

CONSTRUCTING “EUROPE” VIA ITS MILITARY ARM?¹

Walking Towards Other Possible Worlds

Dismantling the “Clash of Civilizations”, and Halting the Drift Towards Security Politics and Militarism

Ramón Fernández Durán

Member, Ecologistas en Accion

“The French nuclear deterrant is an indispensable element in Europe’s security... When the time is ripe, together we will have to face up to the question of a common defense based in the perspective of a strong Europe that is responsible for its own security. This will have to take the existing deterrence forces into account... It shall be the guarantee of our strategic provisioning and the defence of the allies... States that resort to terrorist measures against us... must understand that they are laying themselves open to a firm and appropriate response from us.”

Jacques Chirac, speech at the Ile Longue base, 19 January 2006

“In the struggle against terrorism, the Rule of Law may make use of information obtained in a prison where torture is practiced. This does not imply sanctioning torture.”

Joschka Fischer, former German Minister of foreign affairs, EL PAÍS, 12 December 2005

*“With the new threats, the first line of defence will often be abroad ... A number of countries and regions are caught in a cycle of conflict, insecurity and poverty... This implies that we should be ready to act before a crisis occurs... A number of countries have placed themselves outside the bounds of international society. Some have sought isolation; others persistently violate international norms. It is desirable that such countries should rejoin the international community... Those who are unwilling to do so should understand that there is a price to be paid, **including** in their relationship with the European Union”.*

“A Secure Europe in a Better World,” Common Security Strategy for Europe (Solana Document), Salónica, 2003 (emphasis added)

The EU Budget (and the WTO): Blair’s Utimate Triumph

The last-minute approval of the 2007-2013 community budget was Blair’s final triumphant blow before the Union. Meanwhile, and not entirely disconnected, on the other side of the world the WTO ministerial meeting took place in Hong Kong. In the

¹ This text will published as the epilogue of the english version of the book: “The complex construction of ‘Europe’ as a superpower” (Virus, 2005), from the author, that is being promoted by the Transnational Institute from Amsterdam, and has been translated by Kolya Abramsky.

final summit of his presidency, Blair pushed matters to the limit, well aware of the fact that the Union had no choice but to agree on a budget, since failure to do so would have resulted in a grave crisis. In this way, further paralysis of the Union, already in crisis following the breakdown in the Constitutional ratification process, was avoided. Merkel played a key role in unblocking the situation. As well as pressuring Blair and Chirac to come to an agreement, also made a last minute decision Germany would contribute more money in order to make the British budget proposal easier to swallow, especially for the new member countries. The British proposal presented these countries with the prospect of receiving a considerably reduced share of the budget. The proposal envisaged a significant reduction from the amount proposed by Luxemburg during the previous Presidency, and even this budget had been rejected by a large majority as insufficient.² Thus, the community budget remained at a scant 1.045 percent of the Union's GDP, a percentage similar to what it had been in 1985, before Spain and Portugal joined the "European project." In the following years, the community budget underwent a series of successive increases (by way of structural funds and the creation of cohesion funds, etc.) until it reached a highpoint of 1.25 percent of the EU-15's GDP. However, as the EU has expanded to include twenty five members, the budget is now substantially smaller. Furthermore, the Union's expansion to the East has lowered its GDP and mechanisms for inter-territorial and inter-state solidarity have also been reduced (Torreblanca, 2005).

In our opinion, Blair aimed to kill two birds with one stone in order to score a double victory. On the one hand, his actions succeed in dividing the member states, and in particular the Eurogroup, whilst on the other he managed to salvage (and even increase) the aberrational "British Rebate". The six net contributing countries (France, Germany, Sweden, Austria, Great Britain and Holland) had already stipulated to the Commission their desire that the community's overall budget should not exceed 1% of the Union's GDP, and the proposed budgetary reduction was a sweetener for them. The delay in presenting the budget meant that the Eastern countries had no time to negotiate a better deal, and were left with no choice but to accept this bad agreement, since no agreement would have meant leaving empty handed. And, Blair merely showed a certain degree of flexibility, when Chirac conceded to reconsider the Union's budgets, including that of the CAP, for the period after 2008. By this time Chirac will no longer be president. And with this sign, the Green Light was given to reach a provisional agreement in Hong Kong (as demanded by Brazil and India, amongst others) that set 2013 as the final date by which agricultural subsidies should be fully eliminated. This theme will be renegotiated within the EU in 2008. The Hong Kong agreement, which will allow industrial products (and especially) services from the EU to gain access to markets in periphery countries, remains to be finalized in a WTO meeting scheduled for April 2006. The EU's future lies in the service sector, and it is with this in mind that the new Bolkestein directive should be understood. Under scrutiny from the European Parliament, this directive got somewhat watered down, but its ultra-liberal genetic code remains fundamentally unaltered. Facing pressure from Germany, France stuck its head on the line. This opened the possibility that the agreement could increase the funds going to the East by a small amount. The President of the Commission concurred with this result, asserting that "globalization" entails far reaching changes, and that the Community budget could not remain frozen for 7 years. And, in her stunning debut as a European leader, an enormously satisfied Merkel declared that "Europe" was now able to dedicate itself to

² The British proposal was 1.03 percent of the EU's GDP whilst the Luxemburg proposal was 1.06 percent. Both of these figures are substantially lower than the Commission's previous proposal of 1.22 percent, which in turn was lower than that proposed by the Parliament (Torreblanca, 2005).

defining its role in the world and face up to the challenges of “globalization” and the future of the Constitution.

