

Globalization, Americanization and Western imperialism

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ABSTRACT

This essay argues that globalization, as it is currently being orchestrated by America, is essentially aimed at the promotion of the imperialistic interests of Western society. This hegemony is sustained by propagating the philosophy of liberalism. Liberalism and its defence of individual autonomy necessarily promotes self-interest, whether at the level of the individual or the state. To avoid the injustice and possible anarchy that may arise as a result of this the philosophy of liberalism must be reviewed, based on criticisms by communitarians. The only way that globalization can attain a just integration and global peace is by jettisoning the individualism of liberalism for the altruism and sense of community of communitarianism.

Introduction

THE CRUMBLING OF COMMUNISM in Eastern Europe ushered in a new world order, characterized by the end of hostilities between the two dominant ideologies: communism and liberal capitalism. Since the beginning of the 1990s this new world order has encouraged the interpenetration of ideas, in the form of exchanging ethos and values along former cultural and ideological divides. This apparent integration of world societies has been described as globalization. Globalization refers to the homogenization of ideas, images and institutions, making the global community appear so united as to warrant the metaphor of a global village. But globalization, as the basic defining element of the new world

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order, presents us with a paradox. The apparent integration of global cultures exists along with its antithesis: the prevalence of fragmentation in many areas of the same world. This tension between integration and fragmentation in the new world order necessitates the description of the present age as the age of extremes (Hobsbawm, 1994).

Nothing demonstrates so poignantly the stark contrast of the new world order and the embedded contradiction of the process of globalization as the “prevalent divide between a cohesive, prosperous and peaceful bloc of liberal states and the instability and chaos of the rest of the world” (Hurrell and Woods 1995:454). By analysing this tension we can reveal the realities and possibilities of the globalization project. A close study of the process of cultural diffusion that constitutes globalization shows that the entire situation is a result of the age-long desire of Western society to propagate its culture and ideology of liberalism. Globalization may therefore be considered as a new way of sustaining Western domination of global society. At the centre of this Western hegemonic project, according to critics, is American society. Globalization is Americanization, in as much as Americanism symbolizes the good and the bad not only of Western culture, but also of the liberal philosophy that guides the entire operation.

The objective of this present paper is to analyse the project of globalization within the context of the popular criticism that it is an imperial enterprise. To what extent does this process of homogenization—globalization—engender the dominance of the ideology of liberalism and to what extent does this ideology encourage the subjugation of other cultures and societies by Western society? What rôle does America, as the bastion of Western civilization, play in the project of globalization and its attendant hegemonic desires? This essay argues that the ideology of liberalism, acting as the catalyst for the prevailing process of integration of global society, can be an instrument of imperialism, as well as a vehicle for global peace. In essence, the idea of communitarianism that is presently emerging in the West as an improvement on orthodox liberalism can be deployed to promote the mutual integration and cooperation of world ideas and values, in such

a way that globalization will begin to shed the garment of imperialism. With this reorientation, the ideal of the global community, guided by the pursuit of common interests rather than the myopic idea of national interests, will be sustained and a genuine integration of the peoples of the world will become a reality.

The idea of globalization

LET US NOW EXAMINE the idea of globalization and grasp its real essence for a more detailed analysis. Globalization as it is today is a complex and fluid concept. Precise definition will therefore be difficult. The idea of globalization today refers to the interpenetration and interdependency taking place among the divergent peoples of the world due to technological advances in the areas of communication and transportation. These innovations render ineffective the traditional barriers of space, time, national borders and sovereignty. As a result a sort of uniformity can be identified among the divergent groups that occupy the global space. Arjun Appadurai, in his often-cited essay, "Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy", discusses the idea of globalization within five frameworks; as the interchange of finance, technology, ideas, peoples and information. But Appadurai's analysis, popular as it is, fails to capture all the features of the idea. This is because of its bias towards and emphasis on the economic aspect of globalization (Appadurai 1990:2). His analysis therefore fails to recognize the holistic and complex nature of the idea of globalization.

