

# ONE

## General Introduction

HÉLIO JAGUARIBE

### THE POST-COLD WAR WORLD

After the implosion of the Soviet Union and the de-communisation of its European satellites, the only superpower left in the international system was the United States. President George Bush (Senior) initially maintained that the result of the downfall of communism would be the creation of a new era, marked by universal peace and harmony. This suggestion expressed the American myth that communism was the cause of international problems and that, with its suppression, the 'free world' would realise its possibilities harmoniously and peacefully. It was also a way for the US, as a superpower, to manifest reassuringly its intention of intervening only consensually—and not unilaterally—in the international scene.

A few years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the division of the Soviet Union (with Russia receiving the lion's share of the legacy), the international situation began to exhibit post-Cold War characteristics. Furthermore, various areas of turbulence in Africa, in the former Yugoslavia and in the ever-troubled Middle East have made it clear that the international system is not self-adjustable. In the preceding bipolar regime, each superpower exerted controls over its area of dominance or influence. However, the disappearance of these controls has exposed the world to continuous conflicts that the United Nations, not receiving the necessary aid from member states, lacks the resources to prevent or settle.

On the other hand, given the new conditions and the relative impotence of the UN, the US, in an increasingly unilateral way, has started to exercise a 'world monitoring' function practised in the name of the 'international community'. This is allegedly in defence of democracy and human rights, in addition to promoting America's own national interests. Despite being the only superpower and possessing unchallengeable economic technology and military supremacy compared to any other country, the US lacks the conditions to exercise effective unipolarity, although it frequently seeks to achieve it.

As Samuel Huntington has pointed out, the present world regime cannot be classified as unipolar, but, rather, has special aspects that one might call 'unimultipolarity'.<sup>1</sup> Unimultipolarity is characterised by the fact that the US

enjoys a general power to veto important international proposals or anything that affects vital American interests. It is also characterised by the fact that US participation has become an indispensable factor in the success of any important international initiative. Finally, it is distinguished by the fact that the US has considerable scope for unilateral intervention in international affairs. However, this depends, in important areas, on the minimum support from countries such as France and Germany, and the almost automatic support from Great Britain.

The unimultipolarity regime currently in force has, of necessity, a transitory character. This stems from the fact that following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US has had a high but not unrestricted capacity for unilateral intervention in the international scene. Therefore, in the coming decades this world order will be inclined either to consolidate itself into an unchallengeable American unipolarity, or to turn into an effectively multipolar system.

#### LIMITS TO UNIPOLARITY

Despite its status as the only superpower and the new unilateral assertiveness of President George Bush (Junior), there are currently two main circumstances (domestically and internationally) preventing the US from achieving the unipolarity level. Domestically, the fact remains that North American society and institutions are not geared towards running a world empire. The American people also refuse to assume the financial and personal sacrifices that would be required. Internationally, the fact remains that despite its unassailable economic-technological and military supremacy, the US, given its internal restrictions, faces sufficient resistance from various world powers.

The US is a mass democracy, although subject to a high degree of oligarchic control. The world empires from Mesopotamia, Ancient Egypt and Rome, to the Iberian empires of the Renaissance, and even to the recent British Empire, were constituted and directed by authoritarian regimes. (Although in the British case, it was under the guise—and with the resulting restrictions—of an aristocratic democracy.) In addition to the significant decline in relative power experienced by the UK after the First World War, it was a middle-class democracy under Gladstone, which increasingly became a mass democracy under Attlee, that made the continuance of the British Empire untenable.

In the case of the US, the important protestant ethic residue, which continues to manifest itself in the American people, makes violent or malevolent forms of coercion unacceptable for public consumption. In addition to the socio-economic restrictions stemming from the regime, this lack of coercion means, on occasion, that it is impossible to preserve an imperial system. It was the image on American television of a little, terrified, Vietnamese girl fleeing naked from a napalm bomb that led the American people to oppose the continuing military intervention in Vietnam.

Aside from the unassailable American economic-technological and military supremacy, such resistance (as mentioned above) has proved efficient. It has

done this both in itself and by the fact that the domestic limitations that surround the US deprive it of the opportunity of a direct preventive confrontation with major opponents to its hegemony.

Without elaborating too much on the question of a limited unipolarity, it is worth highlighting three of its most restrictive aspects. Two of these points are closely connected to the domestic limitations facing the American power elite in any attempt to exercise uninhibited world hegemony.

The first relates to the need to transmit an image of legitimacy for US external interventions, to the American people. Interventions delegated by the UN (Kuwait) immediately confer this legitimacy. However, recent American interventions (before 11 September) have not counted on the support of the UN and escaped its condemnation only by virtue of the US power of veto. To make up for this, NATO-conferred legitimacy can be a useful second bet. In the absence of this, however, the express opposition of the Europeans, most notably from countries such as France and Germany, has an inhibitory effect.

The second restrictive aspect of an uninhibited American unipolarity is the fact that, in many circumstances, unilateral intervention would have to be exercised in a malevolent or violent way. This in turn would give rise to strong domestic opposition. The international practice of violence on the part of the US requires two things. First, there must be formal aspects of legitimacy (in the view of American institutions and the moral sensibilities of the public). Second, there is a demand for the prior 'demonisation' of the target country and/or leader—for example, Iraq and Saddam Hussein.

The third restrictive factor for the US exercising a full unipolarity is the strategic and tactical need to prevent the formation and consolidation of dangerous 'anti-hegemonic' coalitions. The US enjoys a clear unchallengeable economic-technological and military superiority over any other country, most notably China, India, Russia, Iran and Iraq. The formation of an anti-hegemonic coalition between such countries, whether all or some, would assume grave proportions. It would require incomparably greater effort and sacrifice than that demanded from the US by the Second World War, among other reasons, because of the potential for a major nuclear conflict.

Under present conditions, the above-mentioned countries are all against American hegemony and all aspire to see a reduction in the US area of predominance and influence. Nevertheless, one could not describe the relations among such countries as being co-operative; in fact competitive or even antagonistic would be nearer the mark. In this context, the US seeks to avoid any exacerbation of the anti-Americanism of these countries. This is in fear of them overcoming their reciprocal differences and banding together against America.

## SCOPE FOR INTERVENTION

### *General aspect*

Within the internal and external limitations mentioned above, the US still has considerable scope for intervention. To analyse this question, it is necessary to view it from two perspectives: first in terms of the main objective pursued by the US in its international policy, and second, the means at its disposal to achieve such an objective.

What is sometimes called the ‘American Empire’ is something quite different from the traditional empires, from the Roman to the British. These were marked not only by the effective submission of the areas under their control or predominance to metropolitan sovereignty, but also by their formal submission. Authorities appointed by the metropolis as pro-consuls, governors and viceroys exercised, with the required military support, effective power in the provinces or colonies of the empire. The inhabitants of those regions, in compensation, enjoyed certain benefits conferred by the empire. These ranged from, in the Roman case, the institution of a rational and equitable juridical system, regulated by the *jus gentium* and supervised by the *praetor peregrinus*—to the Caracalla edict, extending Roman citizenship to all the provinces—to the status of a British citizen, with the corresponding rights (different from those conferred by UK citizenship) to Commonwealth subjects.