In any case, the budget already predefines a “Europe” skewed towards British demands. In other words, a Europe with weak political and military institutions in which nation states retain a strong role. Money for foreign policy (that is, for global projection of the Union) will be limited, but internal “security” and justice” will be granted funds to establish a vigilance system to fight against clandestine immigration in the Mediterranean. And, even the member states continue to show a preference for using national (as opposed to community) R&D funds in order to support their companies. The European Parliament has rejected the future budget as “insufficient”, demanding to the European Council that it should be renegotiated upwards. The President of the Commission, Barroso, has stated that in its current form the budget is unviable and that, come what may, it is necessary to establish European-wide taxation, in order to guarantee the Union’s budget. However, it is impossible for the 25 member states to negotiate the Community budget. It is as if the 17 autonomous “Spanish” communities or the Federated German states had to negotiate their national state budgets amongst themselves. Paralysis is inevitable. In the face of this, it is just as well that the parallel process of putting into orbit the Galileo system got off the ground successfully. This will enable the EU to have a growing presence in space, which is fundamental if it is to be able to turn itself into a leading global actor. Furthermore, the Galileo system is essential in order for the EU to further its security and military goals.

Impending Energy Crisis– Building Europe With the Aid of French Nuclear Power

The question of energy crisis has been placed squarely at the table of Europe’s policy makers. To blame for this are the last months of sharply rising oil prices together with the impact which the recent dispute between Russia and Ukraine over gas had on the EU’s gas supply. It is not surprising that the theme is being prioritized, given the fact that the Union depends on external sources for more than 75% of its petroleum, of which most comes from the Middle East, and more than 50% of its gas, most of which comes from Russia (CE, 2006). As North Sea reserves are exhausted, these figures are likely to skyrocket in the years ahead, making the Union increasingly dependent on external fuel sources. As such, it will also become increasingly vulnerable. Faced with this situation, Chirac has sought to take advantage of the urgency at hand in order to justify “Europe” itself. In this way he hopes to win back his leadership role which had been flagging following the French No vote in the Constitutional referendum, as well as simultaneously revitalizing France’s image vis-à-vis the Union’s other members. And, in the wake of Blair’s “successes” and Merkel’s eruption as a star on the chess board, France needed to recover its lost ground. It has done this by throwing the icy chill of nuclear energy onto the table, offering French nuclear power as a guaranteed future source of energy to all of the Union’s member countries. With this offer, Chirac was playing towards the Eurogroup and Eastern countries alike. France and Great Britain are the only two nuclear powers in the EU. As the quotation at the beginning of this text states, French nuclear strength “shall be the guarantee of our strategic provisioning and the defence of the allies...” Chirac went on to threaten preventive strikes against “centres of power” in countries which pose a “terrorist” threat (Chirac, 2006). One may easily wonder whether he is threatening Iran. Energy, that is fossil fuels, figures squarely within such strategic provisioning, as do all types of raw materials. This is especially so in a historical moment in which their prices are rising spectacularly due to growing world demand and their

predicted future scarcity which is encouraging speculation in the financial futures markets.

The then President of the Union, the Austrian Schlüssel, also threw his hat into the energy debate, asserting that securing energy supplies is a “European” problem requiring a “European” response (EL PAÍS, 17-1-06). Such a statement (as well as Chirac’s) threw the Eastern states into the spotlight, forcing them to take heed (in any case they already were) of the fact that situations may arise in the future in which their ties with the USA will not be enough to ensure their energy supplies, and that they will come to depend on Europe’s political and military power in order to ensure their fragile supply. Furthermore, Schlüssel advocated that the EU should negotiate markets as a single bloc, in order to impose its bargaining capacity. The Commission’s Green Paper on energy will be the key theme at the EU’s next summit, in March. And, apart from emphasizing energy’s increasingly strategic role, they also strove to play on its importance in order to justify before its citizens the need for “Europe”, and especially the need for strengthening its political-military dimension as reflected in the Constitution. Furthermore, just as in the 90s Washington appealed to defence of the American Dream and US “vital” interests in order to justify its military adventures (from the first Gulf War onwards) which were necessary for shamelessly guaranteeing its petrol supply, today the time has come that Europe too must construct an imagery, a new “European Dream”, based on the need to secure its own oil and gas supplies. Thus, it is hoped that European citizens, including those most recently admitted, will come to understand that “Europe” itself is necessary.

A Moribund Constitution Awaiting Resuscitation from the German Presidency

As the Constitution lies hooked up to a respirator in the intensive care unit, the different players involved continue filing into place. Barroso pronounced the patient dead, though later corrected himself, declaring that it was dead as a concrete text but not as an expression of political will. The European Parliament (EP) has recently opted to proceed ahead with the ratification process which is already underway (Belgium has just approved it). However, it admits that the text will perhaps need some touching up in order for it to become more palatable to the changes of presidency and government which will take place in France and Holland in 2007. However, it does not call for a whole new renegotiation process. Such touching up will also pave the way for unblocking the bottleneck in those countries where ratification is still pending, almost all of which are committed to holding referenda. This so, the EP has clearly expressed the need for a broad debate during the official period of reflection called for by the Union, a period which ends in June 2006. This debate, seen as necessary in order to effectively explain to citizens why “Europe” is desirable, is seen as especially urgent in those places where the Constitution has still not been ratified. Both the Commission and the Parliament share the opinion that it is necessary to defend “Europe”, and that the problems it is experiencing in relation to consolidating its political (and military) institutions cannot simply be wished away. The Franco-German axis has already affirmed that it will present a common global strategy concerning the future of the Union (and its Constitution) in June, as well as a joint consensus position about the future of enlargement. In other words, a common understanding as to where “Europe”’s boundaries should lie, and, in the event that continued enlargement goes ahead at all, how it should be undertaken and in what conditions. Apparently, the position of those who believe that it is impossible to further enlarge the Union until the “Constitution” (or a similar text) has been approved, has been strengthened. Such a position runs contrary to