Globalization can be defined more appropriately as a process of cultural interpenetration, in which "culture" designates, not a narrow artistic sensibility, but rather the totality of ideas that sustains a group.

Economic

FIRST, GLOBALIZATION CONNOTES the prevalence of liberal economic values and ideology. This introduces a uniform global economy as a result of the process of deregulation and liberalization policies, as many nations lay themselves open to the free-market economy. This remark is supported by the claim that we do not have nations in today's world, but only markets (Sivandan 1999:6).

Political

SECOND, THE IDEA OF globalization is employed to define the triumph of the political ideology of liberal capitalism. The collapse of communism and the failure of authoritarianism to realize material development—the very reason for which it was tolerated, despite its shortcomings, in many Third World countries—made liberal democracy the only viable option. It therefore became the universal ideal and standard of assessing the worth and competence of all societies. Because of its moral claims, particularly its defense of human rights, liberal democracy was easy to sell to all nations.

International interdependence

THIRD, THE RECOGNITION of the interdependence of the world's societies due to environmental factors is an important characteristic of the globalization era. The realization that everyone in the world stands to lose by environmentally-unsustainable modes of production made environmental sustainability a universal value. International relations became more concerned with environmental issues and the management of a nation's population and resources is now the concern of other nations, since the mismanagement of the environment has serious consequences not only for the abuser of the environment, but for all who occupy the global space.

Communication and technology

THE REDUCTION OF THE barriers of space, time, national boundaries and sovereignty due to advances in communication and transportation technologies is another important feature of global integration. A prominent development in this respect is the introduction of the Internet. This has facilitated the freedom of humans to interact and communicate without the restrictions of the state. This fluidity of national boundaries also encouraged massive migration, which resulted in the emergence of global cities such as London, New York and Tokyo.

National sovereignty

FIFTH, GLOBALIZATION ALSO features the undermining of the sovereignty and autonomy of nation states. This has led to abandoning the principle of self-determination which hitherto guided relations among states. The ability of the international community, not only to influence political

actors, but also to sanction them, has become a reality. This situation encourages insurrection by marginalized groups and reinvigorates traditional cleavages and conflicts. It is in this respect that globalization is said to encourage fragmentation.

Globalization: an enterprise that favours Western values

AS A RESULT, the integration going on is a lopsided one favourable to the ethos and values of Western culture. This may be due to simple historical reasons as West has had many centuries in which to assert dominance over other societies. But critics go further: they regard the present situation as a result of a centuries-old mission of Western society to bring other societies closer in order to dominate and exploit them (Hall 1998:20). It is for this reason that certain scholars regard globalization as an imperialist project. For them the universalization of the values of liberal capitalism in the name of globalization is the consolidation of Western imperialism (Sivandan 1999:5). Globalization is purely and simply another form of the coercive socialization of non-Western societies into the Western cultural system for the sake of the hegemony of the latter (Hurrell and Wood 1995:451).

Homogenization and hegemony

THE REASON WHY the globalization process generates its antithesis—the disintegration and serious crisis in other parts of the world is now clear. This disintegration is due to the trauma that the forced adoption of foreign values induces in the receiving society. It should not be surprising that this homogenization has no significant negative effect on the Western society compared with other societies. As the beneficiary of unification Western society will grow at the expense of marginalized nations, while the latter will continue to manifest the symptoms of societies in bondage.

“Globalization” is not a neutral, apolitical effort to integrate, and it is not merely the product of many centuries of intermingling. Many non-Western scholars believe that globalization is a Western-orchestrated enterprise. Paul Gilroy explains that it is the same old imperialism with a new tool. The “accumulation of capital is no longer fed by mere exploitation of the labor force. It depends increasingly on the

manipulation of complex organizational and informational systems” (Gilroy, 1995:225).

