty in an environment contaminated by businesses. For example, in India, where 40% of the global poor live, they work together to demand extraterritorial recognition of their social rights which they seek judicially from (generally Western) states in which the corporations concerned are based. Most Western states committed themselves to the extraterritorial recognition of social rights back in the 1970s when they signed human rights protocols, especially the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The application of these legal documents had little impact before the global era, but in recent decades of global interactions the use of these legal instruments, readily available and having a relatively large impact, has become viable.

However, it would be wrong to believe that the global poor, in cooperation with social movements and non-profit organizations, will have fundamental power to change social and other injustices. Their activities are very important because they draw attention to the struggle for justice prompted by local misrecognized needs, and enable these needs to be tracked but it is impossible to expect changes only through the actions of these agents without regard to economic or other conditions. On one hand, for example, you see people who have been pushed to the margins of the world who are exploited mainly so that minerals and other natural resources could be looted. On the other hand, we can see how the poor are starting to be involved in the global economic system of consumption and production. Starting in the mid-1990s, former Chinese president Jiang Zemin motivated Chinese companies to engage in more business abroad by means of the slogan 'Go out' ('Zou chuqu') [J. Zemin, *Build a Well-off Society in an All-Round Way and Create a New Situation in Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*, http://en.people.cn/200211/18/eng20021118_106983.shtml]. In those places where Western companies have no interest in view of the low profits available, Chinese companies are coming along and building infrastructure, such as roads and electricity, as well as schools, and they are developing the local African economies. China is looking for minerals and for markets for its cheap products, while Africa needs investment and companies for its development. As a result, more than a billion Africans and more than a billion Chinese are interacting. Increasing numbers of

Africans are becoming involved in this cooperation, just as the Chinese were integrated into production for consumers from Europe and the U.S.A. since the 1970s. This transformed China into a global factory, and the country is now investing in Africa.

We can view that issue from several angles, including from the perspective of efficiency. Sad to say, slavery was not brought to an end just because of the resistance of the slaves and moral arguments but also – and in particular – because it had become economically inefficient. Likewise, now the existing Western model is also showing signs of inefficiency in Africa because it too profit oriented. This is why China is introducing new economic opportunities in Africa and other developing areas of the world, including investment in infrastructure and schools, and is effectively destroying the old Western model of exploitation, which set apart the unneeded population of the developing world and abandoned it on the poor peripheries.

Naturally, the protests of the global poor and their resistance to Western corporations and states, combined with their engagement in the Chinese model, cannot be idealized because, in some respects, the increase in their standard of living is and will be affected by economic mistakes and environmental destruction. Overall, however, we are witnessing momentum behind the decline of the Western concept of capitalism, momentum which, through the Chinese model, is delivering hope to hundreds of millions of people so that they can escape from poverty, as many poor Chinese did in China. However, many problems brought about by this current path of development will still need to be tackled.

6. Conclusions - development on a global level

The existence of the macro-regional and global interactions requires that adequate political and legal institutions of justice are set up, i.e. normative institutions on macro-regional and global levels. On a macro-regional level, I already addressed various modernities. I can add that the European Union is established here but this is not yet sufficiently integrated and does not have sufficient institutions for the genuine democratic participation of citizens and for social justice. The EU may currently find it difficult to stand its ground both internally, in relation to European citizens, and externally, in relation to other macro-regional units which are strong for various reasons: U.S.A., China, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, etc.

On a global level there are currently no adequate institutions. The UN was a progressive response to the situation following the World War II and, in many respects, genuinely delivered numerous positive steps. However, 70 years down the line, it requires a fundamental and creative overhaul. For example, it is unacceptable for the UN to essentially be controlled, via the Security Council, by just five superpowers with the veto power. No country from the global south is represented as a permanent member of the Security Council. The acceptance of India, Brazil, South Africa and Egypt, for example, as permanent members

could at least be a first step on the way to greater justice.

It is also unacceptable that the citizens of various states are represented very unequally within the UN solely on the principle of one state, one vote, i.e. according to a principle of methodological nationalism. For example, at the UN General Assembly, 1.5 million Estonians have the same single vote as 1.3 billion Indians. This is a striking injustice which could be resolved by introducing a global parliament in which, based on methodological cosmopolitanism, the same number of citizens would always have the same number of votes – as is the case today in the parliaments of various countries or in the European Parliament. The current principle of methodological nationalism, however, could be preserved within the General Assembly which could represent another, less significant chamber of the global parliament: a ‘UN Senate’.

The redefined UN could then tackle current injustices in the economic and social area, on one hand, and in dialogue between individual cultures, on the other. As the African author Kwame Gyekye notes [26], this would constitute respect not only for the plurality of cultures but also for common humankind [27]. The UN should address planetary problems of wars, the environment, new dangers related to the electronic control of citizens, biotechnology, financial speculation, the issue of a global reserve currency based on a basket of currencies rather than on the unfair dominance of a single state, etc [28]. More institutional opportunities for civil participation in political and economic democracy, extraterritorial recognition, cultural polylogue, the global parliament and other elements I have mentioned could be among the first steps towards establishing a new order delivering expanded social, economic and cultural justice, and environmental sustainability [*World Parliament*, <http://worldparliament-gov.org/>]. Such a system could secure the downfall of global financial speculation, put an end to the dominance of transnational companies and their economic contradictions, push through greater redistribution to developing countries from the global pie of production and trade, and reduce military conflicts, while ensuring greater respect for various cultures and various kinds of modernization.

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