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NOT ALL GLOBALIZATIONS ARE THE SAME: AN APPROACH TO THE CHINESE VISION

Abstract:

The concept of "globalization", which emerged rapidly with the end of the Cold War, brought with it various interpretations, depending on the actors who tried to define it independently. In this sense, the Chinese vision of globalization is generally different from that set by the West, and is based on a different conception of the global distribution of power. In this article we intend to highlight the points of contrast between the common perception in the West of the concept of globalization and that prevailing among Chinese institutions.

Key words:

Globalization; People's Republic of China; International market; Global governance

INTRODUCTION

The People's Republic of China is undoubtedly one of the actors that most influences the international political scenario, sharing this primary role with very few other subjects. With the end of the Cold War and the advent of the so-called unipolar moment, a univocal vision of the concept of globalization has emerged. Globalization – it must be specified – is not only the result of the idyllic visions or ideological hopes of one country or another, but above all a complex system of socio-economic and political relations, which has been structured thanks to the technical development of humankind, which allowed a rapid reduction in the perceived size of world spaces. In this

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context, it is evident that the dominant actors have the power to impress their own interpretation on an already existing fact, that is the ever closer connection between every part of the world. So it was, for example, for the United States, but there is no doubt that the European Union for example has its own vision of what globalization is or should be. With China's economic rise, the Asian giant has also been shown to have its own standalone vision of what globalization is and should be. In Xi Jinping's 2017 speech in Davos these visions emerged explicitly, but obviously they were already present in a nutshell in the Chinese perspective. It becomes important today to consider the different perspectives that the main actors take on the key concepts that govern international relations in order to be aware of the real impact of their political perspective, which then has evident repercussions on the world chessboard.

In this article our aim is to show, through the crossing of some declarations of the high Chinese institutional spheres, the reading of the global transformations of some analysts, and the economic-political theses expressed by the People's Republic of China, what is the practice of globalization that the Asian country wants to develop. First of all, this will prove how the concept of globalization is not unique, and secondly it will be useful for understanding the Chinese vision of the best possible condition, given the premises, of world international relations. In this sense, the world view, political-cultural assumptions, and structural economic elements converge towards a specific perspective, namely the Chinese one, which we want to approach with this study.

GLOBALIZATION: AN INCREASINGLY DEBATED CONCEPT

When we talk about globalization, we frequently have a single model of globalization in mind. In reality, the model of globalization proposed in the West is only one of these. With the appearance of an era of greater plurality in international politics, where the increase in the capacity of global trade is exponential, and where the intersection of peoples and cultures is in many ways at historic highs, interpretations of this also increase concept. We are used to reading reality with our

interpretative tools, but new actors on the global scenario also have their narrative skills and constantly promote their vision of things.

The case of China is certainly emblematic, where we want to understand the plurality of interpretations that the term globalization assumes in the world. It is true that, to date, even in the West the term has become more polysemic, due to an ever greater fragmentation of the discourse. The Chinese case, however, helps us to better understand how this can happen for other peoples and cultures, since this country has the strength in all respects to strongly affect the processes of globalization. This is given by the political scope of its regional and global influence, but above all by its positioning in the world value chain, as well as by the weight of its economy, currently the second in the world after that of the USA. Between 2019 and 2020, however, we started talking about the "new cold war" between the United States and the People's Republic of China, a gloomy forecast of analysts and journalists. Whether this will prove to be true or not, we can point out that however this term makes it clear how the main actors of the global scenario are precisely the United States and China. This is so true not only from an economic point of view, but in function of their own military expenditure and of many other factors that can influence this consideration, and which follow logically.

During the Cold War, it was Kenneth Waltz, on the basis of the realist school, who developed the concept of "polarity" to reflect on an absolutely new condition of world political reality: bipolarity (Waltz 1964). Bipolarism itself is, in a way, a type of globalization. It was based on an international order, that of Yalta, which although dividing the world into spheres of influence (which Waltz will conceive of as "poles"), tried to exclude dangerous alternatives to the existing balance. One of the examples is that of China, which for Stalin and the Soviet Union should not have immediately established itself as a socialist state, but rather remained under the aegis of the Nationalist Party, the Kuomintang, so as to be one of those "Bourgeois democracies" that would have collaborated with the USSR. In other words, bipolarism was based on the Yalta

agreements, and a type of globalization with more than one ruler was proposed in Yalta.

