

# GLOBALISATION

## ITS HOPES AND RISKS

*Globalisation intensifies with the development of economics, knowledge and technology and in this sense is an objective historic process. When an economy reaches its limits in local markets it expands in regional, continental and global dimensions. Globalisation developed particularly fast in the second half of the twentieth century and continues to do so in today's world of multiple scientific discoveries and technological inventions. In theory, globalisation increases the production of commodities and ensures a greater number of jobs, thereby improving people's lives in both developed and developing countries. It however, contains both known and unknown risks and dangers. It is therefore difficult to find a balance between the advantages and disadvantages of globalisation.*

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### INTRODUCTION

**I**t is characteristic of the current phase of humanity's evolution that parameters, which describe the states of bio and sociospheres, are striving towards critical values. In addition, based on our present knowledge we cannot rule out a collapse of the natural and social environment usually qualified as the "extinction of mankind" in the future. Optimists see hope for the further development of humanity in globalisation, whereas pessimists see additional dangers along with

well-known ecological threats. In practice, globalisation processes contribute to the multiplication of disasters, especially in the sociosphere. Optimism therefore should be connected with common sense and the self-preservation instinct should force people to make such a connection. However, this fact is neither certain nor self-evident. Laziness, increasing stupidity, a lack of criticism and most importantly a lack of will to survive could inhibit or even prohibit this connection from taking place. If globalisation processes are successful in overcoming increasing threats, that success could lead to the preservation of future generations that would coordinate their conduct of power, educational systems, economic strategies and technical progress with the needs of ecology and zoology. Ecology is the science of the environment, while zoology is the science of care for the environment.

Unfortunately, current policies relating to diverse spheres of social life are dictated to by small financial elites and primarily serve their interests. In principle, these policies have local features and meet short-term goals. They must be replaced by ecopolicies based on ecophilosophy, which are futuristically oriented, serve mass interests and refer to global plans and strategies. Globalisation is the spontaneous transformation or “self-transformation” of events, occurrences and processes in regional, continental and in some cases worldwide affairs. It is not a product of an ideology like cosmopolitanism or of a “godly wish” of decision-makers in matters of economy or polity. Globalisation is in reality an occurring process—in a sense and

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to a degree existing independently of people—in the definite (topical) steps of social evolution. Its causal contexts are the development of the economy, the progress of knowledge and techniques (especially means of communication and transportation) and the concentration of social space–time. Today, we must deal with the growth and condensation of a web of diverse social relations, due to which our world has become an increasingly compact and tight global system.

For many, globalisation appears as something that will eliminate all troubles, solve all difficult social problems and guarantee the longevity of mankind in durable peace and welfare. In this sense, it seems to be a new Utopia. However, globalisation causes new social antinomies or discrepancies on a worldwide scale, which contribute to the growing polarisation of the world's population and consequently could lead to new natural/manmade disasters, social revolutions or even world wars. This paper details the following select antinomies—freedom and enslavement, wealth and poverty and security and risk.

## ANTINOMIES OF GLOBALISATION

### *Freedom and Enslavement*

Based on historical experience, the development of freedom entails its own negation as a result of self-organising mechanisms and regularities. This has been observed on military, economic and political levels. On the military level it includes the enlargement of defence blocs such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the concentration of power as a result of joining several states into federations and unions (the European Union) and the increasing subordination (economic and technological) of dependent states to the existing superpower (the United States of America) or to emerging ones. If one state depends on the military force of another, it inevitably loses its freedom—the limitation of freedom is directly related to the extent of military or political dependence. On the economic level, there is gradual international integration and globalisation, accompanied by the limitation of freedom and economic sovereignty, undermines liberal ideology, the free-market economy and free competition. The free flow of capital, labour and technology in principle is possible only with common technical norms, economic and trade agreements, global quality standards for products, linked currencies, unified banking systems, etc as a result of advanced normalisation and standardisation, which on a global scale contribute to the feeling of freedom. However, there is also a progressive concentration of capital with expanding spheres of influence of a small number of monopolies (oligopolies) dictated by financial elites. Globalisation on the economic level, leads to joining and working in such economic organisms and demands a sacrifice of individual ambitions and interests. This means limiting freedom in the economic