The domination of global integration by the values of Western liberalism confirms the claim of the proponents of the imperialist thesis. In his popular essay, “The end of history”, Fukuyama confirms that liberal ideology and, by implication, the dominance of the Western society that produced it, will continue to extend its sway on the present world order. According to him, the uniformity that we witness today is not only the end of mankind’s ideological evolution, but also the “universalization of Western liberal government” (Fukuyama 1989:3).

Similarly Van-Laue argues that global culture, being wholly Western, will be dominated by Western society. He says: “...global civilization is Western because science, technology, global trade and democracy it advances, is originally Western and it is promulgated most by Western nations” (Van-Laue 1987:3). There is a growing body of literature that shows how Western society has propagated her culture for imperialistic ends. Edward Said, for instance, has persistently argued that Western knowledge and its cultural variant is always employed as an instrument of domination of other societies. In *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), he argues that some aspects of Western scholarship and Western culture are deliberately fashioned for the objective of subjugating other people. In the latest of his books Said confronts the theme of globalization; maintaining that, like any other cultural effort initiated by the West, the motive behind it is ulterior: imperialism. These are his words;

One of imperialism’s achievements was to bring the world close together and although in the process the separation between Europeans and natives was an insidious and fundamentally unjust one. (1994:xxi-xxii)

Globalization and Western philosophy

SAID’S POSITION THAT knowledge serves hegemonic interests can be verified by an examination of how philosophy has been employed to serve the imperialistic interests of the West. Philosophical knowledge, by its position as the queen of the sciences, plays a significant rôle in

the evolution of Western society as the master of nature and the entire world society.

The problem of social order, which has been at the centre of the social discourse of the West since the time of the Greeks, produced competing ideologies; of which liberalism became the most prominent. How can society reconcile the tension between the one and the many; between individual interests and social cohesion; between self-autonomy and the authority of the State? These are the clusters of questions behind the philosophical reflections that produced the political and economic ideology of liberalism and capitalism.

Liberalism and the autonomy of the individual

LIBERALISM IN ITS many variants; economic, political, or social, affirms the autonomy of the individual. Politically, it argues for a democratic mode of governance in which the rational being will employ rational faculties to participate in the process of negotiation in order to realize the common will that guides policies and acts of government. Economically, it is assumed by liberalism that the self is capable of competing with others in the pursuit of private business interests. The victor in this competitive enterprise will not be determined by arbitrary standards but by market forces. Economic liberalism pursues the passionate defence of individual rights, maintaining the rightness of individual ownership and the limited participation of the state in business. All these have become the cardinal principles of liberal capitalism.

Economism and imperialism

IN ESTABLISHING A competitive society with maximum freedom for individuals to pursue their interests, liberalism puts in place a social order that encourages efficiency and the daring spirit. This engenders the production of novel knowledge and ideas, which constantly elevates the competitive society in comparison with others. In this way Western society has become the paradigm of progress and technological advancement. But liberalism also generates a negative tendency, which we will call—as there is no better word—economism. By economism we refer to the excessive pursuit of the individual's private interests in such a way that the interest of others, the good of the society and the overall welfare of humanity, is completely discountenanced. It is the

degeneration of liberalism to gross economism that has generated the imperialism that has tainted Western liberalism. This negative tendency has manifested itself in diverse forms and its manifestations are conditioned by the demands and the moods of the various epochs throughout the history of the West.

Moralism and scientism

BUT WHILE WESTERN society, supported by the ideology of liberalism and economism, is notorious for engendering imperialism, it continues to be tolerated, if not admired, by the very peoples and societies which it undermines, due to the fact that this ideology contains two enviable characteristics which we will call: moralism and scientism. These two assets at the base of liberalism are always deployed to legitimize and disguise the hegemony of the West and also to make case for the universalization of liberal values. By the moralism of liberalism we refer to its ethical claims. These surround the affirmation of the rights, freedom, dignity and so on, of the individual. The argument at the base of liberalism—that the individual ought to be free and unconstrained by the State—will always appeal to minds whose limited capacity does not allow them to reflect on how this position can degenerate into the excessive pursuit of selfish interests by the privileged at the expense of the less privileged.