The predominance of the US in the international system is not exerted through the formal imposition of American sovereignty on the territories and people subject to it. The American ‘empire’ is not an empire. It is a field, in the same sense as a magnetic field or field of gravity. It is a field in which multiple conditionings are exerted, conditionings of an economic, technological, cultural, psychological, political and military character. It comes from the US, without harming the continuing nominal sovereignty of the countries encompassed by this field. Wherever possible, the US seeks to influence the choice of local governments. However, it is not essential for American predominance that the leaders of the ‘provinces’, whose domestic institutions continue to exist, are people appointed by Washington or pointedly aligned to it. The system of conditionings operates independently of the will of the leaders of these areas, formally independent but subject to American predominance, generating constraints which would be extremely costly or simply unfeasible to ignore.

In stubborn cases or acts of blatant defiance, the US exerts strong direct pressure and according to the circumstances adopts a policy designed to make the country or leader in question, an international pariah (Khadafi, Hussein). Particularly in the cases of international terrorism, the US launches a campaign to ‘demonise’ such countries and leaders in the eyes of the American people and world public opinion.

The US pursues three main objectives in the international arena related respectively to: American power, the expansion of its economy, and the dissemination of its values and institutions.

*Military power*

The objective of preserving, strengthening and expanding American national power at the international level is understandably the most important of the three. Having managed to become, without resorting to war, the only superpower, the US gives top priority to preserving and consolidating this status. To this end, the US considers it essential to satisfy two requirements:

1. to maintain its control over Eurasia; and
2. to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. (Particularly to make sure that no major power—besides the consummated fact of Russia—reaches a critical nuclear capacity and to make sure that no unreliable or rogue country shall have the means to inflict serious damage on American territory.)

As Zbigniew Brzezinski<sup>2</sup> has pointed out, the huge continental land mass that stretches from the Iberian Peninsula to the sea of Japan, together with the Japanese Islands, constitutes the key area of the world. Whoever controls this area is thus guaranteed world control. If unable to dominate completely and fully Eurasia, the US has endeavoured to achieve the following objectives in this region:

1. to maintain a close military alliance, under American command, with Europe and Japan;
2. to maintain an active co-operative economic relationship with Russia avoiding, on the one hand, any growth of anti-American feelings, and on the other, any decline in their prejudices against China. Thus, potentially allowing the formation of an anti-hegemonic coalition;
3. to maintain co-operative economic and technological relations with China, so as to link Chinese development to American co-operation, thus avoiding the formation of anti-hegemonic coalitions with Russia and Japan; and
4. to maintain co-operative relations with India and impede the latter from forming an anti-hegemonic coalition with China.

Europe is the key-figure for preserving the American system of supremacy, hence the decisive importance for the US to maintain the Atlantic Alliance and its military arm, NATO. The end of the Cold War and the implosion of the Soviet Union have made the preservation of NATO particularly difficult, as it was expressly formed as a defence against an enemy—the Soviet Union—which no longer exists.

It goes beyond the limits of this brief study to carry out a detailed analysis of the conditions and circumstances that have allowed NATO to continue. One might just mention, among the most important factors, the radical British opposition to any weakening or dissolution of NATO, the alliance with the US being more important to Britain than its links with Europe. One should also mention the lingering European fear towards Russia and a probable recovery, in the not too distant future, of her national power. A third factor is that France has not found, within an exclusively European orbit, compensatory mechanisms for the growing disequilibrium that has resulted from the inferiority of its economy and international status when compared to post-reunification Germany. Finally, one should mention the fact that the Europeans do not possess an updated defence system and are faced with multiple difficulties and inevitable delays in their proposals for adopting one. At the moment, as the crisis in the former Yugoslavia made so patently clear, they need to use NATO to tackle problems of this type.

As far as preserving its nuclear superiority is concerned, the US recognises the maintenance by Russia of the bulk of the Soviet Union's former arsenal (albeit in highly unsatisfactory conditions) as a factor to be reckoned with. They do not consider the fact that Britain and France have a modest nuclear system at their disposal particularly dangerous. However, they are making every effort to avoid the proliferation of atomic weapons, although they have been unable to block nuclear development in China. The spread of nuclear weapons, in some cases, already has a critical mass available (in Russia) or at least achievable within a few decades (in China), as well as the problem of the wild adventurism of certain leaders. Thus, the US is leaning, under very different conditions, to Reagan's old project of protecting America with a reliable missile-interception system. This project is strongly contested by Russia, which considers quite rightly, that the installation of such a system, besides violating already signed nuclear accords, would make the US militarily invulnerable, thus consolidating definitively American world hegemony.

In addition to the policies and measures mentioned above, American concern about the international preservation of its power supremacy has led the US to pay particular attention to the question of regional powers. To this end, the US seeks to identify both the respective local predominant power and the secondary power, most likely to dispute regional primacy in the main regions of the world. From the American point of view the regional powers and their respective contenders are:

1. in Europe; France and Germany, allies but competitors for supremacy, with Great Britain also as a contender;
2. in the west of Eurasia; Russia, with the Ukraine as a contender;
3. in the Far East; China, with Japan as a contender;
4. in South Asia; India, with Pakistan as a contender; and
5. in South America; Brazil, with Argentina as a contender.

In such a situation, American policy is studiously two-faced. On the one hand, it seeks to win the support of the predominant power and to act as a local link in the US network of influence, making use of material and honorary incentives to achieve this end. On the other hand, it nourishes the current or potential contentiousness of the secondary power, using the same resources, with a view to reducing the capacity for action and leadership of the predominant local power.

*Economic power*

American economic supremacy, besides its marked technological-economic superiority, stems from the fact that the country enjoys particularly favourable conditions generated by the globalisation process. The economic superiority of the US in comparison with any other country is striking. Boasting the largest GDP in the world and representing about one-quarter of world GDP, the US also enjoys considerable technological and managerial superiority. It controls the high-tech sectors of the economy and shows, on average, and in the most important sectors, significantly greater competitiveness than other countries. It should be added that this formidable productive and commercial system is operated by a network of multinationals that dominate the world market. In addition, the socio-cultural conditions of the US favour the existence and expansion, in the domestic market, of a large number of small companies with a high capacity for technological innovation. This supplies the market with a never-ending and increasing flow of new technologies and new products.

