

## Geopolitics and globalization

### Riassunto. - Geopolitica e globalizzazione

Con la “guerra fredda” si delineava uno scenario nel quale le tre maggiori superpotenze (USA, URSS e Cina) spostavano la competitività sul piano dell’informazione e dell’innovazione tecnologica, con l’ausilio di ‘quinte colonne’. Il conflitto così controllato si trasformava in vantaggio, confermando il principio sistemico che la lotta fra le parti non è distruttiva ma è funzionale al mantenimento dell’ordine del sistema. Ma in USSR la crescita del complesso militare-industriale era ipertrofica a danno dell’industria civile, con diminuzione della produttività, stagnazione tecnica e impoverimento del paese, causa della scomparsa dell’URSS. A sua volta la Russia entra in crisi per gravi problemi etnici e politico-sociali. Anche la Cina entra in crisi: alla politica di riforme economiche e di apertura all’estero si accompagnano lotte politiche di vertice, campagne contro corruzione e criminalità, scontri sociali e conflitti etnici (rivolta di Lhasa del 1987, movimento islamico nella provincia autonoma dello Xinjiang-Uygur), mentre persiste il nodo di Taiwan. Negli USA al successo politico internazionale si unisce quello economico. Il Paese diventa l’unica superpotenza mondiale, ma si aggrava lo scontro ideologico-culturale con movimenti di oppositori, interni ed esterni, con esplicito riferimento alla globalizzazione. La dissimetria delle forze in campo è solamente in apparenza a vantaggio dell’attore “statale”: la nuova guerra asimmetrica produce “la disfatta del vincitore” se quest’ultimo non capisce meglio il suo avversario e non sa opporgli con flessibilità, in maniera coerente su spazi diversi. È una guerra soprattutto di informazione e comunicazione. Se la “disfatta del vincitore” sembra cominciare ad esser compresa dall’attore “statale”, nella conduzione politica non si vede ancora una capacità di capire meglio l’antagonista, probabilmente perché la rete a maglie aperte di quest’ultimo, consentendogli congiungimento e scioglimento di elementi non sempre omogenei, ne maschera identità e strategia,

trovando anche copertura nelle manifestazioni di dissenso interne all’Occidente. Comunque si vogliano intendere la dicotomia islamica del mondo (diviso in “casa della pace” dominata dagli islamici che vi applicano la “sharia”, e “casa della guerra” dove gli islamici non comandano), lo spostamento dell’origine del conflitto dal piano ideologico a quello economico indebolisce l’attore “politico”, obbligandolo a impegni considerevoli di energia per obiettivi potenzialmente anche controproducenti.

### Introduction

The present writer has pointed out earlier (Da Pozzo 1985) that it was only possible to keep investigating geopolitics by bearing in mind Raffestin’s (1980) lesson on power geography, thereby turning the old political geography into a geography of territory viewed as a system arising from the interaction of energy and information displayed by the various actors. Within that context, the world system could be conceptualized as a set of subsystems integrated in various ways and at different levels of intensity, each subsystem reaching out with a different range of action, reflected by territorial control as well as by the internal energy-information balance and by the strategies adopted. The most effective indicator of such capabilities was given by the technologies employed in territorial control and warfare.

It is a well known fact that the greatest concentration of global range, highly destructive weapons belong to the USA and the USSR, and it is also a fact that China is swiftly catching up with the other two powers, thanks to its efforts in the field of mis-



siles. For the other members of the “nuclear club”, i.e. the States which already have or can produce nuclear bombs (but it should not be forgotten that in 1975 an M.I.T. student has shown to be able to manufacture one), there is at the moment neither the will nor the capability to achieve a global range.

### A “balanced” world system?

The contending “superpowers” (USA and USSR, including their respective allies, and China), though seeking to shun a direct confrontation for fear of mutual assured destruction, competed in the information field. The positive feedback of innovation in warfare technology (necessary for “security”) on technological innovation (useful to society in general) was accompanied by the ongoing ideological-cultural clash and the help to the organization of “fifth columns” in the enemy camp. The overall result, at any rate, was the transformation of the three-pronged struggle into an advantage for all three, supporting once more the systemic principle whereby the struggle among the parts is not destructive but functional to the preservation of order within the system, in this case the global one (Da Pozzo 1991).

However, the simple observation that, already in early Seventies, USA and USSR together could destroy the whole planet two times over, and that in the Eighties the global destructive potential rose fourfold, led many to doubt whether a process had been triggered whereby the growth of military hardware had become allometric, being increasingly unable to improve the productivity of systems, with looming instability hazards diffusing from individual States into the world system, precisely due to excessive expenditure of energy for that purpose.

The fall of the Berlin Wall (November 9, 1989) and the ensuing reunification of Germany (October 3, 1990) mark dramatically the end of the geopolitical scenario outlined above. The “system” was losing one of the superpowers: the Soviet Union. In fact, in the USSR the growth of the military-industrial complex during the Eighties was hypertrophic, to the detriment of consumer industries, while labour productivity declined, technology stagnated and the country grew poorer. Such hypertrophy grew largely as a consequence of Reagan’s statement, on March 23, 1983, on the *Strategic Defense Initiative*, better known as “star wars”. The outcome was that the USSR had no longer the strength to hold on. Almost a sym-

bol of that failure was the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl on April 1986.