The idea of scientism, on the other hand, refers to the epistemological feats that the human mind can attain as a result of its liberation by liberal ideology from any form of authoritarianism. The transformation that the scientific spirit has generated in the West becomes an object of envy to all societies, so much so that the development of liberal society is seen to be a product of its technological rather than its hegemonic capacity. The paradox is that even the periphery proclaims the wisdom and the capacity of the metropolis, forgetting that progress is not a product of the epistemological ability of the centre. In essence, the strength of the West rests on the ideology of liberalism. It survives on the ability of the ideology to promise a moral order when there is no such prospect; in its pretence of possessing the magic for development, when actually it relies on the sweat of others. In promising a new moral order where individuals and human dignity will be defended and for

possessing the technological knowledge that can improve living conditions, Western liberalism appeals to all societies, including even the same non-Western societies that it has undermined and underdeveloped throughout history.

In her drive for hegemony, the West has constantly sought ways of bringing other societies nearer so that exploitation could be total and permanent. With technology, this is nearing realization. Today the West has been able to construct what Hannertz calls a “global *ecumene* of persistent cultural interaction and exchange” (Hannertz 1987:107). But, as much as other societies may delude themselves that the interaction is mutual, the truth is that the real beneficiary is the West. As Van-Laue puts it, integration is not neutral but merely pretends to be so (Van-Laue 1987:5)

The prime mover behind this pan-human replication of humanity is late Western capitalism equipped with technology, forever hiring more communities into dependency on the fringes of an expanding world-wide consumer society. The transnational cultural apparatus is an instrument of hegemony (Hannertz 1989:70)

Americanism, Americanization and neo-imperialism

The reconciliation of different cultures

EVER SINCE AMERICA led her allies in the two world wars her leadership of the Western world has not been in doubt. Even the leadership of the entire world was potentially hers. Only Soviet competition prevented her from gaining actual leadership. The moment the Cold War ended with the victory of liberal capitalism, America immediately took over the leadership of the world. The claim that every power organizes “hegemonic space in terms of its own interests and purpose” (Gilpin, 1971:153), is true of America. The structure of the world today is to a significant extent defined by American assumptions and aspirations. The homogenization process is a visible manifestation of America’s dominance, since its history has been that of reconciliation of different cultures. As a nation, America has always been a melting pot of divergent peoples from all the continents of the world. Her attempt to make the integration global should have been expected.

The American leadership of the present world is warranted, not necessarily because she is the heir of the West, but mostly because of her experience in cultural homogenization, technological management and control of people for imperialistic ends. All these qualify her for the mantle of leadership of Western imperialism in the present order. It is indeed true to say that “the world is becoming Americanized just as America has become globalized” (Iriye, 1993:215). If it is a legitimate claim that globalization is Westernization, then it is also appropriate to say that globalization is Americanization.

World culture

TO THE EXTENT that a free marketplace exists in the international system, it is American culture and the American language that are accepted as the closest we have to the world culture. From Moscow to Beijing, from Johannesburg to Tokyo, it is the example of American institutions that is consciously reshaping the world. Common people, idealistic youths, industrial and artistic communities and scientists all look to America for the blueprint to design progress and to maintain order and freedom. They choose a world culture of the future which is essentially American (Feuer 1991:22).

But what, then, is the intellectual foundation of this American culture that is beckoning all of us? What type of philosophy or philosophy of culture produces this American civilization that is becoming a world culture? Or, to put it in another way, what is the Americanism motivating the Americanization project? What we intend to do now, following the advice of Ralph Gabriel, is “to see the United States as a cultural system, not to see America in its entirety, but to abstract from the complexities a pattern to formulate guiding meanings (ideas, values, symbols) that tend toward a coherent and autonomous system” (Gabriel 1974:25).