As previously mentioned, the marked technological-economic superiority of the US is particularly favoured by the globalisation process. This process—the origins of which go back to the mercantile revolution, followed by the industrial revolution—has not resulted from the initiative of any one country, including the US, or of any particular economic group. It has resulted from the aggregate effect of the technological revolution in the final decades of the twentieth century. This incorporated the entire world into a system of immediate intercommunication and close interdependence. It occurred both in terms of the supply of goods and services coming from, and destined to, every part of the world, and, even more significantly, in terms of the almost instantaneous financial movement of many billions of dollars. Within the conditions generated by the globalisation process, the marked economic-technological superiority of the US and its multinationals is making globalisation correspond increasingly to a general Americanisation of the world economy.

It is in such circumstances that the economic-technological conditionings regulated and manipulated by the US are particularly efficient, both directly and through international agencies. These agencies are conceived and structured in a consistent way with these conditionings, such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and others. These conditionings obey neoliberalistic logic, which leads to international super-competitiveness and the creation of new rules. Combined, they strongly

favour the American economy and its multinationals, particularly to the detriment of countries with less developed and less competitive economies. Therefore, these economies are faced with two alternatives. The first option is to open their internal market to an invasion of goods and services offered by the multinationals. This would mean the elimination of autochthonous productive capacity and a growing loss of operational control over their own economy, thus becoming a mere segment of the world market. The second option would be to insist on the practice of traditional protectionism, and thus bring about an increasing technology lag that would subject them (in the name of free trade and liberal and democratic principles) to intolerable sanctions on the part of the international agencies and the US itself.

#### *Cultural power*

The cultural power of the US is frequently underestimated and considered only in terms of its scientific-technological aspects. Certainly, science production shifted during the course of the twentieth century from Europe to the US at an ever-increasing rate. Perhaps even more significant here is the concentration in the US of the technological and innovation capacity in this area. Notwithstanding this predominance, the dominant cultural influence of the US at the 'pop-culture' and 'American way of life' level is no less apparent. The American cinema exerts an immeasurable multiplying effect in this respect. It is an effect that is also self-multiplying in the sense that the screens of the world (with few exceptions) show mostly American films. The odd non-American movie sometimes manages a screening as well, but predominantly by American distributors..

The immense and powerful dissemination of American values and cultural styles has a corresponding effect on the configuration of values and styles of life in the other world cultures. Without getting into too much detail on such a consequential question, one might highlight just three of its most important effects. The first concerns the fact that modernity and modernisation, particularly from a youth point of view in almost every country in the world, are seen as being equivalent to a process of Americanisation and as something resulting from it. Furthermore, American institutions and procedures, such as democracy, neoliberal economics, super-competitive individualism and high and unrestricted consumerism, are seen as universally desirable. Finally, and which tends to lead to disastrous consequences, the conviction is spreading among every nation and social class, that the American way of life and its high and unrestricted consumerism are universally accessible whenever American institutions and procedures are adopted.

#### INTERNATIONAL CONSEQUENCES

The enormous scale and intensity of the American impact on the world is producing very profound and varied effects. Among the countless consequences



of this impact, three aspects should be highlighted as being particularly important. The first relates to the image the US has of itself and its international actions, the second concerns stratification, and the third concerns its real economic-social effects.

*America's image of itself*

The Americans do not view their country as an imperial power and do not aspire to such. They are fully aware and proud of being the only superpower and intend to preserve and consolidate this position. For many, including significant numbers in Congress and the Executive, this position confers unipolarity on the US. Unipolarity carries the obligation of performing a regulatory role in international affairs, which can, and in principle should, replace the work of the UN in a more efficient and internationally beneficial way.

The Americans see their country as a benign power—which tendentially it actually is—that seeks to contribute to the institution of world peace, to democracy and the defence of human rights and free trade. The super competitiveness of the American economy giving it advantageous access to all the markets not subject to a protectionist regime, prompts the country to actively defend free trade. From the American point of view, it is fair that the most competitive should prevail and the effects of this competitiveness are beneficial for consumers in every country in the world.

The view the Americans have of themselves and their role in the world is genuinely positive. It is true in the short run, both for the ordinary man in the street involved in his daily life, and for political leaders, conditioned by the short duration of elective mandates. The great scholars, such as Brzezinski and Huntington (among others), have a historical view of their country. It leads them, on the one hand, to an awareness of the transient nature of all hegemonies, from the Roman to the British and, by necessity, the current American hegemony. However, they share the favourable self-image that Americans have of their country and its international actions. From this conjugation between historical awareness and self-complacency arises the interesting idea that the US will be historically the last superpower. American hegemony, even though non-unipolar, will contribute towards the universalisation of democracy, respect for human rights and a progressive modernisation of the world. It will generalise higher living standards for all nations and thus establish an era of universal peace and prosperity.<sup>3</sup>

*World power stratification*

American supremacy and the unipolarity regime, viewed in terms of world power stratification, leads to a world differentiated at three levels.

1. the level of the ruling countries;

2. the level of the resistant countries; and
3. the level of the conditioned or dependent countries.

Strictly speaking, the US has become the only fully sovereign country. It enjoys the power of veto, not only in the Security Council ritual, but also at the practical level, in any international deliberation of great importance or conflicting with vital American interests. Furthermore, the US is an indispensable partner in any important international initiative that hopes to succeed. It is militarily invulnerable, having at the same time the capacity to intervene effectively in any part of the world. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, the US, by virtue of domestic inhibitions and efficient international resistance, does not enjoy effective unipolar power. The international actions of the US are subject to legitimacy requirements dependent on the approval of the UN Security Council and, in the final instance of the European countries (particularly France and Germany, besides the habitual, almost automatic alignment of Great Britain).

This circumstance, plus the very weight of the EU itself, grants co-participation status to the European countries, although to a lesser degree than the US at the ruling power level. At this level, also to a lesser degree, Japan co-participates by virtue of its position as the second economic-technological power in the world. In addition, the fact remains that the US depends on the Japanese alignment to maintain its influence in the Far East.

Countries that are in a position to resist American supremacy but not contest it head-on occupy the second level of world power stratification. This position is typically that of China. To a lesser degree, countries such as Russia, India and Iran take part at this level. Iraq, if it manages to overcome its traditional rivalry with Iran, which led to a bitter war between the two countries, might have access to this level, as a supporting player of its former enemy. If Brazil manages to consolidate the Mercosul and overcome its current policy of international financial dependence, it might also have access to the level of resistant countries.

The third level of international power stratification is that of the conditioned or dependent countries, which comprises the rest of the world. This level is predominately occupied by countries subject to the technological-economic logic of the Euro-Nippon-American system and without options of their own. At this level there are also a number of Asiatic countries dependent in different ways on China, the most typical case being that of North Korea. Switzerland occupies a singular position in this level and is a small highly developed country which prefers not to join the EU. Such a union would give it greater international participation but deprive it of its assumed neutrality.