We can also remember how the Soviet Union itself had an autonomous globalization project. It was that of socialist globalization, based on the assumption of proletarian internationalism. According to this thesis, first the class struggle should have been “globalized”, creating a worldwide workers alliance, and after the communist revolutions the planetary resources should have been centrally managed as far as possible. This concept of globalization probably did not foresee the extinction of nationalities, as can be read in some Communist literature, but in any case it promoted that concept of “future humanity” worldwide that was sung to the notes of the “Internationale”¹.

On the other hand, it is needless to say that the United States itself had a very particular conception of globalization, which would have consisted in the global extension of the market economy, and with it liberal freedoms. What is commonly referred to as “globalization” today is often a way of indicating the western pattern of globalization that became predominant after the defeat of the Soviet Union in the Cold War. With this obviously competitors have not disappeared to this model of globalization, but it must be said that the latter can be of two fundamental types: those who oppose this globalization, and that basically they do not want the continuation of any globalization process (think for example of the defenders of the nation state in a perspective strongly linked to the twentieth century); and those who agree to deepen the progress of the path of globalization, but guiding it in different directions than the one prepared by the West. The latter are some emerging countries, which have their own specific (and not necessarily concordant) idea of how globalization should be, and the People's Republic of China is one of them.

¹ Although the specific concept is present in the French, English and Chinese versions of the song, in the Italian version there is the explicit wording “future humanity”.

XI'S VISION

Xi Jinping's speech at the Davos Forum in 2017 was, from this point of view, illuminating. But before introducing ourselves to the fundamental issues of what Xi Jinping said on that occasion, it is useful to give a minimum of context. One of the main topics of Donald Trump's election campaign in 2016 was precisely the role that China played within the world value chain, and what this meant for American interest. The main thesis, very popular in reality among the Republicans, was that China, expanding its influence thanks to the international market, and focusing especially on the primary sector, could have been too dangerous a competitor for the USA. This thesis was actually not entirely new, and is repeated with a certain cyclicity according to the political needs of the White House. Even the presidency of Bush Jr., for example, has seen some critical approach towards China with respect to the international scenario. But what gave Xi Jinping the opportunity to express himself in a certain way in Davos was that process initiated by Trump which has been called "the tariff war", that is a series of protectionist measures initiated by the United States, and who received replies from China, which were aimed at damaging the Chinese economy, as well as developing their own. This marries, moreover, a certain "ideological" program of the Trump presidency, developed together with more or less explicit advisers, which has been called "fight against globalism".

Globalism, which might seem to be synonymous with "globalization" – and in some ways it is – does not, however, also have a clear definition. It has a certain meaning in Europe, linked to counterculture, and describes a sort of ideology of globalization aimed at the uniformization of peoples and cultures to a single world model. This would imply, according to this interpretation, a cultural deprivation, a loss of sovereignty by the existing political entities, and would usually be promoted through the means of political, military and financial imperialism. In Trump's language, which surely may have recovered and revised some countercultural concepts, the

term "globalism" goes rather to highlight the existence of a whole series of international institutions or a certain humanitarian attitude that would serve to compress the American interest and prevent it to make yourself explicit. It is true how often, in the European countercultural narrative, international institutions are accused as "globalist", but this happens in function of their hypothetical collusion with the political and military potentates who promote these imperialist and unifying aims. In the case of the Trumpian narrative, "globalism" would rather be what, by placing the emphasis on international concertation, on mediation between the parties, on cooperation between countries, prevents the USA from fully expressing its power in the world, rather than its own internal sovereignty, which is instead the main interest of the European "anti-globalists". Already this dichotomy testifies to a terminological ambiguity in an apparent synonymy definition of "globalization" that must be absolutely taken into consideration. As we are seeing, these concepts, which we often use with little attention, are far from neutral or devoid of nuances of meaning that can change their content almost entirely.

It is precisely in relation to this type of narrative that Xi Jinping has expressed himself, surprising, however, a good part of the world audience, who probably has not yet grasped these conceptual passages. He, in Davos, defended the concept of "globalization", but in doing so he also managed to define it. Some words of great interest for the purposes of the examination are these:

«Some blame economic globalization for the chaos in the world. Economic globalization was once viewed as the treasure cave found by Ali Baba in The Arabian Nights, but it has now become the Pandora's box in the eyes of many. The international community finds itself in a heated debate on economic globalization.

Today, I wish to address the global economy in the context of economic globalization.