American philosophy and hegemony

IN *THE AMERICAN DEMOCRACY*, Harold Laski made this statement about American society: “In no country in modern times has philosophy been so intimately related to the foundation of a national culture as in the United States”(Laski 1948:431). The import of Laski’s statement will register only if one understands that the motivating spirit behind Americanism is perpetually to reconcile the gap between ideas and

action or reality. It is the spirit that made pragmatism the popular, if not official, philosophy of America. The pragmatism of William James, John Dewey, C. S. Pierce and other American thinkers is just an expression of the American impatience with ideas that are too remote from reality; or a theoretical position that cannot generate action. This American desire for immediacy characterizes the entire American culture and reflects the history of its origination as basically a product of economic exigencies.

It is incontestable that American society came into being as a result of the desire to solve certain immediate economic and material problems of the first generation of settlers. Only extreme desperation could have made people take the risks they did of leaving the known for the unknown, which was the situation of the early immigrants in America. Americanism, as the entire culture of the Americans, reflects this immediacy, adventurism and pragmatism. But by far the most influential idea on American public life is the idea of liberalism. Even this idea itself reflects the demands of American historical and cultural experience. Liberalism, as an idea that affirms human freedom, economically and politically, appeals to people who desire unrestricted freedom to be able to pursue economic success, the realization of which provides the only justification for their enormous sacrifice and deprivation. The pretext to moralism at the base of liberalism is also needed to attain the social order necessary for the pursuit of economic interests. Liberalism emphasizes the various ideals and aspirations that we earlier identified in the American experience. It contains adventurism, in the sense that the humans are not inhibited in pursuing their interests. Finally, liberalism is pragmatic, recognizing that politics and the economy should be operated in strict respect for social realities.

If Americanism is essentially the synthesis of liberalism and pragmatism, then we can say that American public philosophy in its entirety is reducible to the title of Max Weber's book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. It is not reductionist to say that all the values embedded in Americanism find a place within this Weberian framework. Americanism and its liberalism is about the interplay of scientism and moralism; and American public philosophy emerged as a celebration of the moral code of Protestantism and the need to maintain

the individual rationality and autonomy at the base of Western capitalism. The failure of Americanism to live up to these moral demands may be due to the intrinsic contradiction between the idealism of Protestantism and the realism of capitalism.

In shaping the public philosophy of America, the founding fathers relied on the Western heritage of liberalism, particularly the rigorous and vigorous development of the idea during the Enlightenment. This public philosophy of liberalism thus emerged as the official ideology of the West, a product of the Western heritage. It should not be surprising if American philosophers carried over the vices and liabilities of liberalism into the philosophy. As Gabriel says,

The very fact that the Jefferson found it useful to write the declaration [of independence] in terms of Lockean philosophy suggests that the men of the American frontiers were conditioned by and were bearers of a tradition. This tradition ran back not only to the great English philosopher of the seventeenth century but past him through the Middle Ages, through Rome, Greece to Asia Minor (Gabriel, 1974:33).

Liberalism and imperialism

BY VIRTUE OF ITS origin, conception and objectives Western liberalism necessarily engenders imperialism. It is therefore logical to note that American liberalism, by the very fact that it is based on its Western heritage, will necessarily catch the disease of its progenitors and degenerate to an instrument of imperialism. But before explain this, let us first analyse the liberalism at the base of Americanism. Americanism as the public philosophy of American society assumes that the individual is the primary social agent, whose capacity for appropriate cognitive judgement is not in doubt. As a political philosophy this basic idea informs the spirit of liberty, equality, human rights and dignity and popular sovereignty, enshrined in the American constitution. In the philosophy of science, the individualism at the base of American liberalism generated the uninhibited, critical and adventurous mind that produced the scientific achievements for which America and some other Western countries became renowned in the last century.

Whether in politics, science or any other area of American life, individualism as the ultimate ideal manifested in four ways, which are; human rationality, human freedom, human responsibility, and the mutuality and cooperation of humans. The four manifestations of liberalism have influenced the norms of American politics in many ways. The ideas of human rationality and freedom inform the democratic exercise of the electoral system and the freedom of all to participate in public discourse that eventually determines the direction of policies within the American society; while the ideas of individual responsibility and mutual trust are the reasons for the patriotism of the average American citizen.