Britain's opinion that enlargement should continue unrestricted³. Meanwhile, Poland and the Czech Republic want to renegotiate the Constitution, and Sweden is delaying *sine die* its parliamentary approval.

However, the Austrian Presidency scarcely offers more hope. In addition to the fact that the reflection process remains open right until the end of its Presidential term, the Austrian government finds itself constrained by hostile public opinion and is itself divided over the Constitution. According to data from Eurobarometer, only one in three Austrians are in favour of the EU. The xenophobic right in government is even considering putting the Constitution before a referendum, despite the fact that it has already been ratified in parliament. Whilst not wanting to downplay the significance of the joint proposal that France and Germany will issue at the end of the reflection period, it nonetheless appears as if the situation is such that it will be almost impossible for the process to be unblocked until Germany assumes the Presidency in early 2007. Thus, the "Constitution" awaits the German turn in office, a time when perhaps Blair, Chirac and Berlusconi will have already bid farewell to the political scene. In any case, the "Constitution" must enter into effect before 2009, a date which coincides with the next European elections. Perhaps it will be possible to take advantage of the elections in order to promote some kind of overall, or rather (in some countries) partial ratification. Meanwhile, the Commission's Plan D, as mentioned above, consists in trying to convince the population of "Europe"'s necessity. And, it appears that this communicative effort will (and in fact already is) centre on other areas too, stressing the fact that the Union is responsible for driving growth and employment (via the Lisbon Strategy), and that the "problems" created by immigration can only be solved at the community level. These are both very sensitive themes in the eyes of the European public. All these issues, we are told, are central to the question of how "Europeans" want to live in the future, and are crucial for convincing them of the need for a (strong) European Union.

In parallel, the EU's internal hardening continues unabated, promoted and implemented by the individual member states, whilst simultaneously being driven and coordinated by the Community institutions, as a way of internally consolidating its governability. To this effect, a form of interstate consensus exists at the EU level, based around the need to gradually close off urban public and civic space, as well as a growing orientation towards internal security policies. This security drive, which follows in the wake marked by the USA after 9/11, is aimed at nipping in the bud and controlling possible resistances and insurgencies. Once more, under the excuse of the struggle against "terrorism", Blair and Sarkozy are laying down the rules. However, this time they are going way beyond what has been pursued under this rubric until now, and other European leaders are towing the line without even so much as a murmur. Under the slogan that cities must be recuperated for "decent" people, Blair is pushing "zero tolerance" policies, aimed not just against "terrorism", but also against prostitution and street vandalism. In parallel, other urban emergency measures have also been put in place. These include declaring war against street sellers, expulsion of antisocial residents from their homes⁴, punishing parents whose children do not attend school, permitting curfews for legal minors in specific neighbourhoods, etc. New measures in France point in the same direction, and in both countries policies are being developed to keep tight control over "sensitive" places and

³ In fact, in the closing summit of the British Presidency, Britain pushed for Macedonia to be accepted as a candidate for membership. This position, which went against the French position, finally won out, and Macedonia was approved for candidacy.

⁴ Eviction from their lodgings for periods of up to three months, during which time they are placed in punishment houses.

neighbourhoods (which, of course, also include mosques). And, at the European level, an expansion of biometric controls is already underway for all the Union's citizens (as well as those from third countries). This will make it compulsory for people to carry with them at all times personal documentation which includes all this information stored on a chip. Such surveillance plans, which will be complemented by the ability of state apparatuses to locate any given individual (and their vehicles) at any time via satellite, will mean that Europe's population will be under tight control. Civil liberties and political rights are rapidly being curtailed. However, unlike in the USA where the phone-tapping ordered by Bush has created a scandal, these restrictions have not yet spawned a general public debate in Europe. This is perhaps due to the fact that such measures are being introduced more surreptitiously in the EU than they have been in the USA.