### Demise of the USSR and serious contradictions in China

An unmistakable token of the changed system was the *Intermediate Nuclear Forces* agreement, signed in Washington on December 8, 1987 by Reagan and Gorbachev. For the first time the two leaders agreed on dismantling missile launching sites in Europe operating within a range of 500 to 5,500 km, with attendant reciprocal local controls. On the same line, in 1991, the year in which the USSR met its end, the START treatise between USA and Russia reduced the number of nuclear heads to 6,000 each (SALT II of 1974 allowed more than 20,000 to the USA and over 26,000 to USSR). In 1993 START II reduced them to 3,000-3,500 (still enough, at any rate, to destroy the planet utterly), doing away also with multiple head missiles, and in April 2000 talks began for a further reduction to 2,000. At the same time, in 1993 Russia, Cina and USA signed the agreement, ratified in 1997 by 81 States, for banning chemical weapons; between 1995 and 1996 it was agreed to extend *sine die* the non proliferation treatise of nuclear weapons and various parts of the world were “denuclearized”. In 1997 the treaty against the use of anti-personnel landmines was signed, it is due to become effective from 1999.

During the Eighties, China was beset by a serious crisis. Economic reforms and foreign policy openings (in 1980 it joined the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) went together with lengthy struggles for political leadership (from the trial to the “Band of Four” to the Fourth Constitution), repeated campaigns against corruption and crime (1983, 1986, 1988-89) and, above all, heavy social clashes (suffice to recall only the widespread student unrest of 1986 and the Peking uprising of 1989), triggered by inflation, unemployment and a worsening of economic and spatial imbalances linked to a surge of economic and productive growth. In April 1989 student demonstrations in honour of the reformer Hu Yaobang took place, in May the unrest spread to many other cities, with impressive demonstrations in which the population supported the students, who in Peking had permanently occupied the Tien An Men Square. On May 20, martial law was introduced in Peking, and the army occupied the square in the night between June 3 and 4 June, after playing havoc among the students, with thou-



sands of casualties; clashes continued for a few days in other cities too, and the ensuing repression of the communist regime was, as usual, ruthless: thousands of arrests and scores of executions took place. Martial law remained in force in Peking until January 1990.

The crisis in Tibet also reached a new pitch (Lhasa uprising in 1987) and in view of all this the very role of China as in international power was sharply cut down to size, so that its action seems to become restricted to its own immediate surroundings, where it managed to obtain from the USSR concessions in the Amur-Ussuri border dispute (1986) and to sign agreements with the United Kingdom (1984) for the returning of Hong-Kong, as well as with Portugal (1987) for that of Macao on the basis of the principle "one nation, two systems"; but, significantly, attempts to apply the same principle to Taiwan (backed by the USA) ended up in failure.

### **The USA emerge as the only superpower**

In the United States, on the contrary, the Eighties, dominated by the Reagan presidency, are marked by favourable political developments in the international arena and medium term successes of "reaganomics". The new president, G. H. W. Bush, seemed to manage with no great problems the new order grounded on American hegemony, as well as upon its capability of intervention, military if necessary, in every part of the world (Panama crisis, 1989; First Gulf War, 1991). Long term problems inherited from Reagan's economic policy (budget and commercial deficit) and the renewed sharpening of social conflicts and of the "right to difference", occasionally with heavy unrest (racial disturbances in Los Angeles, 1992), do not significantly change the picture. Presidents and governments alternate in democratic fashion: they change some features of internal policy, but leave foreign policy guidelines untouched. In this regard, the crisis in the Balkans is particularly instructive: initially (1991-95, clash between Yugoslavia, Slovenia and Croatia, and war in Bosnia) the active role is played by NATO but the intervention is still – as usual – under the umbrella of the United Nations, while in the following stage (Kosovo war) the action of NATO is, for the first time, without UNO warrant, due to Russia's and China's vetoes (March 1999). After eighty days of bombardments, Belgrad was forced to accept the peace plan, which the United Nations was going to ratify shortly after (and even before that, the Inter-

national Penal Court in The Hague had charged Milosevic for crimes against mankind). The uselessness of the Chinese and Russian veto shows that the USA were, and are, truly the only world superpower.

In Russia the disastrous heritage of the Communist regime is worsened by the "savage" onrush of an unregulated market system by a society desperately devoid of traditions of personal and economic liberty (we must bear in mind, among other things, the legacy of seven centuries of oriental despotism prior to the October Revolution). Another legacy of an unhappy history is political instability, going so far as to bloody clashes in the "Parliamentary uprising" of 1993). Even more serious was the explosion of ethnic conflicts, which, in the case of Chechnya, turns into a true and extremely serious open war. In this context, the only positive results were the solution of border disputes with China (1994), followed by the demilitarization of the same borders (agreement China-Russia-Kazakhstan-Kirgizistan-Tadzikistan of 1996), as well as the acceptance in the G7 group (Birmingham, 1999), which thus becomes a G8. From the year 2000, under President Putin, the Russian government regains a certain control over State and administration (curtailment of the power of regional governors, June 30, 2000), as well as upon dissidents and, above all, upon illegal activities. As a result, the economy began to improve, but the declared object of a return to a "Great Russia" was promptly dashed, symbolically, by the disaster of the nuclear submarine Kursk in the Barents Sea, and by the destruction by fire of the television tower at Ostankino (August 2000). A more favourable development occurred in 2002, with the set-up of a permanent NATO Council enlarged to the Russian Federation, aiming at a common policy in the fields of security and anti-terrorism.