Globalization and American liberalism

OUR ARGUMENT SO FAR is that the globalization project orchestrated by American society has degenerated into imperialism because the liberal ideology of Americanism will always lead it to that end. But how has America been able to manage her imperialism on such a grand scale without attracting condemnation? We have shown that America employed her historical experience to forge her imperial order. Her style does not include direct empire building or outright colonialism. She realizes that this may not be necessary, given her technological capability. Through the mastery of electronic technology America can pretend to be the leading opponent of imperialism rather than the leading imperialist. Her history, as a former colony and a one-time victim of colonialism, supports this false propaganda. So successful has this propaganda become that the Americans themselves “find it particularly hard to abandon their embedded image of themselves as inveterate liberals and anti-imperialists” (Strange 1989:177. The reason for this delusion, as Said puts it is that “the rhetoric of power all too easily produces an illusion of benevolence when deployed in imperial setting” (Said 1994:xvii). Although America’s imperialism may appear subtler than that of her predecessors, the obsession for capital accumulation which the economism of liberalism generates has created an American form of imperialism, subtle but effective, and damaging to the victim.

THE NEO-IMPERIALISM propagated by America, as we have emphasized, depends not only on mere use of power like her predecessors, but on the tools of technological materials and ideas. First, America was able to make her society the envy of all others. The rôle that the media, in so many forms, play in this respect cannot be underestimated. With the triumph of liberal capitalism in the Cold War, America could step up the campaign that produced the image of America as a paradise and the land of opportunity. Second, America's control of international organizations, particularly the Bretton Woods institutions and the financial market, was used to lure other countries into the debt trap.

Remaining in the background, the creditors push poor nations into dependency, while America acts as helpless sympathizer. Having got a strong grip on non-Western societies, America's control tightened. The debt situation and the continued reliance of most nations on Western capital allowed America to decree the adoption of policies unfavourable to poor states. Through the International Monetary Fund and other creditors and by taking the advantage of her technological capacity to monitor the activities of vulnerable countries, America enforced the institutionalization of liberal measures such as deregulation, the devaluation of currency, privatization and the withdrawal of subsidies from public utilities.

The crises of legitimacy and neo-imperialism

THE EFFECT OF these policies forced on non-Western societies has been devastating. Apart from making an already bad situation worse, it brought about social and political crises. In African states a crisis of legitimacy resulted. Having lost sovereignty to their creditors they could no longer be relied upon by their people for the provision of the good life—the very reason why they were initially supported. The new imperialism is thus strongly implicated in the multidimensional crises facing most Third World countries, especially in Africa where the problems are so acute as to warrant Afro-pessimism. The neoliberal order, rather than bringing the goods of modernization which American propaganda promises, merely wetted the appetite of non-Western people. For America and those in the West who set the machinery in motion, good markets have opened up. Deregulation has finally removed all

tariffs, preventing easy access to the rest of the world. The devaluation of these countries' currencies opened them up for exploitation by transnational organizations controlled by the West. While the new global order has led to social crisis, instability and disintegration in non-Western societies; in the West it has brought economic development since the West remains the sole beneficiary of the unification. Globalization is therefore marked by the deepening of the centre-periphery configuration (Marshall 1996:196).

Intensification of inequality

GLOBALIZATION AS AN American project has thus deepened the differences in the world. The unification that it appears to be the main achievement of globalization is a negative one. The paradox is that societies of the world may appear to be close in terms of access to one another; but they are far away as the extreme affluence of the West stands in embarrassing antithesis to the poverty of the rest. What is more, the wealth of the West is the explanation for the pathetic situation of others. Globalization therefore, rather than encouraging integration, has produced implosion (Hymans 1995:196).