dimension. The greater and more economically powerful the institutions or the more economic the organisms are, the greater the limitation of freedom of their constituting subjects and the stricter the economic conditions imposed on all people. In addition, with the increase in concentration of “economic power”, fewer people, as representatives of this “power”, decide for others and gradually limit their freedom. Lastly, large numbers of people (consumers) are subjected to a specific form of “terrorism” from producers and tradesmen (“the terrorism of advertising”) and every form of terrorism limits our objective freedom.

### *Wealth and Poverty*

There is a growing polarisation between the poverty of the masses and the wealth of a few, widening the gap between the rich and the poor. There is also a polarisation between and within states, which generates the possibility of revolutionary situations on a global scale. About 85 per cent of the world’s wealth is in the hands of about 650 “multinational groups” while over a billion people survive on less than a dollar a day. The incomes of the rich and the poor at the end of the twentieth century were in the proportion of 1:35.

Such inequities generate jealousy and hatred and become sources of potential aggression and real world terrorism. The poor seeing the life of comfort of the rich often seek a solution in world revolution—today called a “war of cultures”. As a result, the revolutionary drive increases and mankind continuously faces some sort of social cataclysm. Differentiation and competition are natural driving forces for the development of the economy and of people’s activities. There should be economic differentiation but not in rational scope—instead competition should trigger simple economic rivalry between peoples and states. One must however differentiate between competition and rivalry. Competition is connected with antagonism and the

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will to destroy opponents, while rivalry aims to improve each side's performance without annihilating the other. Competition results from the run for profit that has taken on a form of worldwide psychosis today. The worst is that in this run for profit the richest people outrun all others. Consumption is limited for all—one can eat and drink only as much as one can digest. Furthermore, money that is not consumed in a broad sense of the word is simply waste money and in its “virtual” form only exists in computer transactions. Waste or virtual money is alienated money governed by its own mechanisms and rules independent of its owners. Most of it rests outside the real economy and does not express the real price of all commodities, investments and services. It is no wonder that in such a situation the anti-globalist movement has developed fast. As long as there are abysmal economic gaps between peoples and states, keywords such as democracy, equality, justice and liberty will make little sense.

### *Security and Risk*

The growth of a feeling of security in individuals and nations seems to be due to benefits resulting from globalisation processes—living in a group assures individuals of the care of others. Through partial resignation of one's own egoism—the condition of acceptance of an individual by a group—a group supports an individual, thereby creating conditions for his/her existence and survival. This also permits an individual to achieve goals within the framework of common social targets, together with other individuals. Strictly speaking, life in a group ensures the existence of the individual. Life in a globalised society (the “global village”) should therefore provide the highest degree of security. In addition, the shrinking of the social space–time should contribute to the rise of the security of the individual. It is thus self-evident that there is a theoretical correlation between the degree of organisation of a social system, the ease of communication, the growth of a set of various interdependencies, the reduction of distances and the degree of security. However, this is not so in the real world. Against appearances, the degree of risk increases (perhaps proportionally) with the rise of social density (through a reduction of life space–time) and with the rise (intensification and multiplication) of the effects of globalisation processes. The more condensed the social space–time becomes (due to globalisation), the more risk increases, while the consciousness of risk is lowered. Staying in a “tight”

social group does not automatically or even intentionally bring about—through altruistic and socially friendly attitudes or suitable education—the abandonment of various forms of egoism. On the contrary and even paradoxically, a condensed environment favours selfishness and produces attitudes of dislike, intolerance and even open hatred.