#### *Social-economic effects*

The globalisation process, which is rapidly spreading throughout the world within the international power stratification regime mentioned above, produces extremely varied social-economic effects. These effects are conditioned, on the

one hand, by the international power level at which a country is situated. On the other hand, for countries situated at the dependent level, these effects vary. This is according to whether the country manages to achieve a satisfactory position in the international market as an exporter of primary products, or remains an under-competitive industrialised country.

Countries situated at the ruling level have managed to achieve a high level of general development, enjoy satisfactory living standards (although in the case of Europe, there are excessive unemployment rates) and maintain internationally balanced economic, cultural and political relations. These characteristics are presented in full in the US. The continual international trade deficits, tolerated for the benefit of domestic consumers and the logic of its own multinationals, are amply compensated by the huge inflow of profits and interest and also (in the extreme) by the self-constituting capacity of its own financial reserves. In the case of the European countries, the EU provides them with international and domestic protection, highly compensatory for the restrictions to national sovereignty arising from this same Union.

The position of countries situated at the resistance level is more complex and varied. Fundamentally, this level provides them with a wider range of options than the dependent countries. This fact provides a margin of national autonomy, which the dependent countries are deprived of. This margin of autonomy in turn enables them to promote their own development with a significant degree of independence from the ruling countries. The opportunities provided by this level, however, require a considerable and consistent national development effort, which also needs to be implemented rapidly. The resistance level has a comparatively short horizon. Countries that fail to achieve a satisfactory level of development within the next few decades are unlikely to be able to do so in the course of the second half of the twenty-first century, and will find themselves in the position of a dependent country. This is clearly the case of China, but also for Russia, in terms of its need to rapidly overcome the chaotic conditions of the post-communist aftermath. In the case of Iran, it is in terms of the need to overcome Islamic dogmatism and become a modern society.

Countries situated at the dependency level, which covers the great majority of countries in the world, present a huge variety of situations, according to their relative level of development and their demographic statistics. As already mentioned, a small highly developed country such as Switzerland can enjoy advantageous conditions without belonging formally to the ruling level. Underdeveloped countries with a small population which manage, however, to place their primary products in the international market on a satisfactory basis (such as Costa Rica) also enjoy relatively favourable conditions. This level, however, is extremely unfavourable to underdeveloped countries with a large population (like Indonesia and Nigeria) or for countries also with a large population, predominantly industrial, but whose productive system is not sufficiently competitive (like Brazil). Brazil, as will be briefly discussed next, finds itself in an intermediary situation between the resistance and the

dependency level. Its final status will depend, domestically, on the extent to which it is able to overcome its current reliance on the international financial system, and internationally, on how far Mercosul can consolidate itself and expand to the rest of South America, resisting its absorption by the FTAA (Free Trade Agreement of the Americas).

## EVOLUTIONARY TRENDS

### *General aspect*

The current international system and its three-power strata offer little stability. There is inherent instability in the unimultipolarity status of the US, tending in the course of the coming decades to turn into an effective unipolarity or become a new multipolarity. There is instability in the status of countries situated at the resistance level, as is clearly the case with China. The latter will either achieve equipollence with the US by mid-century, or it will slip into a dependency relationship, amidst considerable crisis and turbulence. Furthermore, numerous countries now situated at the dependency level are exhibiting, both domestically and internationally, signs of extreme instability. This is clearly apparent in the cases of Africa and Indonesia, but also, within its own conditions in the case of Brazil. The huge populations of these countries are not compatible with recalcitrant underdevelopment and a continued situation of international dependency. Such countries, if they do not develop and acquire satisfactory conditions of domestic equilibrium in the coming decades, will become explosive centres of international upheaval.

The instability currently found in the international system will bring about great modifications in the decades to come, which will evolve at three main historical-social levels. We can describe these levels as:

1. the economic-social;
2. the international; and
3. the civilisation level.

These levels correspond to processes of different duration and velocity. The economic-social level corresponds to phenomena already being felt, resulting from the domestic and international non-viability of the majority of the countries situated at the dependency level. Such phenomena occur, at great speed, in a relatively short space of time. The international level concerns the configuration of the new world order, which will result from changes in the current unimultipolar situation. The corresponding processes develop in the medium term, their effects tending to materialise from the mid-twenty-first century onwards. The civilisational level corresponds to long-term processes. It consists of the gradual formation of a planetary civilisation, through the fusion of

elements coming from the currently existing civilisations into planetary universal, which will exhibit distinct characteristics in each of the original bases.

*Economic-social level*

As has been pointed out by Aldo Ferrer,<sup>4</sup> the current globalisation process constitutes the third wave of a phenomenon whose origin lies in the maritime discoveries of the fifteenth century and the resulting mercantile revolution. A second globalisation wave occurred with the industrial revolution. The third and present globalisation wave has resulted from the technological revolution of our own time.

The globalisation process has acquired steadily growing proportions, both in terms of geographic extension and in terms of its intensity as it has passed from one stage to the next. In all three stages, this process has been marked by the asymmetry—growing geometrically—of its effects. The Asian world in the fifteenth century exhibited a civilisational level equal or superior to that of the West. With the mercantile revolution, the Western world began to enjoy an economic advantage of around two to one in its relationship with the Asian world. With the industrial revolution, this advantage became ten to one. With the current technological revolution it has become 60 to one.<sup>5</sup>

The effects of this extraordinary asymmetry are extremely destabilising for underdeveloped countries. They exhibit great differences, among other things, according to whether the countries come from major ancient civilisations, such as India or China, from the Iberian cultures, such as Latin America, or whether they are still in a pre-national stage, as in the case of Africa. Despite the profound differences that exist between these countries, the underdevelopment from which they are suffering expresses the effects of the deep asymmetry generated by the globalisation processes.<sup>6</sup> Besides having exponentially raised the difference in levels between underdeveloped and developed countries (the GDP per capita in the case of Africa is around US\$500, against US\$30,000 in the most developed countries) the third and present globalisation wave has brought the masses of the underdeveloped world, through television and other media, into immediate contact with the affluent world. This includes the islands of influence existing in the poor countries themselves, generating acutely destabilising effects, particularly in countries with a large population.

The entry of underdeveloped countries into the Euro-Nippon-American economic-technological system imposes inhibiting constraints on their development, particularly on social development. It also arouses completely unrealistic expectations, generating frustrations that are expressed in all kinds of violence and rising crime rates. These countries are heading rapidly towards a state of ungovernability, as one can already see in Africa, in Indonesia and in the Andes region of South America. In Brazil itself, the destabilising effects generated (particularly by the Landless Peasant Movement and large and extended urban criminality) are extremely disconcerting. This is despite the

stability of its democratic regime, the relatively high average level of the country (US\$5,000 per capita) and the important high-tech sectors that it has.

Any attempt at a more detailed analysis of the conditions of countries at the dependency level falls outside the scope of this brief study, but one should just point out, in relation to the asymmetry process, that overcoming underdevelopment requires, among other conditions, balance of trade and balance of payments equilibrium in these countries. This is in order to allow economic growth, as it is up to institutions like the World Bank and the IMF to facilitate this process.