In China the Nineties saw a renewed drive towards the market economy (dubbed "socialist" to keep the tattered cover of a crumbling ideology), with good success in nodal cities and ports, but the previous social and spatial imbalances were by no means solved; rather they tended to worsen. A stunning growth of industrial production went with a surge of inflation, of unemployment and poverty. Buying power was halved and the insolvency of the public debt officially declared. Even more serious was the emergence of alliances between State authorities, "new millionaires" and organized crime: a consequence of metamorphosis and adaptation of the Communist *nomenklatura* (see Voslensky 1984) – a pattern commonly



observed at the demise of Communist economic systems in the USSR and Eastern Europe, since the same *nomenklaturas*, never called to answer for their crimes, were in an ideal position to turn their political strength and previous economic links into growing economic power, moreover *nomenklatura* networks could easily be turned into crime mafia-like networks, due to evident structural and moral similarities between the two modes of existence.

Consequently, China suffers from serious tensions and violent clashes in the North-eastern industrial areas, while the coastal richer regions begin to agitate for autonomy, and in the ethnically non-Chinese West movements aiming at independence on ethnic-religious basis gather momentum: Tibet and the autonomous province of Xinjiang-Uygur are in uproar. The centralist, repressive response to any dissidence (in 1998 an administrative reform strengthened the already extensive repressive powers; in 1999 Falung Gong, a buddhist sect diffused even among senior party members, was prohibited) seemed to allow the government to regain control (although, in 2002, renewed unrest broke out in the industrial areas of Manchuria), and to obtain token prestige results (the first Chinese “spaceship” in 2003), as well as some recovery of an international role, however limited to neighbouring areas.

Together with the USA, China takes part, since 1997, to negotiations in Geneva for a solution of the conflict between the two Koreas. She recovers, on the basis of previous agreements, Hong Kong in 1997 and Macao in 1999. However, the traditional tension with Taiwan is far from eased, and is made even sharper by the clash for the possession of the Paracel Islands (claimed by Vietnam too) and the Spratly Islands (claimed also by Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia and the Philippines). At the same time, relations with the West, indispensable for economic recovery, waver between favourable openings (specific agreements with the United States in 2000 and admission to the WTO in 2001) and hot clashes caused by well-founded Western allegations of dumping and unfair competition.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium opens, therefore, with the USA as world leaders; but the American perception of their own primacy as a result of a “natural selection” resulting from the previous multipolar conflict led to a policy aiming at the interests of their own “system”, as if there was no longer a “general system” or, more simply, as if they were the same thing. So, for example, besides international conventions still to be ratified (the one forbidding discriminations against women of 1979,

and that on the rights of children of 1989), there are positions ranging from a repeal (2001) of the Kyoto agreement for the reduction of greenhouse gases up to attitude kept at the mega-summit (60,000 delegates of 200 countries) in Johannesburg (2002), from the resumption by president G.W. Bush of the “star wars” project (abandoned in 1993 in the wake of the “disarmament” policy), up to the superfluity of UNO agreement to their own world operations (from the Balkans to Iraq).

### The new globalized conflict scenario

In the absence of a State strong enough to withstand the American forces openly, conflict takes the shape of an ideological-cultural clash in the shape of a consent/dissent dichotomy towards the United States and, in more general terms, towards liberism and the “Western way of life”, giving rise to antagonist movements, internal and external, more or less organized, all referring explicitly to globalization, generally thought to be a phenomenon peculiar to the contemporary age, but disagrees on its interpretation: for some it means economic growth, development of synergies, increase in the mobility of men and goods, diffusion of information and increase of innovation, while for others it is tantamount to increasing growth inequalities, cultural oppression, imposition of behavioural and economic models, potential loss of knowledge. Through ideology, globalization is viewed as a political process, that's to say as the consequence of conscious strategies by political actors, and this brings about a considerable obstacle in the evaluation of the consequences – real and not ideological – of globalization.

Far-reaching revolutionary socio-economic changes – such as the Industrial Revolution or the very globalization which is our concern – cannot in fact be governed by denying them, but by a management which, conscious of their nature and their potential consequences, must contrive the most suitable policies aiming at realistic objectives, bearing in mind that a choice of different options always exists. In the same way as geographic determinism is a false paradigm, the dogma of historical inevitability is a dismally false and potentially dangerous one. The Industrial Revolution was by no means halted by luddism, but was governed, in the countries which chosed to pursue it, by means of the first social laws since mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The symbols and hearts of industrialization have been the machines and labour mechanization. The very same role for the present ongoing globalization is



played by the evolution of the infrastructural network, of the circulation and communication of information, which does not mean merely the ability of a single actor to act alone on the world scene.