Trauma at the margin

WHETHER THE PROCESS is called globalization or Americanization, the enterprise of integration has brought nothing but trauma to the people at the margin. There is no way by which America can be exonerated from the global crises that will soon occur as a result of the injustice and inequality of the American-controlled world order. In engendering imperialism, Western liberalism and the American State have seriously compromised their own essences. It has "paradoxically generated the seed of its own dissolution (Huymans 1995:472). Whether as a public philosophy or as an idea that defines the prevailing order, liberalism is subjected to severe criticism mainly because its immanent immorality. We are all aware that liberal capitalism was subjected to critique by Karl Marx and his disciples. The summary of their critique is that liberal capitalism will polarize society along class lines. Applied to international relations, the élitism and stratification of liberal capitalism has manifested itself in polarization between the oppressive and wealthy nations of the North and the impoverished and oppressed nations of the South.

An alternative to individualistic liberalism

OUR ARGUMENT IS not going to follow the Marxist approach which is already common knowledge. Instead we claim that within the same liberal orientation, within the same American intellectual tradition, there is an alternative to the individual liberalism that engenders imperialism. This is the communitarian position. It is today used to question the individualism of traditional liberalism and to claim that, only when liberalism is based on the idea of individualism, does it necessarily generate the hegemonic control of one group by another, whether in national politics or in world affairs.

Beyond imperialism to communitarianism

COMMUNITARIANISM IS an attempt to repair liberalism and avoid its inherent pitfalls, particularly its extreme assumption that individuals can be autonomous. This idea developed out of the social crises of American society, manifested in the form of racial violence, group conflicts, and other forms of protest against the modernist ethos in contemporary American society. This social malaise brought into the open the full implications of liberalism's emphasis on individual autonomy. The immorality that the liberal tendency generates informs the arguments of communitarianism. The objective of the communitarian version of liberalism is to produce a new political philosophy concerned with how to attain cohesive relationships between individuals within the society, in order to attain a viable social order.

Communitarianists see liberalism's failure to defend the rôle of virtue in public life as a crucial flaw. Without a sense of the connectedness of communal duty and belonging, they believe our lives lose meaning and society degenerates into a battle ground of competing interests (Frohnen, 1996:5)

The idea of communitarianism has been developed by philosophers such as Armita Etzioni, William Galston, Charles Taylor and Robert Nisbet, among others. Taking the communitarian position as the point of departure, our argument is this: If liberalism engenders crises in American domestic activity, then it should not be adopted in international relations, because the crises it creates in American society

will be transferred to the world stage due to America's dominant influence. In the same way that liberalism encourages individual autonomy, thus legitimating the immoderate pursuit of selfish personal interest within each nation, it has also generated the blind pursuit of selfish interests in the international terrain; without considering the overall welfare of the global community.

Communitarianism presents itself as the path to a new global order that will avoid the injustice of liberalism. If America continues to maintain hegemonic control, this may eventually become a threat to her survival as a world power and the civilization that she represents. After all, civilization survives or ends depending on how consistent it is with its moral principles as Gabriel remarks:

Civilization is a manifestation and a proof of progress of course, but at the bottom, of ethical progress. For civilization is the fruit of an understanding of the moral law and of the founding of human institutions (Gabriel 1974:22)

Gabriel enjoins the American culture to "rediscover a morality that proclaims that some types of behaviors are always wrong" (Gabriel 1974:22). It is this type of strong commitment to morality, according to him, that prolongs the lifespan of a civilization and therefore it is only when America's leadership is guided by strict adherence to consistent moral principles that it can last.

A sketch of the communitarian position

IT IS DIFFICULT to capture the positions of the communitarians in very precise terms, since their argument is developing in reaction to the views of orthodox liberalism. But since our present essay is a critique of liberalism in international relations, a brief insight into the disagreement of the two will be an appropriate starting point. The communitarians object to the individualism of liberalism. To them, the affirmation of the autonomy of the self easily degenerates into the blind pursuit of selfish interests. Self-interest and selfish interests, according to them are too closely related to be manageable. When people becoming obsessional in their drive for personal interests, any consideration for the feelings of others will be drowned in a sea of egoism. The absolute liberty that

liberalism pursues leads to the complete neglect of virtue, if virtue is to be accepted as the altruistic consideration of the wishes and desires of others.