#### *Civilisation level*

From the end of the nineteenth century and in a process that gained pace after the First World War and even more so after the Second World War, Western Civilisation<sup>7</sup> began to exhibit characteristics that required differentiation from its preceding tradition. One might use the term Late Western Civilisation to denominate it, in the same way that Classical Civilisation, after Constantine, became known as Late Classical Civilisation. The Christianisation of the classical world, with the resulting loss by Rome of its previous religious beliefs, led to profound changes in the ancient world. Transformations in the long term and in the course of great vicissitudes, gave rise, after the disintegration of the Carolingian Empire, to the emergence of Western Civilisation.

In the same way the growing laicisation of Western Civilisation, the crisis of transcendent values (with Nietzsche and after him) and the non-open *de facto* replacement of the belief in God, as the basis of the Western cosmovision, by the belief in science and technology, have made the Western Civilisation of today something very different from the preceding tradition. Thus, it is a late expression of that civilisation.

Concomitant with this process and more markedly after the Second World War, another process has been taking place at a much slower rate. This is the gradual fusion of the civilisations to the present day into a general, single civilisation, which can be entitled a Planetary Civilisation.

This second process began at the end of the eighteenth century, through the growing influence of the important elements of Western Civilisation on the other remaining civilisations: Islamic, Indian, Buddhist and Sino-Japanese. The initial penetration of Western Civilisation was in the technological and military areas. Confronted with Western technology and its military applications, the other civilisations realised that if they were to survive, they needed to incorporate these crucial elements of Western superiority. They tried to do this, preserving in the other cultural domains (particularly in the religious and institutional domains) their traditional characteristics. However, in the course of time, this intent proved to be impossible. Western technology brought with it the parallel need to adopt Western science with all its ramifications, in the conception of the world and organisation of society. Fundamental conceptions for Islam, such as

that of structural unity in the community of the ummah of political, civil and religious dimensions, were not compatible with the modernisation of Islamic society. Turkey took the recognition of this incompatibility to its ultimate consequences, converting Islam into a subjective religion and imposing completely Western Turkish characteristics on society and the state. Japan moved towards complete Westernisation, except in respect of its ethical values. For the Indo and Buddhist civilisations, the conception of samsara, related to the transmigration of souls and central to their religious-philosophical convictions, has proved to be incompatible with modern biology and psychology.

The gradual and growing Westernisation of non-Western civilisations has not occurred in a linear and continuous way. Thus, it has given rise in different regions to occasionally violent reactions, such as Islamic Fundamentalism. Nevertheless, the process in the long term follows an inexorable logic. The modernisation of the non-Western world is synonymous with Westernisation. It so happens, however, that the Westernisation of the non-western world corresponds, albeit to a lesser extent, to an ample penetration in Western Civilisation of elements from other civilisations, as well as African culture. Buddhist practices and concepts have considerable influence on sectors of Western society. Afro-Americans, to affirm their differences from the Anglo-Saxon world, have adhered on a large scale to Islam. Neo-Confucian ideas are dispersed throughout the world. Black influence is predominant in Western pop music. The illustrations are countless. What results from this process of reciprocal influences is the gradual formation of a Planetary Civilisation: a civilisation whose scientific-technological bases come from Late Western Civilisation, but which tend to present marked differences according to the original pillars of this civilisation. These differences came from the non-Western civilisations that survived until the twentieth century.

This hypothesis for the gradual formation of the Planetary Civilisation differs fundamentally from the ideas put forward by Huntington in his book, *The Clash of Civilizations*, mentioned previously. However, what Huntington does visualise is the strong tendency for the major conflicts of the twenty-first century to pit the US,<sup>8</sup> and its possible allies, head-on against China, and in terms of terrorism and guerrilla conflicts, against the Islamic countries. It happens, however, that Huntington's predictions, although concerning antagonisms that might well come about, will not represent a civilisational clash. Rather, they will represent a dispute for world power within the context of a Planetary Civilisation in the process of formation.

As previously pointed out, the world order in force after the implosion of the Soviet Union, characterised by the unimultipolarity of the US, does not look set for long duration. The unimultipolar regime will tend, by the mid-twenty-first century, to change into either an effective American unipolarity or, more likely, head towards a new multipolarity. Furthermore, the three-way stratification of world power, split into a ruling country level, a resistant country level and a conditioned or dependent country level, is also unlikely to last. The resistant

countries will tend, by the mid-twenty-first century, to divide into those that achieve ruling country status (as will probably occur with China) and those that slip back into a dependency relationship. Among the dependent countries, however, the underdeveloped countries with large populations that do not manage to move towards sustainable development in the relative short term will tend to experience profound destructive crises. They will lose internal conditions of governability and constitute explosive centres of upheaval in the world.

It is difficult to forecast the ways in which these different probable processes will manifest themselves and interrelate during the first half of the twenty-first century. There will be a tendency for the ruling countries to use constraining solutions in their respective local areas. These solutions, for the upheavals caused by the disruption of non-viable societies, will employ suitable coercive means. However, the globalisation process, which will continue to spread and intensify, contains inevitable channels of intercommunication—everyone with everyone and everything with everything—in an operationally unified world. Under such conditions, islands of affluence, no matter how powerful they may be militarily and technologically, will be unable to survive surrounded by a sea of rebellious, wretched populations.<sup>9</sup> The massive extermination of the impoverished masses could be adopted, if it were feasible. However, what makes it impossible is the inevitable contamination of the planet as a whole, which would result from using mass extermination methods such as nuclear or chemical—biological weapons. This is in addition to the fact that the higher cultures cannot preserve their own values if they violate them on a large scale in the process of exterminating the outcasts of the world as a whole.

In the long term, the world is faced with a single alternative. Collective suicide or the institution, within the emerging Planetary Civilisation, of a rational and equitable world order. In the form of a modern *Pax Universalis*, the *Pax Perpetua* would be established, which Kant, in the conditions of the eighteenth century, understood as being the only possible way of regulating the world.

## ARGENTINA, BRAZIL, MERCOSUL

### *Mercosul*

What is the situation of the member countries of Mercosul and of the latter, as an integrating system in southern South America, *vis-à-vis* the situation and the international conditions previously mentioned?

Mercosul is both a common market project for its members as well as an initiative for co-ordinating efforts designed to provide its members with greater external weight and better international negotiating conditions.

Mercosul has represented a market of growing importance for its members. In the period between 1991 and 1998<sup>10</sup> aggregate intra-regional trade was 36.9 per cent, 16.5 per cent, 79.6 per cent and 80.5 per cent for Argentina, Brazil,



Paraguay and Uruguay, respectively, with the rest of the world. In this situation, if the relative trade importance of Mercosul is less for Brazil than for the other countries, one should take into account that Brazilian exports to Mercosul are products of high aggregate value, in which manufactured goods represent 90 per cent of the total. To get a comparative idea, Brazilian exports of manufactured goods to the EU represent only 38.5 per cent of the total. In addition, besides the current importance of Mercosul, intra-regional trade has grown at significantly higher rates than the trade of member countries with the rest of the world. From 1991 to 1997 intra-regional trade grew by 771 per cent, against an increase in trade of 142 per cent<sup>11</sup> for the rest of the world.