With the line of Tordesillas of 1494, the Pope Alexander VI divided already in "global" fashion the whole world between Portugal and Spain. Shortly later, Charles V of Spain can say, not without reason, that on his empire the sun never set. The following century the East India Companies doubtless acted already as world-wide economic actors. However, within their planetary-size networks, the space-time dimension imposed by available technology caused these imperial spaces to be very fragmented: the first circumnavigation of the planet by the Magellan expedition is an adventure lasting three years (September 20, 1519 - September 6, 1522), and even in 1779 it takes nearly one year to take to Madras the news of the war declaration of Spain to England, but twenty years later von Humboldt sailed from La Coruña (Spain) to Cumaná (Venezuela) in forty days.

Man overcomes the limits of space action of the time factor by means of technological innovation. The onset of the infrastructural revolution is a vital part of the Industrial Revolution. Key dates are 1825 (the first railway line, between Stockton and Darlington) and 1914 (the first regular airline). The railways, the steamship, the car, the plane are the chief agents of this conquest of space. In the same period, covering the latter part of the First Industrial Revolution and the whole of the Second Industrial Revolution, one more momentous change takes place: the divorce between the transport networks and the networks catering for the circulation of information: while telegraph lines followed the railway lines, the telephone and the wireless developed quite independently of transport lines.

With the conquest of space, its Euclidean geometry measured in kilometres have been replaced by the new geometry of infrastructure and accessibility, grounded upon times and frequencies. It is a powerful geometry, which restructures the territory in depth: a strongly visible geometry, often on purpose, precisely as an exhibition of power. So, if the packet linked London and Bombay in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in a month, and Jules Verne, around 1870 described a journey around the world in eighty days, in 1909 the "Mauritania" conquered the record of the North Atlantic crossing in just four days and a half.

However, money swiftly became the unit of measure of the new geometry, since in the overall

balance between the factors cost and time, the former prevails on the latter, according to Smith's more general paradigm whereby industrial society develops its territorial construction. The classic model, which von Thünen devised, between 1826 and 1863, for agriculture, became the basic reference for any study of land use anywhere, so much so that, in current language, distinguishing between planned and unplanned territories one tends to forget that the latter are far from "spontaneous", but built according to the logic mentioned above. Even cost minimization for the maximization of profit produces spatial frameworks geared to local peculiarities and identities, to geomorphological, economic and web characters, bringing about well structured territorial mosaics and a peaceful coexistence between "global" and "local". Not by chance Von Thünen names his model "isolated State", and non surprisingly the logic of this model is still visible, in spite of the swift evolution of transport networks, in the landscapes of our countryside up to the Fifties and Sixties.

In the Seventies takes place that great transport revolution, of which the man in the street has a rather dimmed perception in comparison with other technological innovations, but which is the true harbinger of globalization and brings revolutionary change in society and geographic space. This revolution begins in sea transport and continues on land, making an updating of networks and strategies unavoidable: the unitization of the transport cycle brought about by containerization triggers circuits around the world and erases or minimizes the previous spatial constraints on transport cost. The monetary measure of space has shrunk, since cost differences between the various segments have disappeared, becoming independent from means of transport and natural conditions, due to the logic of "door to door" service. Passenger air traffic has reached the record of the Paris-New York flight with a Concorde in less than four hours, e about forty-eight hours for a trip around the world on regular flights. If cost differentials are still considerable between the elitarian Concorde (phased out in 2003, but probably to be replaced by similar or more advanced planes) and the other planes, the latter are subject to market laws, rather than to social utility, which tend to make them cheaper.

At the same time, the swift innovative evolution of computer science and computer networks is strengthening the transport revolution, by providing the necessary technological support and globalizing communications: the first Internet proto-



col dates back 1983 (see Cerf and R. Kahn), and from 1988 was spread by Harvard University, till the formation, in 1991, of ISOC, a non-profit non governmental organization, to carry out management at world level (in 2000 it grouped over 175 organizations and 870 individual subscribers in 170 countries).

The economic evolution of the most advanced countries reached the post-industrial stage, in which the highest profits no longer come from production of goods but from services, and in particular from finance. This is what the media recall us every day: we are “global”, we know and see “the whole world”, but in fact the world has gone “virtual”, not only because we only see what very few news networks (CNN, NBC, BBC, Reuters, and so forth) decide we should see, but because it has dematerialized: money is exchanged electronically, the value of currencies is no longer linked to production and reserves but exchanges – from inland-built aquaparks to American supermarkets mimicking European or exotic landscapes, and even the artificial reproduction of sensorial emotions – seem to have replaced reality. Even traditional views of territorial organization are being challenged. Transport networks are visible, but information circulation has become more and more powerful and invisible, even in its infrastructures – by now basically satellites.

Ongoing territorial restructuring starts to explore the contradictions between previous patterns and the transition towards the new. Therefore the more visible characters of globalization, such as “diffusion” or “omologation”, with their positive results in terms improving living standards (see, for example, the fall of mortality rates and the population growth of less developed countries thanks to the introduction of modern medicine), due to processes of concentration and hierarchization, lead to increasing economic imbalances and domination effects. If it is true that the administrative network of the political actor tends to immobility whereas that of the economic actor tends to functional flexibility (Raffestin 1980), there is no doubt that the social and spatial system is more favourable to the latter, and it is perhaps even too obvious that politics has become impotent to control the upheavals – economic and environmental – caused by globalization.