“Europe” Signs Up To the “Clash of Civilizations”, aided by political Islam

For the last three years, since “Old Europe” (France and Germany) and the USA clashed in the Security Council over the preparation of the war against Iraq, and the division within NATO over the same theme, the Atlantic alliance has been undergoing a gradual recomposition. This has included a steady (but by no means tension free) realignment of the EU along the trail being blazed by the USA in the Near and Middle East. The Union is proving incapable of exercising its own policy with regard to the conflicts in this enormously important geostrategical zone, revealing that it is unable to separate itself in any meaningful way from US interests and aggression in the region. This inability stems from its own internal divisions and contradictions with respect to the area, and the political limitations imposed by its failure to speak with a single voice, as well as its weakness as an autonomous military actor. Both of these failings have been exacerbated by the delay in approving the Constitution. The implications of all of this are that the EU's projection into this global hotspot is even more closely dependent on the US. This can be seen in relation to Israel's (increasingly militarized) conflict with the Palestinian world which is supported by Washington and accepted by the major “European” countries. It can also be seen in the Arab-Islamic world as a whole, the region where two thirds of the world's crude oil reserves are located, and in which the USA and Great Britain have already activated two erupting volcanoes, Afghanistan, and above all, Iraq. And, western policy towards this zone is stoking the incipient rumblings of yet more volcanoes, including Iran for starters. Furthermore, this entire territory is enormously hostile to the Western presence there, a presence which dates back to the era of western European colonial domination. There is extreme hostility towards the US presence (in the current post-colonial phase) and of its increasing military involvement in the zone which has grown since the first Gulf War. This hostility has only sharpened with the fiasco unleashed in post-war Iraq, and the worsening of the situation in Palestine, both of which have nourished the growth in political Islam throughout the Arab-Islamic world and the various forms of Jihad⁵ even further, fuelling the flames of the so-called “Clash of Civilizations”. However, this hostility is no longer centred on the US, but is also targeted in an increasingly harsh form against the EU's various member states, and at the Union itself in its own right.

One cannot fail to be amazed by the now famous CIA flights which took place throughout “European” territory in order to relocate (i.e. subcontract) torture to prisons located outside the EU (even the Union of 25). It has become patently clear that several

⁵ This has been encouraged by the fact that progressive and secularizing efforts have been strangled by the West, and in many countries dictators have benefited from Western support.

“European” governments, though paying lip-service to Human Rights, were fully aware of these operations, turning a blind eye and even collaborating with Washington. As Powell has pointed out, “Old Europe” has acted with sheer hypocrisy, publicly maintaining its distance from the USA and repeating its opposition to the war against Iraq. Yet, even the Schröder-Fischer government was in on it, and the French security services also collaborated. This became abundantly clear when the recent visit of Condoleeza Rice was met with a pact of silence between all the Union’s governments. And the Council of Europe was obliged to act independently of the governments of the Union. In these circumstances, not only is it becoming increasingly difficult for the EU to preach about human rights to anyone anywhere on the planet, but also its image in the Arab and Islamic world is becoming increasingly inseparable from that of the USA. The two sides of the North Atlantic, the West’s hard core, are witnessing how what supposedly (though falsely) bound them together during the Cold War (their defence of Human Rights) is crumbling. The quotation from Fischer at the start of this chapter is symptomatic of the changes underway. And, still more upsetting about all of this, is the fact that the EU itself is abandoning what is (or rather was) one of its most attractive features, its power to project itself globally in a seemingly mild manner. Until now, this supposed bland face of the EU has been very important in terms of how it related to the Near and Middle East. Bush’s arrival to the White House clearly marked Washington’s abandonment of its own soft power approach, which was undertaken without even the slightest of qualms. And thus it is happening, especially in the Islamic world. However, it appears that it may be beginning to backfire.

Yet, “Europe” hardly finds itself in a better position. Most recently, the war of cartoons in which Mohammed was presented as a terrorist, has ignited the passions of the Islamic world. Published by a far right and xenophobic Danish newspaper, in the name of an increasingly threatened “freedom of expression”, these cartoons have unleashed a spate of attacks including the burning of embassies and consulates of EU member countries, EU offices and “European” military installations. Although it appears as if the situation was later manipulated and blown out of all proportion, this gratuitous and poorly judged provocation has fallen on incredibly fertile terrain and has brought forth an explosion of accumulated and hitherto contained wrath against the West, and the domination, humiliation, lack of understanding and racism which it has submitted the Arab and Islamic world to over several centuries. And, “Europe”, has passed squarely into the line of attack from Islam’s most fanatical sectors, attacks which have cost a string of deaths. Europe’s image is in tatters. Meanwhile, the USA observed this crisis with concealed glee, expressing its “solidarity” with the offended Islamic world. “Europe”, which had hoped to remain hidden behind the USA, and to present a friendly face, has instead come to be perceived as a new and easily demonizable “Satan”. Furthermore, its absolute dependence on the “Great Satan” was seen as reenforced by its reaction to Hamas’ victory in Palestine, a triumph which the West itself had fostered by giving unconditional support to Sharon. Just as the US giant had dictated, the EU cut funding to the PNA. All this to say, the Union has removed its amiable face, and is now revealing its true face. It is no coincidence that the most serious disturbances which took place in the first moment were in countries in conflict with “Europe” (Afghanistan, Lebanon, Iran, Syria, Palestine...), albeit the mobilizations later spread throughout the whole Islamic world, including Turkey. And some of these mobilizations, such as in Nigeria and Libya, were extremely bloody. The increasingly visible and interventionist posture of the “European” countries, and the major exposure which the EU has in the Near and Middle East, clearly comes with a price attached. In three years its image as the good side of Western politics, as counterweight to the USA, has gone up in smoke. And, “Europe”’s political weakness

remains absolutely glaring. Its internal divisions have made it impossible for it to present itself as a cohesive front able to talk in a single voice, making it incapable of countering the hostility that has been targeted against its own diplomatic representatives.