Where does the increased sense of risk in globalised society come from? First, areas of individual life space, spheres of privacy, real freedom and the feeling of freedom are reduced in a “condensed” social space–time. When a threat appears to the freedom of an individual, there is a natural defence reflex in the form of revolt and antagonism to other people. As in technical systems, where the greater the number of elements, the greater the increase of the risk of damage to these elements, so it is in social systems, which are even more complicated than technical mechanisms. The greater the number of people, institutions and organisations—subjects with free will and ambition to achieve their own egoistic aims—the greater the probability of “damage” to them. Acts of aggression, conflicts, discrepancies, not relating to ethical norms, etc are examples of such “damage”. All this produces uncertainty about correct behaviour, erodes positive attitudes to public welfare and generates threats to the individual. Uncertainty and threat are treated as potential (often real)

enemies, which reduce individuality, privacy and freedom. This is well known among social psychologists investigating crowd behaviour, as a crowd is a local, temporary and excessively condensed social cluster. Being in a crowd as a rule and in general is risky, as the behaviour of a crowd is unpredictable. Through globalisation, world society is gradually transforming into a crowd. The feeling of risk increases with uncertainty about the future. Knowing what awaits us, we can prepare ourselves for future events. In general, the more we know about the future, the less our feeling of uncertainty and threat. Foresight however is near impossible in our quickly varying material world. The tempo of change has accelerated considerably due to people’s activities and is akin to a modified version of Heraclitus’ well-known saying *panta rei pio tacheo* (everything flows faster). Generally, objects of research and description change faster than we can

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describe them. Descriptions are momentary in “real time” and true only during the short time of “mouse clicks”. Do such descriptions suffice as bases to foresee the future and create real prognosis?

#### THE HOPE IN THE RISK: THE RISK OF THE HOPE

Globalisation is inseparably connected with risk—not only with the danger of its own collapse, but paradoxically also with the danger of its successful development. In both cases, it could lead to the accelerated self-destruction of mankind. In the first case, our hope for solutions to the most important problems as well as our belief in the mitigation of various ecological threats and social discrepancies are connected with ongoing globalisation. People think they can easily and effectively manage the resources of energy, human capital and raw materials, control economic development and direct scientific and technical progress through the concentration and monopolisation of economic and political power resulting from globalisation. We believe that could create a “world government”, which would ensure the survival of humankind and exercise power in the name of all and for the good of everyone. Such a “government” would be apolitical and independent (from what?) and would have unquestioned moral authority (whose morality?). It would work under conditions of economic justice and ethical pluralism. This is one of many Utopias we have dealt with in the past. Utopias are willingly accepted as they give us hope or a “recipe for survival”. However, what would happen if globalisation did not produce the awaited results? Would there be great disappointment with another Utopia, a bankruptcy of hope, a collapse of faith in the possibility of survival and universal discouragement or would we seek another way out of the impasse? On the one hand, the risk of the collapse of globalisation brings great anxiety about the future fate of mankind, while on the other, the possibility of the success of globalisation also causes fears. Why is this so, when globalisation is seen by many as a sort of panacea?

Globalisation at the economic and productive level means “the creation of a world economy based on the free flow of goods, services and labour”—this sounds encouraging. However, such a free flow requires a world currency system, the development of integrated economic structures, growth of transnational corporations/companies, etc. The development of these structures

under conditions of free competition however would lead to the bankruptcy of small and weak enterprises and structures and as a result to the strengthening of monopolies and an extension of their power. Globalisation may be realised as a result of the accumulation and concentration of capital and authority. In this way it would bring us directly to the dictatorship of monopolies—the other side of globalisation that has been carefully hidden from the public. The dictatorship of monopolies is just a different kind of totalitarianism. As we have yet to experience this new form of totalitarianism, we do not know whether it will be worse than those of the past. Taking the moral aspect of contemporary world monopolies into consideration, their relations with various mafias, their use of ever more powerful technologies and insidious influences on the life of the masses, etc one may predict that a future “mafia-monopoly totalitarianism” will be worse than that of the Bolsheviks and fascists.