The huge migrations produced by wealth concentration and the new international division of labour, have practically done away with State borders. For example, paradoxically, foreigners entering Italy without permit are defined “clandestine”, “irregular” or even “illegal”, yet they are not

subject to any sanction. This is no Italian peculiarity, since also the *Protocole contre le trafic illicite de migrants par terre, air et mer, additionnel à la Convention des Nations Unies contre la criminalité transnationale* (2000) – ratified, however, by seventeen States only, besides dealing with the prevention and repression of the illegal traffic of migrants, does not suggest any sanction. Hence follows a further paradox: a State giving up its *raison d'être*, while these movements occur normally from low density areas to areas with a higher density, thereby worsening the problem of the concentration limit. Neither are environmental problems are suitably managed by the States, as shown by international agreements more destined to the show business than to practical implementation.

In the new scenario of contemporary globalization, the previous political system has become dissolved, with no well defined alternative system appearing as yet. We can see a single world State actor which, however, is far from possessing structure and means adequate to master the system. The network of independent States, strengthened by stable alliances, did cover the whole world precisely thanks to the now defunct multipolar system. The synergic combination of energy and information functional to confrontation with “the other”, does not work any longer, there being no similar opponent. The means for a confrontation produced and perfected for that strategic scenario are no longer useful in the changed conditions. Bearing in mind all this, the solution of a single super-State, viewed as a functional adaptation of politics to global conditions, seems at best far-fetched, and doubtless it could not be reduced to a mere enlargement of the American block, as shown by the latter's weakness, if not clumsiness, in managing the latest developments.

In my view, the mournful attack of September 11, 2001 to the New York Twin Towers and the Washington Pentagon has little to do with previous terror attacks, (from the earliest hijackings of planes in the Sixties to terror outrages in Munich and elsewhere), neither has it been the first terror attack in the USA (suffice to recall the explosion, February 26, 1993 by Islamic terrorists at the World Trade Center in New York, which caused six casualties, and the car-bomb on April 19, 1995 by T. Mc Veigh against a federal building in Oklahoma City which caused 168 casualties and 500 wounded). Also the spectacular power whereby the September 11 attack has been carried out, as well as the symbolic meaning of the targets chosen (the hearts of business and defense), are far from being what really matters: The point is rather that

such a horrible outrage is a token of the new world system.

### A return to localism?

The growing weakening of the political actor in governing the territory, and the demise of its organizational network within globalization, is linked to a return of the *espace vécu*, of strict territoriality as a feeling of spatial identity of human groups (Soja 1971, Fremont 1976, 1980), through increasing localisms and regionalisms on an ethnic and/or religious base. This is an ever present phenomenon in political conflict, but in the Nineties it multiplies all over the world, from former USSR to China and Africa, and, above all, it finds in the muslim religion an international “glue” which eventually brings about a unity and an alternative model to set against the “Western-liberistic” one in the ideological-cultural clash which accompanies globalization and has reached the level of extreme, irreversible violence.

State organization tends to stability and centralized network, The “ideological actor”, instead, operates by open networks. “Un réseaux comme internet ou Al-Qaeda a une structure maillé et ouverte. Il n’a pas de structures fixes et se constitue au fur et à mesure de la connexion de ses divers éléments: Le système (...) est constitué de points névralgiques, dont l’ensemble constitue le centre de gravité de l’organisation terroriste” (Baud 2003). Both actors dictate laws and organizational management; but the while State actor, in Western democracies, is subject to the consent of the governed, the ideological actor, especially when it is also “religious”, becomes self-referential.

On the ground, the State actor offers visible and territorialized targets in higher numbers than can be defended, whereas the ideological actor materializes above all in the adepts hiding as much as possible even its logistic supports, included the financial ones (it is utterly impossible to spot and seize the *zajt*, the “donations of the believers” which feed Al-Qaeda). The apparatus, often even hypertrophic, and the military philosophy of the State actor are still stuck to the open battle of armies; those of the ideological actor embody the latest evolution terror and guerrilla technology, whose scenarios and sanctuaries were already seen by Debray (1967) to be shifting from the mountain to the city. There follows also a difference in the choice of targets: rigorously military and to be hit with extreme precision with the smallest possible number of victims in the former

case, indiscriminate and with the highest number of victims in the latter. For example, in Iraq in October 2003, for the first time in history, an unmistakable Red Cross hospital has been the target of a bloody terror attack.

### The defeat of the winner

The asymmetry of fighting forces is only seemingly in favour of the State actor. J. Baud (2003), speaks of “the defeat of the winner” if the latter does not understand better its enemy and its strategies and knows how to oppose it with flexibility, in peace and war, coherently in different spaces, in the persuasion that “(...) *le succès n’est pas associé à un nombre de morts, mais à la réaction provoquée par les destructions. La guerre asymétrique n’a ni visage, ni solution unique (...)*”.