The point I want to make is that many of the problems troubling the world are not caused by economic globalization. For instance, the refugee waves from the Middle East and North

Africa in recent years have become a global concern. Several million people have been displaced, and some small children lost their lives while crossing the rough sea. This is indeed heartbreaking. It is war, conflict and regional turbulence that have created this problem, and its solution lies in making peace, promoting reconciliation and restoring stability. The international financial crisis is another example. It is not an inevitable outcome of economic globalization; rather, it is the consequence of excessive chase of profit by financial capital and grave failure of financial regulation. Just blaming economic globalization for the world's problems is inconsistent with reality, and it will not help solve the problems.

From the historical perspective, economic globalization resulted from growing social productivity, and is a natural outcome of scientific and technological progress, not something created by any individuals or any countries. Economic globalization has powered global growth and facilitated movement of goods and capital, advances in science, technology and civilization, and interactions among peoples.

But we should also recognize that economic globalization is a double-edged sword. When the global economy is under downward pressure, it is hard to make the cake of global economy bigger. It may even shrink, which will strain the relations between growth and distribution, between capital and labor, and between efficiency and equity. Both developed and developing countries have felt the punch. Voices against globalization have laid bare pitfalls in the process of economic globalization that we need to take seriously.

As a line in an old Chinese poem goes, "Honey melons hang on bitter vines; sweet dates grow on thistles and thorns." In a philosophical sense, nothing is perfect in the world. One would fail to see the full picture if he claims something is perfect because of its merits, or if he views something as useless just because of its defects. It is true that economic globalization has created new problems, but this is no justification to write economic globalization off completely. Rather, we should adapt to and guide economic globalization, cushion its negative impact, and deliver its benefits to all countries and all nations.

There was a time when China also had doubts about economic globalization, and was not sure whether it should join

the World Trade Organization. But we came to the conclusion that integration into the global economy is a historical trend. To grow its economy, China must have the courage to swim in the vast ocean of the global market.» (Xi 2017).

In these statements we immediately see how Xi wants to differentiate two types of globalization: one enriches peoples, the other puts them in crisis. Curiously, however, both have something to do with the market. It is clear from the first lines how the globalization that Xi Jinping wants to defend, and which is in fact the one that for China produces the highest possible level of well-being, is that of the international market. The idea behind this theory is the famous one by David Ricardo, which he made explicit with the concept of “comparative advantage” (Ricardo 2012). Notoriously, Ricardo systematized the principle that two countries with a different amount of resources and capital, being differently favored in producing some goods more than others, would find greater satisfaction of their needs by trading with each other. This kind of push, which leads two countries to trade, obviously leads all nations to do so, and this results in the framework of world trade. This thesis, for a long time, has seen some opposition in the so-called socialist camp. This is true if we consider how communist ideology has a certain aversion to the reality of the market. Xi Jinping himself highlighted, in the speech, how China has for years seen the opening to the international market in a negative way. In fact, this opening could have threatened the country's political stability, as well as the socialist institutions that it had given itself with the Mao revolution.

In contrast, over time, openness to the international market has also become one of the building blocks of the doctrines of so-called neoliberalism. Indeed, it was for this reason that many analysts viewed China's presence favorably on the scene of a world globalized by the economy. This would have meant that China was entering within a world unity where the market would have represented the mediator, but also the ultimate goal. Even earlier, the market reforms launched by Deng Xiaoping had given some hope to the West, whose concept of globalization has long been linked to the

economic-commercial channel. In addition, the US attempted to make China a diplomatic partner in the Cold War against the Soviet Union.

Certainly Deng Xiaoping's market reforms were a welcome element for the United States of America, as well as a step forward in the construction of contemporary China. What did not happen in China, however, was a scenario similar to the subsequent one of liberalization in Russia. China and Russia can probably represent two different models of integration within the international market, even if the strong corrections implemented after the Yeltsin presidency have in fact changed the tables.

STATE AND ECONOMY IN CHINESE GLOBALIZATION

If it is true that China has opened itself, ambivalently, to international and domestic trade, this has always happened under strict control of the state apparatus. This means that these processes have been defined according to precise strategies and thanks to control tools that prevented market forces from derailing with respect to political purposes. This is very different from projects such as that of European functionalism, according to which greater economic cohesion between countries would have led to profound political transformations. By this we do not mean that China is a country that cannot change or that does not change with respect to the historical phases in which it lives, far from it. Rather, we want to argue that this is mutually operated organically in the national interest and in the ideology of the political apparatus, and not produced by the “creative destruction” of the market.