From 1999 to the writing of this study in mid-2001, a serious crisis confronted Mercosul. The Argentinean stagnation was ascribed, by some sectors, to the negative effects of Mercosul. The new Uruguayan government, under President Jorge Battle Ibañez, is unsupportive of Mercosul. Therefore, Mercosul is faced with the alternative of either reaching new institutional arrangements and becoming stronger and consolidated, or converting itself into a less ambitious free trade area, with the probability of being later absorbed by the ALCA (American Free Trade Area).

When considering Mercosul independently of its 1999–2001 crisis, one must consider two main aspects. First, Mercosul as a regional market and second, Mercosul as an international protagonist.

As a regional market in the relative short term, Mercosul faces the option of expanding throughout the rest of the South American continent. This would incorporate, if not all the other countries, at least countries such as Chile, Bolivia, Peru and Venezuela. Brazil strongly supports this alternative. Opposed to this, there is another option that the US intensely supports. It consists of instituting an American Free Trade Area (ALCA), extending from the present North America Free Trade Area (which currently incorporates the US, Canada and Mexico) to the whole of Central and South America.<sup>12</sup>

As the 1990s came to a close, the position of Mercosul, and also of Brazil, remained extremely ambiguous in relation to these two alternatives. On the one hand, the Latin American countries have signed declarations of intent with Washington, in respect of ALCA, to finalise the accord by 2005. On the other hand, there is a prevailing view in Brazil that a free trade treaty for the whole of the Americas will eliminate Mercosul's common external tariff, which in practice means ending the union. The Latin American country's competitiveness, particularly in sectors of high aggregate value, is well below that of the US. This disequilibrium, with the implementation of ALCA, is recognised in the region as possibly reducing the members of Mercosul and the other countries of the region, to what they were until the 1930s (mere exporters of primary products, with an enormous decline in their per capita GDPs and employment levels). On the other hand, in many South American countries, including the ideas of Minister Cavallo in Argentina, there is a prevailing view that ALCA is preferable to Mercosul.

One possible outcome would be a restructuring of Mercosul in conditions favouring Argentinean demands, in which case Mercosul would not be absorbed by ALCA. Another possibility is the acceptance of ALCA by all South American countries, with the exception of Brazil. If the US would not suppress all non-tariff barriers, Brazil would refuse to join. An important variable in the game is the behaviour of the EU. An opening of the EU to Mercosul would change the present picture in favour of the Brazilian position significantly.

The other important aspect of Mercosul, supposing its consolidation, is the extent to which it functions as an international protagonist, representing the interest of its members. The political importance of Mercosul is in fact considerably greater than its commercial importance. Certainly, for Paraguay and Uruguay, Mercosul represents a market that absorbs 80 per cent or more of their exports. In the case of Argentina, although on a lesser scale, Mercosul receives about 40 per cent of that country's exports. For Brazil itself, as already pointed out, Mercosul has an important role as a market for Brazilian manufactured goods. Nevertheless, the political importance of Mercosul is even more significant, as only under its auspices do the member countries enjoy any international bargaining power. In the short term, this bargaining power gives them access to the resistance level in the international power stratification, opening up a space in the longer term for access to the higher level. In isolation, not even Brazil would manage to rise in the short and medium term to the resistance level. Potentially, in the long term, assuming that the country achieves a satisfactory level of national development by 2020, Brazil would be in a position to maintain itself at the resistance level, even without Mercosul, with the possibility of making subsequent progress. In the absence of Mercosul, the ALCA will absorb the other South American countries by 2005, thus perpetuating their dependency status. More than just a regional common market, Mercosul is a passport to history for its members.

#### *Argentina*

Besides external obstacles to its consolidation and expansion, such as those arising from the ALCA project, Mercosul is facing serious internal difficulties. These relate in general, to the considerable hesitations on the part of Argentina in its relationship with Mercosul, and in particular, to Brazil. Predominantly, this is due to three main factors of a political, economic and psychic-cultural nature.

On the political plane, there are those in Argentina who assume that Brazil, due to its large geographic, demographic and economic size, will inevitably be the leader of Mercosul. This will reduce Argentina to a secondary position. For others, this question has little relevance, as any attempt at exercising arbitrary power or even excessive influence by a member country of Mercosul (in this case Brazil) can be avoided through appropriate institutions. In addition, many people consider it much more advantageous for Argentina to belong to Mercosul, rather than to remain isolated and totally dependent on the major

powers. In this situation, there would be resulting benefits for Argentina, even if Brazil exercised a controllable leadership over it. There are those, however, for whom the prospects of Brazilian leadership, seen as an exercise in sub-imperialism, is quite unacceptable. In such a case, it seems preferable to be subject to US leadership.

On the economic plane, the problems facing Argentina are more objective and relevant, although compatible with satisfactory solutions. Such problems stem from the fact that Argentina, having opted in the previous military regime for a de-industrialisation policy, is currently faced with insufficient capacity and industrial competitiveness compared with that of Brazil. Therefore, trade with Brazil tends to be characterised by the low aggregate value of Argentinean exports and the high aggregate value of Brazilian exports to Argentina. This problem is real, and certainly not desirable. Nevertheless, both in the short and medium term, various corrective measures can be taken, and in the long term, the problem can be completely rectified. Among the corrective measures particular importance should be given to setting up large bi-national corporations and to a high rate of Brazilian investment in Argentina. This can be in addition to measures that will ensure a balance of trade between the two countries, which in recent years has been showing an Argentinean surplus. In the short term, Argentina's new Economic Minister, Domingo Cavallo, decided, with a reluctant Brazilian agreement, to suppress external tariffs for capital goods for a certain time. This was in order to stimulate a new developmental effort. It is already visible that a future agreement concerning Mercosul will have to reconsider, in a broad way, the question of the common external tariff.

The third factor underlying Argentinean hesitations is of a psychocultural nature. This relates to the Argentinean discontent with Brazilian economic and political pre-eminence in Mercosul.

It goes beyond the scope of this study to get into a more detailed discussion of the possible factors underlying Argentinean hesitations in its relationship with Brazil and Mercosul. Let it suffice to highlight just three important points. The first concerns the fact that any fears Brazil might exercise within Mercosul and/or in its bi-lateral relationship with Argentina, any form of sub-imperialism as proponents of the Brazilian subimperialism thesis claim, are completely unfounded. This is due to the obvious fact that in a confrontation with American hegemony, any form of arbitrary power on the part of Brazil, within Mercosul or South America, would allow the country which was the target of such arbitrary action to withdraw from the system and join ALCA. Brazilian sub-imperialism would only be possible if Brazil, instead of aspiring to an autonomy level, became a regional agent of American imperialism.