The globalisation of the economy and production goes beyond the spheres of social life. It takes place in spheres more distant from the economy, that is, in the sphere of mental culture. The domination of monopolies on culture, above all in our spirituality (mentality), seems to be especially risky for the survival of humankind. Production and the exchange of goods are basic factors of social existence. However, our existence is not determined only by these, we are also products of our mental culture. Our personality, morality and mentality are the result of social and spiritual cultures. In making economic, productive and other decisions people are guided by their own consciousness, conscience and value systems, as well as by other components of mental culture. Our fascination with scientism

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and technological progress has pushed spirituality to the bottom of the hierarchy of factors that regulate our existence. However, spirituality is what differentiates people from other living beings and is typical of all mankind. Globalisation that is inseparably joined with the “dictatorship of monopolies” is a threat to our spiritual culture and may lead to its degradation. Consequently, a new domain of ecology has arisen—the “ecology of spirit”—which cares for our spiritual environment. This is threatened by the progressive reduction of individual life



space–time and feeling of freedom, the spread and intensification of attitudes of ill will, enmity and aggression and the promotion of stupidity for commercial and political ends.

### ***The Progressive Reduction of Individual Life Space–Time and Feeling of Freedom***

The phenomenon of the progressive reduction of individual life space–time and feeling of freedom and the tendency of further social evolution should be subjected to philosophical reflection. The following processes cause a reduction of individual life space–time:

- The greater than ever growth of the world’s population due to the progress of knowledge and technology
- The increasing speeds of communication (transfer of information) and transportation (translocation of people)
- The progressive worldwide “webbing” (condensed webs of telecommunication – the internet and cellular telephones)
- The rise of urbanisation

Interactions and interdependencies between people multiply and intensify as a consequence of the above-mentioned processes. There has been a considerable reduction of time intervals in life and its tempo is steadily accelerating. Until recently, hours and minutes measured human life, now it is determined by mouse clicks and modern technology already uses nanoseconds. All these cause us to live in a “narrower” social space–time, limited by the increasingly nearer time and space horizon. Our life space–time changes as a result of the faster pace of existence and the quicker flows of money, information and technological processes. Our contemporary sociosphere has become a rapidly changing field of different social interactions. The greater the social density, the smaller the life space–time of individuals, the smaller the freedom of movement in such space and the more reduced our personal feeling of freedom. Freedom and the feeling of freedom are essential and specific attributes of humankind as well as necessary conditions for life. We therefore have to develop these attributes as part of our social evolution and then history may realise the Hegelian idea of the “March of Freedom”. However, it is also possible that globalisation could

lead to a turning point and even stop this march, leading to a new epoch in the rape of mankind. Therefore, the main questions are how much reduction of our free life space–time will lead to a critical state? What is the minimum life space–time of an individual, so that he/she may feel as a “person” in the sense of personalism? At what moment will we reach some catastrophic state in our evolution? These questions cannot be answered yet, but must be formulated today. If our evolution leads to a catastrophic state, then our hope in globalisation is doubtful, if not illusory.

### *The Spread and Intensification of Attitudes of Ill Will, Enmity and Aggression*

In a situation where the dimensions of an individual’s life space–time are reduced to minimal border areas, each one defends his/her own “free territory”. This causes dislike towards other people who disturb or violate our “private territory of freedom”—our individual life domain. The well-known Darwinian “battle for existence” has become in our time a “battle for individual areas of freedom”—for our privacy. As the tendency to minimise our freedom grows, our attitudes of dislike transform into attitudes of enmity, mutiny and ultimately aggression. Hence, various forms of xenophobia appear on ethnic, racist, religious and other grounds. Life in a “dense” social space takes place under conditions of hard competitive battles for consumer goods, jobs, social positions, a wish to dominate over others, etc. Globalisation, which allows for the free flow of people and goods, intensifies our attitudes of antagonism. Furthermore, competition is not limited to local regions, as with free flow it has a transcontinental (global) scope and encompasses all the people of the

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world. Finally, the social environment (sociosphere) has become increasingly confrontational and conflict generating. People are increasingly enmeshed in a web of conflicts that cause fights on different fronts and levels of the social structure. At a certain level of development, a competitive fight could get out of control and pursue utilitarian aims only in accordance with the criterion of efficiency. Therefore, it could become a form of banditry and terrorism on a global scale, indirectly fostered by globalisation.