Straddled Between a Strengthened West, and the Possible End of Atlanticism

The recent arrival of Merkel to the German Chancellorship has undoubtedly reinforced this reconfiguration of the Transatlantic relationship. Her presence has given a tremendous boost to the Transatlantic friendship, including a reconfiguration of NATO and reconsideration of the Union's relationship with Russia (which is still understood to be a strategic partner, albeit less hotly than before with Schroeder). However, despite all this, Merkel is also coming down in favour of a strong "Europe". That is, the "new Germany" is opting for a strategic partnership based on a (strengthened) EU and NATO. It is still too early to clearly foresee what form the EU's transatlantic relationship will take in the future. The European Constitution opened up the possibility of endowing the Union with its own autonomous military dimension, and it is likely that such a course will still be pursued provided that the Constitution, or whatever "sweetened" Treaty may replace it, remains in these terms and is not put into question by anyone (especially Great Britain), and above all provided that it is finally approved. My personal opinion is that this is one of the main Gordian knots, if not the main one, facing the Union's future. This is especially important not only because the near future will surely witness the gradual decline of the West with respect to the rest of the world (especially in relation to the strong eruption of China and India into global capitalism's new landscape), but also because this decline will, in all probability, entail a sharpening of tensions within the West itself, namely between the USA and the EU. Despite the fact that they also have common interests, economic and financial rivalry between the USA and EU at the global level may make this decline abrupt. Of particular importance in this regard is the fact that both spaces possess globally important currencies that are in competition with one another. One, the Dollar, has (for the time being) planetary hegemony, whilst the other, the Euro, has ambitions to dispute this hegemony. The mere existence of the latter is provoking the erosion of the former's global primacy⁶.

In the face of these dauntingly complicated future scenarios the West is considering all options in order to maintain its global dominance, and if necessary (as in all probability it will be) this includes strengthening the EU's role in the world. Indeed, the very future of the West will be compromised if the EU fails to do so. And, to a large degree, both questions are also contradictory. Thus, the first option⁷ is based around the necessity of creating a large transatlantic market between the USA and the EU, together with free trade agreements with other regions of the world and the shoring up of NATO to even include militarily strengthened Japan, Australia, New Zealand and South Korea, countries which all may be considered as outer-flanks of an expanded West. Amongst

⁶ In a recent conference given before he left the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan himself acknowledged that the world's central banks have reduced the Dollar holdings in their portfolios. "Only" a little more than 60% of the world's reserves are in Dollars, and 25% in Euros. In just a few years, the Euro's ascent has already been very important (EL PAÍS, 12-12-06).

⁷ This is the view espoused by US Neo-cons, Blair and Aznar (the Azores Trio), as well as by certain conservative sectors from continental Europe. In our opinion it responds to common north Atlantic economic and financial interests (mainly from the Anglosaxon world) which are being projected beyond the north Atlantic space (Australia and New Zealand), and which are also establishing strong bridgeheads in other areas of the world (Japan, South Korea, Columbia and even Israel). The prosperity and continued survival of these latter territories is dependent on Western protection and support.

other questions, such an Alliance would be called upon to defend future energy supplies and would have rapid intervention forces at its disposal in order to act where ever in the world that such action might be necessary. There has even been talk of including Israel and Colombia in the NATO of the future.

The second set of options are more “Europeanist”⁸. These are defended clearly and publicly by Guy Verhofstadt (ex-prime minister of Belgium, and former candidate to preside over the Commission in 2005), and Chirac’s initiatives also fit in well with this scheme of things. Sermons are given outlining the need for the “Eurogroup” (the twelve current members plus any possible future members from the EU-25) to build a “strong Europe”. Such a “United States of Europe” would require an important autonomous military dimension. According to such a stance, this “strong Europe” would be a powerful political-military anchor, and would be absolutely indispensable for a broader “European market” which may come to include, at some point in the future, between 30 and 35 members. This will be necessary if “Europe” is to defend its interests at the global level (especially its currency), and strengthen itself as an “essential” global actor. In other words, we are dealing with constructing a “European” world super-power. Only in this way, so the argument goes, will “Europe” be able to survive in the uncertain future which is approaching.

The current Constitution is straddled between two extremes. On the one hand it is a complicated pact amongst the EU-15, on the other it opens up the road for the latter scenario involving up to 35 members. In fact, it champions, in no uncertain terms, expanding the military expenditure of Union’s individual member states, creating a European Armaments Agency, and establishing a Common European Defence Market. Furthermore, it calls for increasing privatization in the arms industry. This would mean that, just as is the case in the USA, this industry would stand to gain from aggressive policies as such policies would expand its own market. The “European” military-industrial complex, which is being progressively consolidated, operates outside of the WTO framework (as do all “defence” industries), and is being promoted by way of political decisions and support (Fdez Durán, 2005)⁹. However, the final configuration of the Union’s military dimension remains up in the air, now that the Constitution is at death’s door (at least for the moment) and “Europe’s” own power structures are addled with tensions. The Solana Document, the new European Defence Strategy, which accompanies and complements the European Constitution, also lacks grounding in reality. However, for its part, (and within the means of its possibilities) the EU, in order to complement the promotion of its economic and financial interests in different regions of the world, continues to develop increasingly security-based and militaristic strategies. Among these strategies, two stand out due to their economic and geostrategic importance as well as for the relevance which they have acquired in the recent past, and will continue to acquire in the very near future.

⁸ Here it is generally worth citing the interests of continental west European capital. In particular, this position is defended by the two most important heads of the Eurogroup, France and Germany, although their positions differ from one another.

⁹ And all of this is already being gradually set in motion, despite not being able to count on the Constitution, albeit lacking the decisive impulse which its approval would give the process. The Union spends just over 20% of global military expenditure, compared with 50% from the USA. This disequilibrium, together with the fact that its military structures still do not have even a minimally autonomous component within NATO, means that the EU continues to be a “military worm” which is only able to operate in scenarios that are of interest to the US, or NATO itself, and only once the hyper-power has already intervened. This is especially so in the Near and Middle East.