It is a war in which the most important feature is information: this is obvious from the statements of terrorists and the means they use. Let us bear in mind, for example, the slogan by Khomeini of the USA and the West seen as “the great satan”, and the *Jihad*, against them, sometimes even repeated by leaders of Arab States, and the actions of armed fundamentalist movements, from the Palestinianians to Al-Qaeda. From the opposite side we have the statements by Bush (2002) on “rogue States” and the “axis of evil” (Iraq, Lybia, Iran e North Korea). As to action, let us consider the spectacularity of the action and the suite of new technologies: the “war broadcast live” by television networks (from CNN to Al-Jazeera) or, on the line of the questions without answers listed by Hoffmann (2002), we must ask ourselves why terrorists do not use missiles or teleguided weapons instead of homicides-suicides. The founding innovations of globalization are part and parcel of the “new wars”: not only the whole electronic technology goes into providing increasing precision to military hardware, but computer science and networks have become key components of intelligence operations (bear in mind, for example, the Echelon system), as well as in the formation of new strategic dimensions in infosphere and cyberspace, where both sides come to grips every day in the use of mass-media and with actions on Internet.

However, the “defeat of the winner” is beginning to be understood by the State actor in the conduct of military operations. Witness of that is the management of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq with a conscious attempt to cause the lowest possible number of victims and the “minimum force” reactions to guerrilla and terror attacks. It is in the



political management that the ability to understand better the opponent is still faulty, probably because the open structure of the enemy, which allows formation and dissolution of groups, not always homogenous, contributes to mask identity and strategy, being also well supported by the spectacular manifestations of dissent which exploded in the Nineties against the Western world. Beyond the traditional functions as “fifth column”, the medley of “movements” (“people of Seattle”, Third World mongers, ecologists, animalists, noglobals, “blocks” of various colours, and so forth). These, by uncritically accusing “globalization” of every possible environmental “damage” and of every possible human difference and social injustice of the planet stresses only and exclusively the economy, and meeting the broadest consensus of pacifist and “humanitarian” associations, so that even many politicians become convinced, in the end, that this is the true reason of the conflict.

But the origin is instead openly ideological, as also people of the “movements” would understand if only they listened to what the other side is saying. Osama Bin Laden was absolutely clear, in the three points of the declaration of the World Islamic Front (February 23, 1998): the USA have been occupying for seven years the “sacred” land of Islam in its most “sacred” part (Saudi Arabia); the USA, with the alliance of “crusaders” and “zionists”, persist in devastating war initiatives to “destroy and humiliate” the muslims; this objective, together with the economic one of the possession by “crusaders” of local resources, is abetting the occupations and the massacres made by the “zionist” State. Whatever meaning we give to *jihad* (occasional “holy” war against a particular enemy) and *gharb* (permanent cleavage and conflict) and their dichotomies of the world, divided into *dar el-Islam* (house of Islam) e *dar el-kurf* (house of ungodliness), both in the sense that the latter must become *dar el-kurb* (house of war) to be conquered to the “faith”, as stated by Mohammed in his Letter to the Persians of 633: “Become muslims and be saved (...) otherwise I will march against you with men who love death as much as you love wine” (Reyssset & Widemann 1997), or in the sense that it can become *dar el-kurb*, and only partially, bearing in mind that the *jihad* is basically a war of defence (Baud 2003), it is in any case a fact that the shift of the conflict from the ideological arena to the economic weakens the political actor, obliging it to lay out a considerable energy expenditure for objectives which may even be potentially counterproducing.

## Shifting conflict paradigms

Let us bear in mind a few examples. The environmental problem, for instance: no doubt Western technology and mode of production may bring about environmental damages which must be countered by suitable, and costly, actions by the producers themselves (and this is being increasingly done); but, in strictly ecological terms, a no less serious environmental threat is the exponential population increase just in countries with Islamic majorities and in general in Third World countries, whose governments are always ready to upbraid the West for all and sundry evils (the noglobals accurately shun this point). The “rich” Western Sates have started long ago to act against hunger and poverty by international aid and cancellation of debts, whereas Arab petrodollars are signally absent from the scene of aid to the Third World. On the contrary, by causing successive oil crises, the Arab oil producers have damaged especially the poorer countries (without forgetting how much of oil revenues were used to feed terror movements in Palestine and elsewhere).

The “moral obligation” to intervene in the struggle against hunger and poverty (referred to also by the UNO, for example in the *Human Development Report* of April 1992) is being laid only upon the West on the basis of the mistifying idea (held by noglobal movements and literature, also geographic, smacking of “Third World-ism”) that Western wealth is based on the “exploitation” of poorer countries (Johnston & Taylor 1986), in spite of the fact that wealth differentials can be interpreted far more convincingly as a consequence of *internal* factors (Kohlhammer 1992). Economic statistics show, *inter alia*, that rich countries do not consume more than they produce, that they exchange among themselves more than 70% of the entire world commerce, that in the export of raw materials the share of industrialized countries is twice as much that of the others and, with the exception Persian Gulf countries and the sub-Saharan Africa, underdeveloped countries export more manufactured products than raw materials. From the very beginning of the Industrial Revolution, in Britain, internal factors (both in terms of intellectual resources, i.e. innovations, and of raw materials, with the only exception of cotton, important but not decisive) were clearly predominant (Biagini 2004).