As mentioned, however, China has for some time been adverse to any form of economic globalization. Obviously it shared the communist ideal of the world unity of the working class, but its reading, which was also called “national-communist”, distanced it from the concept of “socialism in one country” developed in the Soviet Union under the government by Stalin. The idea of the People's Republic of China was that according to which every nation should find its way to

independence and socialism, without external interference. To do this, it was necessary to develop a trade between subordinate countries – South-South trade – which also took place according to the modalities of the mere exchange of materials and products.

The current vision of China, however, as remarked in Davos' speech, is that according to which a globalization, the Ricardian one, produces wealth and well-being. The other globalization, which however does not deviate from the international economic exchange model, produces misery and crisis due to precise political choices and obvious flaws in governance. From this, the tragedy of refugees, economic crises like that of 2008 and so on would descend. The alternative that China proposes is clearly a model difference, so that states and international institutions finally take on the task not of denying, but of leading globalization.

This, to be honest, is expressed with a typically Marxist approach, that is, with the dialectical approach. It is indeed possible to see between the lines this duality of which we have spoken, but the way in which it is proposed is of a dialectical type, that is, it develops in stages. What Xi Jinping reiterates in more than one passage of Davos' speech is that globalization produces a whole series of problems, but basically the advantages outweigh them in qualitative terms. It would therefore be necessary to deal with the questions opened by globalization and resolve them, without however abolishing globalization itself. In summary, this is the same approach that Marx adopted, in the *Communist Manifesto*, towards capitalism (Marx, Engels 2014), which itself had at its core the prodromes of current globalization, producing ever greater deterritorialization phenomena.

The entry of China into the WTO, its important presence on the international trade scene, have raised it to a so to speak constitutive factor in this area, but the economy and commerce are not the only voice for which China proposes a change of orientation, or at least feeds different ideas towards the West. One of the aspects that follow the premises we have discussed is that of global equity. The place that China gives to the concept of equity and sharing is very important, and is

expressed, among other things, in the concepts of profit redistribution and social stability.

«We should strike a balance between efficiency and equity to ensure that different countries, different social strata and different groups of people all share in the benefits of economic globalization. The people of all countries expect nothing less from us, and this is our unshirkable responsibility as leaders of our times» (Xi 2017).

However, this attention does not only affect the social strata, but also the relationship between states and people. Greater redistribution of wealth pairs with greater redistribution of power. China on the one hand is a strong promoter of a multipolar international order, on the other, being part of the Security Council, it supports the constructive action of the United Nations and the cooperation between states.

In other words, it is strongly in favor of the cooperative elaboration of governance strategies and their application. It is also critical of all those phenomena that steal sovereignty from States, depriving them of decision-making power and therefore of rationalizing capabilities. For China, national sovereignty is one of those principles that cannot be affected by market forces.

The multipolarity advocated by China, proposed with it by other States such as India and Russia, represents the idea that it is important to have in mind how other actors in the world must coexist with the one currently main, and that any form of hegemonism creates general disadvantages that are not acceptable. After all, the “bad globalization” of which Xi Jinping warned us in Davos is precisely that dictated by a certain hegemonism, which risks also undermining the subsistence bases of the first world power.

To describe this phenomenon, Xi Jinping has recovered the concept of “Thucydides' trap”. The latter is the concept of international relations whereby two geopolitical powers, one hegemonic and the other on the rise, will tend to clash because of the fear of losing the dominion (Allison 2017). This of course is most problematic for Chinese decision-makers, and must be

absolutely avoided. Any clash between these two powers could actually create great disruptions from the point of view of the stability of a system where, willy-nilly, more players now act. China proposes, precisely with regard to this reality which it finds itself influencing with its own existence², a system of greater concertation, whose main challenge is to operate as far as possible synthesis between the different parties.

MULTIPOLARIZATION AND INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

As noted by Stuenkel, it is the BRICS group that proposes a decentralization of global power, through a global political alliance that has consolidated over time (Stuenkel 2015), despite long-standing open questions between some of its countries (we speak clearly of India and China). With the beginning of the so-called unipolar phase dictated by the implosion of the Soviet Union, these countries have in fact made ever greater alliances, also determined by the desire to see their decisions respected in an increasingly monochromatic world. This also led to a multiplication of possibilities for actors crushed or almost by bipolar confrontation, in which it was difficult to actually remain unaligned. Furthermore, this also guaranteed a de facto ideological victory for China, which has been able to demonstrate the validity of some of its theses on national independence and political autonomy. Indeed, returning to the discourse on mutation and adaptation capabilities, the People's Republic has been able to demonstrate how a more flexible approach to economic issues could guarantee greater chances of survival and development than those of the Soviet Union.