From this perspective liberalism emphasizes right at the expense of good; self at the expense of society. The essential problems of politics is not a person's rights but, how to reconcile these rights with those of others in order that each can enjoy to the maximum his or her social essence. Communitarians argue that any conception of rights without its corollary—duties—will always generate crises and chaos.

The idea of the common good

THE IDEA AT THE centre of communitarianism, which is fundamental to its critique of classical liberalism, is the idea of the common good. All societies need the idea of common good or common interests and must constantly sustain the common good or it will collapse. It is a cardinal aspect of human relations. But the idea of the common good is difficult to describe although we all grasp it intuitively—the notion of a desirable situation such as access to clean water, that benefits everyone equally and is the responsibility of everyone, though of no one person in particular. Every society must constantly discuss this concept and strive to attain the common good in practice.

The question then arises: how do we attain social justice when the idea of common good cannot be clearly defined? Liberals argue that common interests constantly emerge through the interaction of divergent interests in any society. It is for this reason that contemporary liberals like Rawls still feel that social justice is feasible only when there is minimal control of the individual by the State. The weakness of this assumption is that it is just as likely that the interaction of different peoples in the struggle to realize their interests will generate chaos rather than social order. Both social order and justice will be compromised if the freedom of the individual is limitless. This is the point that the communitarians seek to make.

Egotism and the community

COMMUNITARIANS BELIEVE that the ideals of order and justice in the society can be realized only if the egoism of liberalism is replaced with a sense of community and altruistic feelings. Members of a society need to

possess the idea of the common good to unite their society and promote altruism, because the pursuit of the common good entails an indirect pursuit of each individual's good. Communitarians believe that the only type of society able to realize the wishes of the individuals through the realization of common good is the community. And a community, according to them, is a social structure where all members see themselves as belonging to one family.

From this discussion, it is clear why the adoption of liberal principles by the American State and her Western allies will always lead to Western imperialism. Liberalism and its concomitant principles of unregulated freedom, individual autonomy, competition and a deregulated economy will always generate, conflicts leading to the hegemony of the strongest. This ideology will always be favourable to those obsessively pursue their own egoistic interests. Taken to its logical conclusion liberalism is simply a case of "farewell to ethics." But the survival of any society depends on how it is able to manage and control the drive for power with ethical norms. The failure of liberalism in this respect is part of its history.

Translated to international society, liberalism has generated egoistic tendencies in the name of national interests. For the sake of its national interest America has turned global society into an imperial estate. The disregard which the West, led by America, has for the rest of the world manifests itself in its treatment of the debt crisis and its overall reaction to the very pressing problems of humanity in the developing world. Even despite the fact that servicing the debt has turned the people in the developing world to destitutes, the policy has scarcely been altered.

The post-Cold War adoption of neoliberal ideologies has now brought into open the moral poverty of liberalism. Deregulation and liberalization are imperialistic and unjust. Forcing open competition on an unequal world and compulsorily opening up the economies of the Third World in the name of structural adjustment programmes are measures that characterize the immorality of the liberal doctrine. Recognizing that liberal ideology has turned world society into a crisis-ridden one, the adoption of the communitarian argument is necessary for the salvation of the world. Immanuel Kant envisaged a rational ethics

founded on the golden rule, together with a world federation; a global community ruled, not by might but by standards to which all must abide. Western liberalism cannot realize this ideal. But within the same intellectual tradition the idea of the society as a community of people with common interests is developing. The globalization of the world for hegemonic ends can be changed to serve the genuine interests of humanity. After all the lessons that the problem of environmental pollution has taught us is that we cannot avoid one another. Human problems are the problems of us all. This should make appreciate the fact that we are all in more or less the same situation and in turn lead to our accepting body of common interests as binding on us all. Globalization can be an instrument of reconciliation, if we jettison the egoism of liberalism and adopt the morality and cohesive vision of communitarianism.

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