There is a thesis, according to some, that the supposedly inevitable secondary position of Argentina (behind Brazil) in Mercosul would render preferable the adhesion of Argentina to a system under the immediate leadership of the US. However, this does not take into account the terms on which the participation of a country like Argentina are made, in one case or the other. In fact, within

Mercosul, the position of Argentina, far from being secondary and despite the size of Brazil, is crucial, because the very existence of Mercosul as a level of international negotiation depends on it. Without Argentina, the Brazilian position would blur Mercosul, and make the union irrelevant. In Mercosul, Argentina is a fundamental participant, whose relationship with Brazil, despite its greater size, is on the same level. A link between Argentina and the US, without Mercosul, would make it one of the countless dependent countries, less important than the Ukraine, which has nuclear arms, and Egypt, which is a key country in the Arab world.

A third point to consider concerns the economic advantages that Argentina reaps from its participation in Mercosul, in contrast with the disadvantages that would follow upon its withdrawal. Primarily, as previously mentioned, Mercosul absorbs about 40 per cent of Argentinean exports, which in itself is extremely important. Furthermore, precisely because Argentina is a crucial participant in Mercosul, it enjoys enormous bargaining power and therefore is in a position to ensure balanced trade relations. It also enjoys particularly favourable conditions for expanding its industrial capacity and increasing its competitiveness. In contrast with this situation, withdrawal from Mercosul would not bring about any expansion in Argentina's industrial capacity or any increase in its competitiveness. In fact, it would lead quite to the contrary. Defenceless and exposed to the tough vicissitudes of the international market, Argentina would be forced to resort to an expansion of its traditional agricultural sector, missing the opportunity, which Mercosul offers, to re-industrialise.

### *Brazil*

On account of its continental size, Brazil is inevitably the central player in Mercosul. However, this does not mean, as mentioned before, that it is in a position to exert predominantly unilateral leadership. On the contrary, the fact that Mercosul lies in the region that is subject to the most uninhibited American hegemony, and is currently, in the course of the early years of the twenty-first century, facing the serious challenge of ALCA, means that Brazilian leadership can only be exercised with the consensus of the other member countries. This signifies leadership that stems not from coercive means, but from the capacity to put forward measures of general interest and contribute towards a rational and equitable administration of the system.

It is important to stress the fact that currently, the position of member countries within Mercosul is of a different nature according to whether one is looking at Brazil or the other member countries. This situation will tend to prevail in the hypothesis of other South American countries being incorporated into the system. For Brazil, which constitutes the major market to which the other countries of the region are seeking access (while the other national markets are relatively small for Brazil) the main importance of Mercosul is political in character. Mercosul is a predominantly economic arrangement for the other

members, without detracting from its political importance. For Brazil, without detracting from its economic importance, Mercosul is predominantly a political system. More than being just a market for its exports—notwithstanding the importance of this—Brazil is seeking through Mercosul conditions that will enable it to preserve its national autonomy. This is within the international power stratification participating at the resistant country level.

Brazil's position means an obligation to satisfy various requirements in order to consolidate and expand Mercosul. These requirements are of two distinct types. On the one hand, the consistency of Mercosul depends, particularly in view of the current crisis of the system, on the internal conditions. On the other hand, in order to take advantage of the benefits that Mercosul can provide, there are conditions which Brazil itself depends on.

The internal consistency of Mercosul, in relation to Brazil, depends whether the other participants find satisfactory stimuli to remain coherently within the system, as well as the significant disadvantages of withdrawing from it. Coercive leadership, as a hegemonic power might exercise, depends on the penalties it can inflict on those that do not follow it. The leadership that a non-hegemonic power like Brazil can exercise, lacking any coercive means, depends on the advantages it can offer to those that follow it and the disadvantages that result from not doing so.

Within these conditions, Brazil has to be clear about what is primarily involved in the task, together with the corresponding costs. Brazil must reassure the other participants that their membership to Mercosul is advantageous and any withdrawal consequently disadvantageous. This task, with its respective costs, generally involves the adoption by Brazil of compensatory measures for the greater average competitiveness of its industry, *vis-à-vis* that of the other members. For instance, one of the new arrangements could be a revision of the common external tariff, reducing significantly its incidence on capital goods. What matters most of all, is to facilitate access to the large Brazilian market for the other participants, and give them the conditions to achieve a balance of trade equilibrium.

Brazil is subject to the responsibility of reassuring the other members that their membership of Mercosul is an advantageous one and this may prove to be an excessively onerous task. There is an impression that Brazil will be the major beneficiary of Mercosul. However, the burden of sustaining the general optimisation of the system may subject Brazil to excessive demands. To correct this situation, Brazil needs to set up an alternative system for protecting its international interests, so that in the extreme hypothesis that Mercosul splits, the country has other means for preserving its autonomy on the international scene.

Once again, the scope of this study does not allow a further elaboration of how a country like Brazil can set up an alternative system for its international protection. Two of the most important requirements to this end are:

1. a system of close economic-technological co-operation with the other continental countries in the world—China, India and Russia; and
2. the negotiation of a wide-ranging co-operation accord with the EU. It should be added that such initiatives can and should be adopted concomitantly with the consolidation and expansion of Mercosul.

Besides working towards the consolidation of Mercosul and, in fact, as a condition for doing so efficiently, Brazil needs to carry out a profound institutional reform. The reform must significantly raise its level of governability, which currently is extremely low, and enable it to rapidly carry out a major comprehensive national development programme.

Mercosul, if it succeeds in consolidating itself, provides its members with the internal conditions to conclude their respective development programmes and raise their competitiveness. In terms of the international market and system, it provides them with protection for sufficient time to acquire international competitiveness. Furthermore, in respect of the international power stratification regime, it provides them with access to the resistance level, creating a satisfactory margin of national autonomy. For both these effects to occur, the members of Mercosul should adopt (at the national level) the corresponding measures and proceed actively to incorporate other South American countries into the system.

## CONCLUSIONS

Events in the world are developing through three main processes, at different levels of historical-social depth and speed:

1. the economic-social process, within the ambit of the various countries and their reciprocal inter-relations;
2. the process of forming a new world order, with its different power tiers; and
3. the civilisation process, moving towards the gradual formation of planetary civilisation.

These processes are taking place, from the first to the last, at levels of growing historical-social depth and declining speed. The events related to the economic-social configuration of societies affect their daily existence and are being processed rapidly. The twenty-first century inherited societies marked by abyssal differences between each other, in terms of income, education and qualifications, from the century before. A small number of affluent countries in Europe, North America and Japan have a per-capita income of around US\$25,000. This is in comparison with the rest of the world population, which has an average per capita income level of less than US\$3,000—with a large number of poverty-stricken countries with percapita incomes below US\$500. However, even greater gaps separate a minority with living standards approaching those of the European

countries, from a huge mass of excluded subjects within the underdeveloped countries themselves.