The first strategy, running parallel with the desire to create a Mediterranean Free Trade Area by 2010, took the form of a new summit that was held at the end of 2005 in Barcelona aimed at creating a Euro-Mediterranean Association. It is worth highlighting that the Mediterranean is an area of enormous geostrategic importance, and one in which the disputes between the USA and EU are clearly manifest¹⁰. Hence, the Union is forcing structural reforms on the economies of the Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean, attempting to fortify the framework in which investments operate, as well as promoting the total elimination of trade barriers. This is aimed at encouraging penetration by European transnational industries and services, at the same time as trying to appropriate the region's strategic resources and utilize its abundant and cheap labour force. All of this is draped in rhetoric about dialogue between the shores of the Mediterranean (the North and the South and West), a dialogue based on promoting democracy and human rights in the countries of the Maghreb and Mashreq, at the same time as they are thrown a few economic crumbs. However, the Union's strategy of asserting control over these territories through security and "antiterrorist" policies in order to defend its own investments and interests is patently clear, as is its imposition of migration policies¹¹. All of this means that the populations of the region are increasingly rejecting these policies, further sharpening the conflict between the West and the Islamic world. This being the case, and conditioned by the attitude of public opinion, not even one head of state or government from the Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean attended the summit in Barcelona. This was literally a slap in the face to the entirety of the EU's heads of states and governments. Although it is possible that the lack of participation may have been due to the fact that Condoleeza Rice had, allegedly, spoken out against the Summit, a factor which may have deterred some heads of state from attending, the unavoidable fact is that a very serious rift is opening up between the two worlds. And this warrants reflecting upon.

The EU's relations with Latin America are taking a similar turn, although in a context involving less cultural clash, as Latin America is a (subordinated and conflictive) extension of the West. In this field, the Union aims use the occasion of the 4th biregional summit in Vienna this May to create a Strategic Association between the EU and Latin America. This will take the form of a Euro-Latin American Free Trade Area by 2010, and a Political and Security Association to complement it, as well as other secondary programmes designed to make the package more digestible and sellable to the public. This includes employing rhetoric and social engineering around such issues as encouragement of human rights and democracy, the struggle against poverty, promoting sustainable development and civil society participation. But, this euphemistic fig leaf is not enough to keep the EU's true goals from shining through. These include encouraging "Europe"'s large companies and financial institutions to penetrate deeply into this important area of the world, guaranteeing them an ever larger access to its diversity of rich resources, protecting community investments, and last but not least, enabling the Union to defend its interests in the climate of increasing social conflictivity and major social change which is underway throughout Latin America due to peasant, indigenous and urban social movements. This latter point is behind the fact that the political and security association includes proposals to "strengthen (and follow up on) democratic governability", as well as to hold "frequent meetings between ministers of defence". This

¹⁰ The USA is also pushing free trade agreements with Mediterranean countries, in addition to the security and military agreements that it is promoting in the region.

¹¹ Repression of migration itself, concentration camps for immigrants from third countries, and repression and expulsion from these. "Development aid" is ever more frequently destined for these objectives.

will occur within a multilateral approach, clearly indicating what multilateralism is being reduced to¹² (Salafranca, 2006).

And, as part of this process, the Vienna Summit aims to conclude an association agreement between the EU and MERCOSUR, initiate a similar association with the Andean and Central American Community as well as deepening already existing agreements that the EU has with Chile and Mexico. As such, the Union, and the interests that it represents, are embarking on an enormously ambitious agenda in Latin America. And, despite the fact that the “European” military presence (or that of its member states) is (until now) virtually non-existent (except in Haiti and territories dependent on the EU, and its complementary role to the USA in Plan Colombia in which the EU provides civil-security-civil aid but not military in order to play the role of “good cop” in the “Peace Laboratories”), the EU is nonetheless beginning to openly rival the USA in Latin America¹³. This has already triggered alarm bells in the networks and social movements, emboldened by their success at ongoing resistance to the US-led FTAA which has resulted in its derailment (at least for the time being) at the most recent hemispheric conference which took place in Mar del Plata. And, it remains to be seen how Latin American leaders will respond to such “European” desires. Until now they have not put up much resistance, but support is starting to experience a serious blow due to social and political changes (Chavez, Evo Morales) that are now underway throughout the entire region. Latin America’s active civil society networks have already begun to set their sights on these “European” plans, and movements throughout the region are now gearing up to resist this form of “European”-led FTAA.

All things considered, the manner in which the EU is increasingly pushing its own economic and financial interests on the whole world, in many cases rivalling with the USA, is becoming clear to all. No less clear is the way in which it is developing security policies based around a desire to pursue an increasingly militarized course in order to defend these interests. All of this is seen as necessary in order to adapt to the new realities of a global capitalism that has, for the last few years (and especially since September 11th), entered a stage of “armed globalization” and “permanent global war” (against “terrorism”). However, lacking its own clear political and military dimension, the EU will be unable to negotiate these waters nearly as “efficiently” as the USA, which (in theory) is able to wield both coercive and attractive power. This is especially so given that new capitalist actors are making a forceful appearance on the global landscape, beginning to dispute markets and increasingly competing for access to scarce raw materials, and even increasingly developing their own military capacities. Thus, the scenario described in this section could contribute to the end of “Atlanticism”, shaping a world in which each country or bloc (USA and EU, but also others) fights separately for their own interests. This may even come to include military conflict. Indeed, as the world becomes increasingly convulsive, such a reality is already taking shape before our eyes.