### *The Escalation of Stupidity*

The most important threat of globalisation is probably the growing stupidity of the masses. By stupidity is meant the antinomy to wisdom, the lack of knowledge or simply thoughtlessness. The escalation of mass-stupidity is an effect of globalisation in the spheres of economy and production. The growth of stupidity has also been caused by the globalisation of spiritual culture, technological progress and paradoxically the development of knowledge. Technological causes for the rise of stupidity are the automation, computerisation and robotisation of human activity. These processes have been engendered by highly developed knowledge and will demand ever more specialised professional expertise in the future. This requirement however relates only to builders and programmers directly connected with inventiveness and innovation in computer technology. Highly developed knowledge is not necessary for the mass-users of computers or robots or mass-consumers of complicated technical objects, systems and tools. A basic knowledge of algorithms, computer-jargon terms, options and technical instructions suffice for them. It is not necessary to educate an army of mass-consumers of computers and robots to prepare them to work with technical objects. Training at a “minimal programme level” is sufficient. Thus, on the one hand, there is an essential but small number of highly educated specialists (experts) and on the other are the massive numbers of people educated at a minimum-level. This dichotomy is reflected in the present system of education as well. There are few schools with the highest levels of education (“smithies of experts” – future discoverers and inventors) but a large number of schools with low levels of education, which graduate “mass-consumers” of highly developed and complex technologies and technical objects. Thus, our present civilisation produces ignorant persons *en masse* together with the development of highly

educated experts. Scientific progress has led to a situation where we are able to embrace only minute parts of knowledge—specialists in one domain are ignorant in other spheres. Most people accept and are reconciled to such a situation—they neither need nor want to be further educated.

At present ignorance and stupidity have become mass social occurrences. Of his own time, Karl Marx had written that the product of work was more humanised, while the man (worker) who produced it was all the more dehumanised. By altering this statement, we can state that the more intelligent, complicated and subtle tools and technical systems become the less intelligent and more thoughtless the people using them turn out to be. The era of computers and robots will stop the Hegelian “March of Reason” and begin the “March of Stupidity”, leading to an essential turning point in the history of humankind. Consequently as an effect of globalisation, we will have to deal with a gradual polarisation of world society into a few sages or technocratic savants and a huge mass of “silly, ignorant and thoughtless” people. We must acknowledge the “March of Stupidity” in which a larger number of people will participate most likely as a by-product of scientific progress. As stupidity becomes our greatest enemy, it will not prolong the survival of our species and may in fact become the most important factor leading to our self-destruction.

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## CONCLUSION

One hopes that individuals and mankind will survive as a result of changes for the better caused by globalisation. The phenomenon multiplies and intensifies different kinds of interpersonal dependencies, leading to a better organisation of our sociosphere. However, we cannot ignore the fact that globalisation could lead to over-organisation, resulting in the dysfunction or

in an extreme case destruction of the sociosphere. Hence, globalisation as a necessary result of scientific progress could become the major obstacle to the fulfilment of our vision. It could become—and this is probable—the cause of Armageddon. Our hope for survival is related to our reason and wisdom and to the conviction that people will make reasonable decisions about the development of the economy, knowledge and technology. Future advances should favour the survival of individuals, communities and mankind at large. As of now, we do not know what speaks for this hope or which logical arguments could give reason to it. Some researches show that people do not use reason in taking everyday decisions and thus our hope may be supported only by a belief in the self-preservation instinct. This is also not a certainty as this instinct weakens with the development of knowledge and technology. While globalisation may solve some problems with which we are currently wrestling, it will most certainly generate new ones that we cannot even foresee. Three questions arise in this regard. Can we be reasonably optimistic about globalisation? Is our hope in globalisation merely wishful? In spite of all, should we take the risk of globalisation for our survival? Answers to these questions are not simple and demand wide analyses and deep thought. It is not possible to give authoritative answers based on subjective beliefs. ❧