In this sense, the project of the BRICS and therefore of China has been interpreted as aimed at a specific type of systemic change. This change, however, is not aimed at the

² «China has not only benefited from economic globalization but also contributed to it. Rapid growth in China has been a sustained, powerful engine for global economic stability and expansion.»

Xi Jinping, *Speech at the World Economic Forum, Davos 2017*, The People's Republic of China – The State Council Information Office:

http://www.china.org.cn/node_7247529/content_40569136.htm

complete reversal of the world political structure, but at its rebalancing in a polyarchic sense.

«Delegitimizing rhetoric may indeed be a precondition for the creation of an anti-hegemonic coalition, yet it is not entirely clear that delegitimation inevitably leads to anti-hegemonic behavior. Looking at the BRICS' current rhetoric, one may instead come to believe that anti-systemic rhetoric meant to delegitimize the hegemon seeks to satisfy a nationalist domestic public, and thus serve as a substitute for actual balancing behavior. When looking at the BRICS' behavior, it becomes clear that they are far more status-quo oriented than their rhetoric suggests.» (Stuenkel 2015).

Of course, it is important to understand which status quo you are talking about. The defense of a world order constituted by the BRICS, and China with them, is certainly not the stance in favor of the present world conditions. Rather, according to the “dialectical” principle enunciated by Xi Jinping in Davos, it is the need to carry out reforms in accordance with the general interest rather than deconstructing a whole system that has instead proven to have many positive characteristics. In a multipolar system hypothesized by these countries, in fact, the West – or rather the two worlds that compose it: the Anglosphere and Western Europe – would also have their role, but first of all included within their space bed , and secondly equal to other similar geographic-political entities.

«Emerging powers challenge the notion that Western norms are superior to those of the rest of the world» (Stuenkel 2015). This in effect is the cultural link that united the political practice of the BRICS with the national needs of the once politically subordinated peoples. In fact, this type of narrative is very present, in different ways, both in China, in Latin America, in India, in Africa, and in Russia. This determines an anti-hegemonic attitude which, in reality, does not mean subversion. These countries, fueled by more or less sustained growth rates, want to recognize their space in the world, which means first of all their ability to be able to determine their own internal political choices, often harshly criticized by the West.

Megan Dee describes the current phase of world politics with these words, underlining their high level of problems:

«There is little doubt that the world is a very different place today than it was 30, 20 or even 10 years ago. The end of the Cold War was to bring with it both shrinking borders and new power brokers; closer interdependence and greater global insecurities. Globalisation has brought the abroad ever closer to home. Power is diffuse. Gone are the days when the ‘West’ could dictate policy and shape the world in its own image. The world of today is instead witnessing the rise of new and diverse global powers capable of wielding influence in both global markets and global governance. [...] Multilateralism has become increasingly difficult, yet never more important. Diplomacy has a renewed significance. This is an emerging multipolar world.» (Dee 2015).

For China, the problem caused by the existence of hegemonic political entities becomes precisely the impossibility of operating a better multilateral policy, which in this period instead is of perhaps greater importance than at any other historical moment, given the very serious global consequences that war or economic crises produce in a globalized world. The global health emergency of Covid-19, moreover, was a proof of how the crises today reverberate on a global scale at an unparalleled speed, and of how the interconnection between elements of problematic also requires interconnection of responses.

These principles necessarily lead to a positive consideration of world intergovernmental institutions and pre-existing governance mechanisms. They belong to what is positive in the so-called “globalization”, according to China. In many ways, they themselves guarantee the process of deepening multilateralism, for which they were actually born, and which China is looking for. The state of affairs regarding the issue of effective multilateralism within intergovernmental organizations is roughly this:

«Further informal recognition of the status of the emerging economies as rising power brokers in international institutions has been the increasing acceptance by the ‘Big Two’ – the United

States and the EU – that they can no longer achieve all that they want globally without taking into account the preferences of other powers³. The unilateralism that marked US foreign policy in the early 2000s has subsequently begun to be replaced by a renewed focus upon multilateral methods of decision-making and support for international institutions⁴. The EU has also recognised the growing influence of the emerging economies and the need to work with them as partners in furthering ‘effective multilateralism’⁵. Similar recognition is also being afforded the emerging economies in the increasing frequency of calls for formal reforms of the United Nations and international economic institutions to better reflect the new balance of global power⁶. [...] Thus, while the formal structures of today’s global governance reflect little plurality between the world’s major economies, informally the emerging economies are gaining in recognition and informal status as power brokers within today’s systems of global governance.» (Dee 2015).