Various circumstances and factors in an increasingly globalised world have made this situation untenable, both on the international plane and within the countries themselves. There are excessive differences in income and education levels. The social situation of the world, internationally and at the domestic level of extremely heterogeneous countries (particularly those with large populations), is becoming explosive and will reach intolerable levels in the comparative short term.

The affluent countries, and within the underdeveloped ones, their affluent minorities, are inclined to consider the use of coercive means to contain the excluded masses. However, as previously mentioned, it is not viable, both ethically and operationally, to go ahead with what in the final analysis would mean the extermination of the excluded masses. The world, therefore, at both the international and the national levels, must head towards a much less inequitable economic-social regime. This means a whole set of policies and costs. However, it also means, given the high degree of social exacerbation already reached, there is a need for short-term compensatory measures, which will inevitably require a great effort.

In the international system, events are heading two ways. On the one side, they are heading towards the formation by the mid-twenty-first century of a more stable world order, which will replace the present unstable unimultipolarity regime. On the other side, at a faster rate, the relative positions of countries are changing in the three tiers of world power stratification previously mentioned. For the member countries of Mercosul, the fundamental question concerns the extent to which they are able to overcome the current crisis, to reach resistance level, and stabilise themselves in it. Then they can possibly raise themselves to the higher level in the future.

As has been previously discussed, the destiny of the countries in question depends on consolidating and expanding Mercosul and at the same time securing their own respective national development. Positive results will enable these countries to stabilise themselves at the resistance level, which in turn favours their subsequent development.

In the short-term horizon up to 2005, the significance of Mercosul, besides its international consolidation and expansion to other South American countries, will depend on whether it can defend itself from absorption into ALCA. Overcoming this important challenge, the significance of Mercosul in the longer term will depend on the type of world order that has developed by the mid-twenty-first century. If a multipolar regime prevails, a greater space for national development will open up for member countries of Mercosul. Depending on how significant this development is, Mercosul may gain access to the ruling country level. A multipolar world will tend to be administered for a long time by a formal or informal management committee, comprising, although with unequal weight, the major world systems. Countries such as the US, China, possibly India

and Russia, the EU, an equivalent grouping of Islamic countries and possibly Mercosul, are the likely candidates to sit on this management committee.

In the present stage of humanity's cultural and technological development and in a growing world rapidly being unified by the globalisation process, countries are faced, both individually and collectively, with the non-viability of maintaining intolerable economic and social differences (whether between each other, or within each country itself). Equally, the world is faced with the need to establish a stable world order, which will, through necessity, have to be rational and reasonably equitable. The alternative to a rational, reasonably equitable and egalitarian ordering of the international system and the countries that integrate it, for a large number of countries, is the explosion of uncontrollable social conflicts. For humanity in general, the alternative is collective suicide, which will result from a holocaust of global proportions.

Mercosul, faced with the broad historical-social process outlined above, is a collective union of very small proportions and modest weight. Mercosul, however, is not irrelevant for its members and the South American countries that might join. This is because the possibility of having any historical destiny and escaping the alternative of becoming mere segments of the international market depends absolutely on Mercosul.

Even in international terms, however, Mercosul is not irrelevant. A new world order is in the process of formation. The international posture of a representative system of the main countries in Latin America (except Mexico) constitute an important lineage of Western culture. As a union, they can exert an important catalysing effect in favouring the emergence of a multipolar world within a rational and reasonably equitable world order. Furthermore, they can contribute so that the entry of the US and the EU into this new system occurs consensually and without jeopardising their legitimate interests.

Moreover, it should be added that in the alternate hypothesis of the US consolidating its world hegemony, constituting a stable unipolar regime, Mercosul would continue to be a precious instrument. It would aid in securing a more favourable positioning for its member countries in this new world order. A dominant *Pax Americana*, in the conditions of the twenty-first century, as in its time did *Pax Romana*, will have to manage the world in a rational and reasonably equitable way. This is in order to maximise the self-sustainability of this world, minimising the need and the cost of corrective interventions on the part of the hegemonic power. A more efficiently consolidated and expanded Mercosul will provide the best economic-social conditions within the system for its members and the best economic-political conditions for its relationship with the hegemonic power.



## NOTES

1. See Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations, and the Remaking of World Order*, Ch. 1, Touchstone Books, London (1996), 1998, and 'A Superpotência Solitária', in *Política Externa*, Vol. 8, No. 4, March-May, 2000, pp. 12–25.
2. See Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Great Chessboard*, New York, Basic Books, 1997.
3. See Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, Ch. 5, and Brzezinski, *The Great Chessboard, Conclusion*.
4. See Aldo Ferrer, *História de la Globalización*, Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996.
5. See Osvaldo Sunkel and Pedro Paz, *El Subdesarrollo Latinoamericano y la Teoría del Desarrollo*, Mexico, Siglo XXI, 1970, and Jadish Bhagwati, *The Economics of Underdevelopment*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1966.
6. The underdevelopment of Third World countries is not only due—often not even mainly—to the effects of the asymmetry. This was responsible, generally speaking, for the historical origin of underdevelopment, particularly in the case of Asia. During the twentieth century, especially in the second half, countries such as Brazil up to the 1970s, and more recently South Korea, managed to overcome the effects of asymmetry. An important factor in perpetuating underdevelopment has been the excessive cost of local elites, in relation to the surplus generated by their societies, as notoriously occurs in the case of Africa.
7. Western Civilisation began to take shape in Europe in the tenth century AD. The bases of Christian Society, which legitimised the Carolingian Empire and which was administrated by it, developed from the Classical-Christian culture of the Late Ancient World, with a powerful Germanic aggregate. In the course of time, from the Middle Ages to the Baroque era, Western Culture developed its main lineages: Germanic, Italian, French, Iberian and Anglo-Saxon.
8. It is important to note in relation to Huntington, that he identifies at the present time the West with the US, considering as anti-Western any resistance to American hegemony. Such an identification obviously has no basis to it. The US is only a transplanted segment of one of the branches, of Anglo-Saxon lineage, of Western Civilisation, which also includes the Germanic, French, Italian and Iberian branches.
9. The same rule applies in the context of extremely heterogeneous countries, such as Brazil, India, Indonesia and others in the relationship between their affluent elites and their wretched masses.
10. Data from the *Boletim de Integração Latino-Americano*, No. 23, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, p. 189, the data from 1998 corresponding, in the cases of Argentina and Uruguay, only to the January–June period.
11. See Note 10.
12. As a matter of fact, the ALCA project presents a strong appeal to most Latin American countries, including many Argentinean sectors and Chile, which has proclaimed its intention to join. Brazil is the most resistant country.