The upshot of all this is that the Third World exploits and blackmails the First: “That we live at the expense of Third World countries, that our wealth is based on the misery and exploitation of



the Third World is a very widespread prejudice: in the ranks of the Left and among Greens of every hue, among "open" Catholics, pacifists, men of good will (moderate and extremists), the most literarily inspired authors and their sensitive readers, in short: among Beautiful Souls". In a note, Kohlhammer explains: "I borrow this term from the hero of the Third World, Saddam Hussein" (see Bittermann 1991, Kohlhammer 1992).

One must also bear in mind that, out of nearly 175 million migrant estimated by UNO in 2000 (United Nations 2002), 60% is in developed countries, whereas for 16 more million refugees 81% is in less developed countries. The former percentage might even appear lower than expected, although it does not overturn expectations, contrary to the views of Caritas, which estimates that there are more migrants in developing countries (98,678,000, or 56,3%) than in advanced ones (76,441,000, or 43,7%). In fact, the UNO report gives 104,119,000 migrants in "more developed regions" (59,6%) and 70,662,000 "less developed regions" (40,4%), of which 10,458,000 in "least developed countries". It is doubtful whether these statistics possess any credibility. It seems that even the United Nations give for the same year 2000 diverging figures, as not even the total coincides: 175,119,000 according to Caritas and 174,781,000 for the UNO.

But considering that the United States alone receive 20% of migrants and Europe (fifteen countries) the 15.1%, the concentration is evident: in comparison with a world average of 3 migrants upon 100 residents, the figure for the USA is 12 to 100 and for Europe 7 to 100. These comparisons appear meaningful, as they do not depend upon statistic forcing (smallness of the reference figure) or upon exceptional events (natural calamities or local wars). Moreover, in all official data immigration is clearly underestimated. Not only the impossibility to estimate its clandestine component, but also its doubling in the last twenty years has prompted the comment that it is "no passing phenomenon, but a structural dimension of society". For example, in the case of Italy, in comparison with 1,512,324 residence permits, the organization Caritas estimates 2,469,324 presences "regular foreigners", but does not even attempt to quantify the "irregulars". Data on economic activity are also unreliable, as well as those on remittances, and the average amount of such remittances for each "Gastarbeiter". The so-called "informal" economy (*lavoro nero*) and illegal activities are therefore deemed to be of unknown, but most probably huge proportions. Finally, migrant

flows are managed and exploited with increasing profits by truly criminal organizations, against which the United Nations have published two Protocols in the year 2000.

Precisely the latter feature brings to the fore the problem of the weakening of the "State" actor. If the clandestine passage costs, according to the route, from thousand to ten thousand dollars, while the pro capite income of the fifty poorer States ranges between 100 and 500 dollars a year, the outcome can only be the transformation of the clandestine into a slave of the organization paying for his journey (Marotta 1997): the result is an increase of labour force for the informal economy if all goes well, but often for criminal activities; but in both cases the damage for society is large and the "State" actor is evident. Neither is it to be forgotten the active presence, among the crowds of illegal immigrants, of members of the fundamentalist organizations mentioned above (shown even more than by the statements of the immigrants, by the itineraries and the location of the bases supporting the immigrant flows) and the alarming picture is complete. Even without accepting the hypothesis of deliberate invasions (Tani 2002), it is undeniable that, due to immigration, the rising percentage of muslims in Western Europe is creating problems. As a consequence, the limits between tolerance of minorities, and dissent of laws and cultures from those of the majorities, appear rather ambiguous. Even the declaration of 1988 of Europe as *dar el-Islam* (Kepel 2000), could be rather optimistically understood as a move towards reciprocal tolerance, or as prompting to muslim communities to apply the *Sharia*, which, as all know, is not precisely compatible with European laws.

Paradoxically, in their support of the abatement of any frontier and the absolute right to mobility, "noglobol" movements find their better and more powerful ally just in those "economic" actors whose world-wide strategy comes under "noglobol" attack. If the different attitude towards migration, is one of the classical examples of the diverging strategy between the "economic" actor (favourable to open frontiers) and the "political" actor (inclined to control migration), the present identity of opinions between the Caritas and the World Bank attributing the need of migration to a lack of equal distribution of world wealth: a populist attitude that has little to do with equity, and also clashes both against the biblical principle to earn bread with the sweat of the forehead as well as against the liberist principles underlying loans and bank policies. However, the paradox can also throw new light on the global system.



## The need to strengthen the role of politics

The collapse of the Berlin Wall, besides marking the disappearance of one of the great world powers, marks the fall of the prevalence of its model of priority of the "political actor" upon the "economic", and the latter is further strengthened by the territorialization generated by globalization, which the "political actor" seems unable to govern. Moreover the "economic actor" enjoys the advantage, like the "ideological actor", of an open and flexible network, and also capitalizes on the notion that his "economic support" is "indispensable" to the "political actor". It follows a feedback whereby, as the economy rules, politics is regarded as responsible for new or lingering problems, internal or external, and therefore becomes the target of far-flung attacks which weaken it and increase its submission to the economy.