This is the scenario in which this project of “democratization of international relations” hoped for by China⁷, and other emerging powers fits. The joint declaration of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation of

³ Gilford John Ikenberry, Michael Mastanduno, William C. Wohlforth, *Introduction: Unipolarity, state behavior and systemic consequences*, in *World Politics*, vol. 61 no. 1 y. 2008, p. 16 [author's reference].

⁴ White House, *National Security Strategy*, 2010, pp. 12-13:
http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf
[author's reference].

⁵ Council of the European Union, *Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy – Providing Security in a Changing World*, Brussels, 11th December 2008, p. 11 [author's reference].

⁶ Richard Gowan, *Asymmetrical Multilateralism: The BRICS, the US, Europe and the Reform of Global Governance*, in Thomas Renard & Sven Biscop [edited by], *The European Union and Emerging Powers in the 21st Century: How Europe can Shape a New Global Order*, Ashgate, Farnham 2012, pp. 165-184; Shaun Breslin, *China's emerging global role: Dissatisfied great power*, in *Politics*, vol. 30 no. 1 y. 2010, pp. 52-62; Paulo Sotero, *Brazil's rising ambition in a shifting global balance of power*, in *Politics*, vol. 30 no. 1 y. 2010, pp. 71-81; Michael Zürn & Matthew Stephens, *The view of old and new powers on the legitimacy of international institutions*, in *Politics*, vol. 30 no. 1 y. 2010, pp. 91-101. [Author's references].

⁷ *Joint Declaration of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China*, Moscow, 26th March 2007:
https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t309361.shtml

26th March 2007 explores the meaning of what “multilateralism” would mean for these countries:

«Countries should work together to resolve the problems facing the international community. [Operational principles should be] the firm establishment of widely recognized principle of decision through consensus and coordination mechanism in international affairs [,] cooperation with other countries to uphold stability and security at all levels and on all fronts and create favorable conditions for sustainable development [,] promote multilateralism and democracy in international relations, respect the primacy of international law and work to establish a harmonious world of enduring peace and common prosperity. The diversity of cultures and civilizations in the world should be maintained, and initiatives and actions for promoting inter-civilization dialogue should be encouraged.»

We will return to the principle of inter-civilization dialogue later. However, it is important to note that, as mentioned, this document underlines the importance of supporting world conditions that can guarantee balanced development, according to a model of greater international equity. The role of pre-existing international institutions becomes clear when it is announced that:

«[The] cooperation under the UN framework is a guarantee for advancing [...] interests, namely, to strengthen the role of the United Nations and the central status of the UN Security Council in upholding world peace and security. [The] reform of the United Nations should be based on the broadest consensus among its member states. It is very important for the two countries to strengthen coordination in the reform of the world body.»

To put it with Stuenkel:

«while the BRICS Summits may be understood as an exercise of delegitimization of global order, there is no clear indicator that BRICS members are truly interested in adopting any tangible measures to undermine global order—and yet, they will

increasingly limit the United States' capacity to claim special rights in it.» (Stuenkel 2015).

Simone Dossi, on the other hand, notes in his essay on China's maritime doctrine that China is interested in creating coordination between the major maritime powers to defend international waters from threats to civil and commercial security (Dossi 2018). If we consider maritime connections as the development of a “technical globalization”, or rather the fundamental structure necessary for the definition of the unity of the terrae orbis, then we see how also in this case a typical attitude of the Chinese vision of international relations is reproduced. However, this goes without contradictions to a fortification of its navy in defense of its national and territorial interests. Ultimately, it would have no interest in wanting to replace the United States on the seas, but would rather assist them in promoting an increasingly peaceful and safe maritime environment. This search for balance and stability can be used to read every aspect of globalization related to Chinese interpretation.

Not only acceptance, but also the updating and promotion of the role of already existing intergovernmental bodies is therefore the fundamental figure of the Chinese idea of globalization. To date, the latter are experiencing a crisis with a strong global impact as the space that emerging countries take up inside becomes problematic for the maintenance of North American hegemony.