China’s “Coming of Age”, the Emergence of India, and Systemic Chaos

With each day that passes, the Asian giant, China enters into greater competition with the USA and the EU in Africa, Latin America and the Middle East. In addition to posing a

¹² Plans are also afoot to construct infrastructure networks in energy, water, transport and telecommunications, in order to guarantee Latin America’s subordinate integration into the world economy, and in this case especially, its subordination to “European” interests. These plans are also occurring in the name of multilateralism.

¹³ The Union as a whole is the main source of “cooperation” funds to the region, and the main commercial partner with several countries, especially those belonging to MERCOSUR.

challenge to US access to strategic raw materials, especially fossil fuels, it is also fighting over markets for its manufactured products in these areas of the world, and occasionally even displacing their own domestic industries (as, for example, is occurring in Latin America). Not only is the “workshop of the world” exporting to the USA and EU, but it is also increasingly winning periphery markets away from the hard core of the West, albeit for the most part still in low technology goods (except for microelectronics). India is following hot on China’s heels, playing a growing role in the service sector. However, it is still a long way from what the Moghul Empire was in its heyday at the centre of world trade. The two countries, between them, make up nearly half the world’s population and a rapidly increasing share of the global GDP. However, their weakness lies in the fact neither country (nor both countries combined) has at its disposal high technology, financial power, or world currencies. Furthermore, they both lack the military power with which to confront the West’s hard core. This hard core still has overwhelming control and leadership in global technological development (R & D and innovation) and is able to defend its position through the WTO patent system (TRIPS agreement). Furthermore, it also concentrates the bulk of the planet’s economic and above all financial power¹⁴, and controls the lion’s share of the global military power (especially the USA), as well as being home to the leading arms companies (which are protected and encouraged by the state). Last, but not least, the West has at its disposal the two most important currencies in existence, in terms of their geographical, commercial and financial reach. However, this situation is undergoing rapid and profound changes, changes which could accelerate in scenarios of deep crisis or breakdown, such as appear imminent on the horizon.

World economic growth, based primarily on the pull of the US growth engine, is jeopardized by the increasing difficulty the US is having with financing its overly-swollen basic imbalances (current account and fiscal deficits). The war on Iraq is a central factor in exacerbating these imbalances and the difficulties which they are causing. Should the Dollar crisis (which has been brewing for several years, and has been aggravated by the unsustainability of the above imbalances) deepen further, imposing an abrupt rise in Dollar interest rates in order to maintain flows of capital towards the USA, this scenario could become far worse. In our opinion, this explains the attempt to maintain the Dollar’s (and by extension US) hegemony militarily. Another quite different matter is whether it is actually able to achieve this objective (Fdez Durán, 2004). This situation could provoke a generalized raising of interest rates throughout the world¹⁵, including in the Euro area. In turn, this could aggravate a dreaded sudden crunch in world-economic growth and worsen existing global imbalances, all of which would have a major impact on the external debt in the periphery. Furthermore, a rise in Dollar interest rates (which has already been occurring in a gentle form since the summer of 2004) could contribute to bursting the international financial-speculative bubble in the real estate sector, a phenomenon which has been described as “the biggest financial bubble in capitalism’s history” (The Economist, 18-6-05). In fact, an inflexion is already underway. This would have a major impact on the purchasing power of the (propertied) classes which have reaped such high profits from the enormous growth in real-estate. Should this real estate, and other speculative bubbles which have been built up over the last three years in the stock and financial markets (especially in futures and derivatives), burst due

¹⁴ This is defended through Free Trade Agreements that the West has with the different regions of the world, as well as through the WTO. However, emerging powers such as China, India and Brazil, are increasingly able to impose their negotiating power within the WTO and Free Trade Agreements.

¹⁵ As the English version of this chapter goes to print, interest rates are already beginning to rise in Japan.

to rising interest rates, it could precipitate a genuine world-wide depression-deflation. This would have unforeseeable consequences¹⁶.

The last few years of world economic growth has largely been based on the unstoppable expansion of credit. In other words, it has been brought about by an enormous capacity to create global money, as the North's major monetary fortresses (especially the USA and EU) issue money in strong currencies. Money has been created at all levels: paper money, bank money and financial money. This has enabled the hard Western core to expand its economic and financial power over the rest of the world, allowing it appropriate firms, financial institutions, resources, and all manner of patrimony in the periphery. This process has been helped along by the (provoked) plummeting in value of periphery currencies vis-à-vis core currencies. All of this money has been created largely through credit, by the generation of debt throughout the system. However, the process is increasingly unsustainable, and the whole global debt pyramid could come tumbling down for a myriad of different reasons. The risk would be especially high should world-wide economic growth fail, as this would jeopardize the capacity of debt repayment in the future, especially should monetary policy be tightened. And, such a routing could gradually result in an uncontrolled price rise for fuels, especially oil, and other raw materials. Such price rises could have the effects of reducing global economic growth (already purchasing power is being effected), and lead to skyrocketing inflation, which in turn would necessitate a raise in interest rates. We have already entered into a new historic cycle of expensive oil and this scenario could worsen should we go beyond so-called Peak Oil (as described above), or if socio-political and military conflicts, especially in the Middle East, provoke a sudden tightening of oil markets. In Davos this year, there were warnings that the price of oil could go beyond 100 Dollars a barrel.