It is a perverse feedback, on the same line as that excess of economicism which, as already stressed several years ago (Da Pozzo 1991, 1992), marred an understanding of ecosystems and, after producing multiple disasters, claimed to be able to solve problems by further "economic" inputs. In conclusion, if the idea that innovative information capable to bring about a replacement of oil with a different energy source will deprive the "antagonist" actor of his main support is probably true, a different pattern of relationships between the "political actor" and the "economic" is called for, lest another "antagonist actor" emerge, supported by some other pressure group linked to the new energy source.

It is therefore plain, in systems logic, that increasing allometric growth plunges the system into a crisis: but the ideologization of problems mentioned above is obscuring the economic allometry. In other words, many do not realize that phenomena of "concentration", "specialization", "continuous growth" (of income or population, no matter), and so forth, are all processes moved by the present logic, but opposed to those ruling the ecosystem. Bearing in mind that the same economic approach is applied to the measures for environmental protection, which calls for a reorientation, including a speedy recovery of strength and credibility of the "political" actor, not in ideological terms denying the value of globalization, but aiming at reorganizing space on the basis of rational strategies.

Besides the large scale processes outlined above, the economic literature of Anglo-Saxon countries increasingly stresses the need of "glocal" (global+local) development to give space to the

local ability to manage rules and global flows. I am persuaded that a geographic *glocal* should be developed, based on a renewed governance of the territory, the seat of local day to day activity. This is where the political actor has, nowadays, the greater practical opportunity of balancing the economic actor, thereby tempering market logic with a planning practice grounded on scientific rationality, introducing zoning controls and building a network of local success stories. This may allow the realization of the overworked (to nausea level) "sustainable development" not in its belittling economic meaning, but in the broader and desirable sense of way of life sustainability.

## References

- Baud J. (2003) *La guerre asymétrique, ou la défaite du vainqueur*, Monaco, Editions du Rocher.
- Biagini E. (2004) *Ambiente, conflitto e sviluppo. Le Isole Britanniche nel contesto della globalizzazione*, 3 vols., Genova, EICG.
- Bittermann K. (ed.) (1991) *Liebesgrüße aus Bagdad. Die «edlen Seelen» der Friedensbewegung und der Krieg am Golf*, Berlin, Edition Tiamat.
- Caritas Italiana - Migrantes - Caritas Roma, *XIII Rapporto sull'immigrazione*, [www.caritasitaliana.it](http://www.caritasitaliana.it) - [caritasroma.it / immigrazione](http://caritasroma.it/immigrazione).
- Da Pozzo C. (1985) "La geopolitica del mare: un campo di trasformazione", in *L'umanizzazione del mare*, Convegno UMAR Genova 1985, Roma, CNR: 89-118.
- Da Pozzo C. (1991) "I processi territoriali e l'ambiente", in *Le scienze dell'uomo e la crisi ambientale*, Pisa, Giardini:177-193.
- Da Pozzo C. (1992) "Bioetica e geografia", *Rivista Geografica Italiana*, 99, 3: 503-513.
- Debray R. (1967) *Rivoluzione nella Rivoluzione?*, Milano, Feltrinelli.
- Fremont A. (1976) *La région, espace vécu*, Parigi, PUF.
- Fremont A. (1980) *L'espace vécu et la notion de région*, Reims, Travaux de l'Institut de Géographie.
- Hoffmann B. (2002) "Rethinking Terrorism and Counterterrorism since 9/11", *Studies in conflict and terrorism*, 25, 2002: 303-316.
- International Migration 2002*, ONU, Population Division, Dept. of Economic and Social Affairs.
- Johnston R.J. & Taylor P.J. (1986) *A World in Crisis? Geographical Perspective*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Kepel G. (2000) *Jihad*, Parigi, Gallimard.
- Kohlhammer (1992) "Viviamo a spese del Terzo Mondo?", *Il Mulino*, 5, 1992: 773-796.
- Marotta G. (1997) "L'immigrazione clandestina in Italia", *Sisde*, 7, [www.sisde.it](http://www.sisde.it).
- Raffestin C. (1980) *Pour une géographie du pouvoir*, Paris, LITEC.
- Reyssat P. & Widemann T. (1997) *La pensée stratégique*, Parigi, PUF.
- Soja E.W. (1971) *The political organization of space*, Washington, D.C., Association of American Geographers.
- Tani A. (2002) "Aspetti strategici dell'immigrazione clandestina", *Pagine di Difesa*, 23 settembre.
- United Nations (2000) *Protocole additionnel à la Convention des Nations Unies contre la criminalité transnationale organisée visant à prévenir, réprimer et punir la traite des*



*personnes, en particulier des femmes et des enfants*, New York, U.N.  
United Nations (2000) *Protocole contre le trafic illicite de migrants par terre, air et mer, additionnel à la Convention des Nations Unies contre la criminalité transnationale*, New York, U.N.

United Nations (2002) *International Migration 2002*, Population Division - Dept. of Economic and Social Affairs.  
Voslensky M.S. (1984) *Nomenklatura: la classe dominante in Unione Sovietica*, Milano, Longanesi, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.