The United Nations is the logical continuation of the structure of the League of Nations, strongly desired by the American President Woodrow Wilson. The latter, also known as the League of Nations in Germany, had some contradictions according to some already in its programs. The interpretation of the German jurist Carl Schmitt, for example, exposed some interpretative problems for words such as “internationality” and “interstatuality”. In fact, he already noted this after the First World War:

«As a result of the 1919 Paris peace treaties an incongruous organization came into existence-the Geneva establishment, which is called in German Völkerbund (in French, Société des

Nations and English, the League of Nations) but should properly be called a society of nations. This body is an organization which presupposes the existence of states, regulates some of their mutual relations, and even guarantees their political existence. It is neither universal nor even an international organization. If the German word for international is used correctly and honestly it must be distinguished from interstate and applied instead to international movements which transcend the borders of states and ignore the territorial integrity, impenetrability, and impermeability of existing states as, for example, the Third International. Immediately exposed here are the elementary antitheses of international and interstate, of a depoliticalized universal society and interstate guarantees of the status quo of existing frontiers. It is hard to comprehend how a scholarly treatment of the League of Nations could skirt this and even lend support to this confusion. The Geneva League of Nations does not eliminate the possibility of wars, just as it does not abolish states. It introduces new possibilities for wars, permits wars to take place, sanctions coalition wars, and by legitimizing and sanctioning certain wars it sweeps away many obstacles to war.» (Schmitt 2007).

This nature still open to the possibility of conflict, although conducted by other means and other legitimations, has so far had different orientations. According to critics of North American hegemony, the humanitarian universalism professed by international institutions has often been helpful in the political pursuits of the United States. To date, the United Nations still plays a primary role in a political standoff where it is considered by the United States, or at least by the Trump presidency, to be a “condescending” institution towards the People's Republic of China. The role that the People's Republic of China play as member of the Security Council have moved these institutions towards a greater opening of the same to non-monochromatic perspectives, progressing towards the ideal that had been promoted to their foundation. Yet, they did not produce universal concord, as Schmitt pointed out, also obviously their role has been of great help in solving many world problems and in compressing the possibilities of conflict. The “struggle”, however, has moved within them, as a context

of diplomatic confrontation between emerging and hegemonic countries.

THE CONCEPT OF CHINESE GLOBALIZATION IN PRACTICE

The global health emergency raised by Covid-19 has highlighted all these elements, accelerating the processes already underway. With this global crisis, the Trump presidency has underlined its opinion on this institution, in the special capacity of the WHO, in its opinion too close to the Chinese demands. China's challenge of "democratizing" the United Nations encounters many obstacles in this regard, nevertheless it represents its vision of how international institutions should drive globalization. Globalization, as we have said, is a term with various nuances, various meanings and various interpretations, and this is the project of China's institutional globalization.

The problem of interstatuality, raised by Schmitt after the First World War, that is, when this concept became politically relevant, is addressed by China with the aforementioned principle of multilateralism. The latter in fact promotes peace between countries and political entities, but according to a realistic perspective of limiting the conflict, starting from recognized bases of cultural and decision-making difference. In many ways this problem was already anticipated by the Maoist reading of the question of internationalism, in a perspective quite different from the Stalinist and Soviet one, according to which the peoples should have developed according to their own autonomous historical paths. This realistic, pluralist corrective was in many ways an anticipation of the multilateral approach, expressed however in this case in the perspective of internationalism rather than in that of interstate. It is evident that these principles constitute long-term guidelines of Chinese thought and practice.

It is no coincidence therefore that the principle of civilization and coexistence between civilizations has been widely promoted by emerging countries, especially in the dialogue between the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. In fact, these two states have structured,

together with some Central Asian countries, and keeping other countries including Iran among observers, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

«Over time, the SCO is becoming more and more an area of strategic-military and economic-commercial cooperation, in which the weight of China emerges predominantly. Not only on the political-cultural level – the principles continuously affirmed by Beijing of "non-interference", "non-alignment", "openness to the world" and "mutual respect"⁸ have been included, for example, in the Constitutional Charter of the SCO – but also for as regards infrastructure construction, cross-border economic cooperation programs and joint military maneuvers. Moreover, bearing in mind that in 2005 India, Iran, Pakistan and Mongolia became observers of the SCO, in the near future we could deal with the largest regional organization in the world, which, without the direct participation of the USA, would include the two most dynamic economies on the planet and some significant nuclear powers.» (Parenti 2009).

The guiding principle of the SCO, as often reiterated by the official documents of the participating countries, is that of comparison and mutual recognition between distinct civilizations⁹. The concept of civilization, however, while incorporating the existence of national identities, does not correspond entirely to it. Indeed, it goes beyond nationalities towards larger groups of peoples and cultures. To respond to the principle of confrontation and mutual recognition between civilizations, the most suitable institutional framework seems to be that of the great regional alliances, of which the SCO is only one of them. A greater regionalization of world power, which does not contravene a stable international order, would act according to China precisely as a rebalancer of the problems relating to the centralization of weight in a single geographical, economic and strength point.

⁸ These too are guiding principles of Chinese globalization.

⁹ Cfr. *Joint Declaration of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China*, Moscow, 26th March 2007:

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t309361.shtml

Indeed, the SCO also corresponds to a small model of how, according to China, international institutions should work. It becomes clear that the SCO model is the multilateral model that the countries who participate in it would like to implement as much as possible also in the United Nations.

The People's Republic of China is already, by its constitution, a multinational state. Various ethnic groups participate in it, similarly to the Russian Federation which instead welcomes various religions and traditional groups within it. The Chinese scholar Zhang Weiwei defines this paradigm as that of the civilizational state, an innovative model of statehood that blends the demands of the modern nation-state with that of the civilization-state:

«China is already a civilizational state, which amalgamates the nation-state and the civilization-state, and combines the strength of both. This fact itself is a miracle, highlighting the Chinese civilization's known capacity and tradition for creating synergies.» (Zhang 2011).

Civilizations can be, for the Chinese globalization model, guiding concepts for the creation of a mosaic of alliances and regional organizations, which can support a more solid structure of international relations. But this is not the role of the civilization principle alone. Just as mutual recognition of the history of nations was once one of the key elements of diplomacy, so for countries that promote the concept of civilization as a current political principle, becoming aware of the plurality of these civilizations and their historical relationships obviously dictated also by geographic dimension.

Finally, the picture is completed with the large infrastructure projects that China has launched or is launching in this historical period. We must never forget how globalization is also the ability to communicate between distant places and the ever faster connection between spaces. These things in turn encourage both the contact between minds and knowledge and the development of trade, which thus guarantees the opening of new markets. In history these two elements rarely did not coincide. The most important Chinese project in this regard remains that of the Belt and Road

Initiative, which represents China's new ambitions as a promoter of integration and economic development. Its continental railways and port connections will connect, in Chinese projects, the great Asian country to Italian cities, such as Venice.

CONCLUSIONS

Openness towards the advantages of globalization, promotion of intercultural exchange, positivity towards the international market, trust in international institutions and promotion of their ever greater implementation, multilateral approach, role of the State as an ordering element of modern potential, conception of “civilization” as promoter of a widespread mosaic of regional organizations, wide-ranging infrastructure projects: all these elements make up a very specific conceptual framework, which defines the Chinese idea of globalization. Very complex legacies intervene on this, sometimes even ancestral, others simply deriving from recent history, but above all responding to the present conditions of a constantly changing world. The Chinese approach is as important as its global weight, and places us in the perspective of studying having to compare ourselves with those who have an objective influence on the present reality to which the West contributes too. From this derives a more complete vision of the world and a deeper understanding of the nature of globalization.

The opinion of the People's Republic of China is that globalization is primarily an emerging phenomenon predominantly of an economic nature, and it must therefore be regulated like any phenomenon of this type. The Chinese approach is twofold, when it sees risks and opportunities in globalization. In this sense, there is a doubling between globalization as a structural fact and what globalization could be positive, guiding its processes towards a defined (and, in this case, shared) purpose. It is impossible not to notice the classic Marxist dialectical and “materialistic approach behind this way of thinking. Dialectically, globalization is a contradictory but potentially positive phenomenon: its

negativities and its excesses can be reversed into advantages and opportunities if only one has the decision-making power to take the reins. “Materialistic” because it is possible to divide it into a structural fund of a techno-economic nature and a superstructural interpretation. Finally, the idea that the birth of a disruptive historical movement creates opportunities to be exploited is another element to consider in the characterization of Chinese political thought. In taking into consideration the US vision of the concept of globalization, we have not greatly taken into account every interpretative variable of the given concept in other geopolitical spheres, and it would be appropriate to continue this analysis in this sense. Understanding worldviews is one of the moments needed to understand the world.

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