The intensification of the "Clash of Civilizations" is a consequence of the sharpening of the conflict between the West and the Middle and Near East, since this is where the world's main oil reserves lie. Sitting on top of the world's holy sites for crude oil, it is no coincidence that the Arab-Muslim has become the "other" *par excellence*, the true enemy that must be controlled, dominated and (if it comes to it) crushed. Whoever controls the "world's petrol spigot" controls the world, and in this way the West hopes to stave back its hegemonic decline. And thus, in order to guarantee its access to these oil reserves, Western powers are developing new strategic forms of foreign policy, increasingly based on political, and above all, military intervention if necessary. And of course, such interventions will be necessary to satisfy the ever greater energy needs of a capitalist model based on endless growth and accumulation. This can be seen in Bush's new doctrine in the USA and in the EU's so-called Solana Strategy which was cited at the beginning of this chapter. However, it might be fair to add, China is looking on with great satisfaction at this rising conflict between the West and the Islamic world, knowing full well that this unstoppable "Clash of Civilizations" which the USA and EU are spiralling towards will ultimately exhaust these actors, perhaps enabling China to very rapidly become the hegemon of the capitalist world-economy (which is its medium term goal). China itself has only a very small Muslim population, and, at least until now, the "Clash of Civilizations" has not affected it directly. Furthermore, it generally maintains

¹⁶ Such a scenario appeared on the verge of becoming reality in 2002-2003, provoking the Federal Reserve to lower its interest rates to historic lows (around 1%). This momentarily resolved the situation. However, the solution of the problem entailed cheapening money throughout the world, effectively creating the conditions for new speculative bubbles (such as real estate) to emerge, thus furthering this mad plunge towards depression-deflation.

good relations with the Islamic world, and is cultivating its relations with the Iranian regime, a regime which has been so thoroughly reviled by the West. Furthermore, China is also keenly aware of the fact that the “Clash of Civilizations” is also reaching and bleeding India. Here the conflict is playing out in a different manner, encouraged by Hindu fundamentalism. Very significant internal conflicts exist with its Muslim population and with bordering Islamic countries (Pakistan and Bangladesh). India, once the great Moghul Empire, wants to reclaim the position at the centre of the Pacific world which it held before western European domination began expanding over the planet (from the 15th century). However, this time around, the context is one of a new scenario in which a runaway global capitalism is becoming increasingly unsustainable with each day that passes. .

However, if previous hegemonic transitions are anything to go by, such a change of hegemony within the capitalist world-system is unlikely to be exempt from acute interstate rivalry and conflicts¹⁷ as well as increasingly disruptive social and political conflicts (Abramsky, 2005). However, it is far from clear if a new long wave of capitalist expansion, as occurred in each of the preceding historical long waves, is possible or not. This is due to fact that the commodity system’s expansive logic is reaching the planet’s geographical limits, and because capital’s dynamic of endless growth and accumulation is already coming into conflict with the planet’s ecological limits. This is happening both in relation to the increasing scarcity of resources, as well as the destructive impact globally of urban-agri-industrial metabolism, which is radically altering the functioning of the world’s ecosystems, and limiting the economic system’s ability to grow. Continuous and predatory growth is simply not possible in a finite ecosystem such as the Earth’s biosphere. Hence, the interstate, social and political tensions mentioned above could become aggravated still further. All of this indicates that we are entering, or may have already entered, a long period of systemic chaos.

Hence, it is no coincidence that this is producing symptoms of the beginnings of a crisis and increasing ungovernability. An important example of this can be seen in relation to gold. The price of gold is rising rapidly and has reached a 25 year high point. This is perhaps an indication that confidence in the major global currencies (especially the Dollar, but also the Euro¹⁸) is beginning to wane, yet the short term offers no easy or predictable replacements. The rising price of gold may be an early indicator of the West’s decline. Little by little gold is resuming its old role as money *par excellence*, despite the fact that the crisis of the Dollar-Gold Standard meant that the international monetary system was delinked from any physical tie with gold in 1971. Furthermore, the Dollar’s fate is being played out in China, the principal holder of US Treasury Bonds. Equally, the chaos brought about by the new increasingly financialized and deregulated forms of a global capitalism that is unfettered by patriotic bonds and loyalties, striving only for endless growth, is resulting in ever greater flows of capital speculating with raw materials (especially oil) and with the major currencies (in the futures markets). This can

¹⁷ Hispano-lusa hegemony (end of the 15th – beginning of 17th century); Religious Wars/Thirty Years War (1618-1648) and the shoring up of the hegemony of the United Provinces (Holland), (end of 17th – beginning of 19th century); Napoleonic wars, Peace of Vienna (1815), and the consolidation of British world hegemony (19th – beginning of 20th century); First and Second World-wars, and the eruption of US hegemony in the western area, which expanded to the whole world after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of the Soviet Union (1989 – 91) (Arrighi, 1999).

¹⁸ The negative results of the French and Dutch referenda, and the subsequent paralysis of the Constitution’s ratification process, greatly affected the Euro throughout 2005. The Dollar rose throughout the year, after having fallen throughout the two previous years.

but aggravate already existing global imbalances. The IMF has already issued a warning to this effect. However, the power of money, an uncontrollable genie, has already slipped from the bottle and is long gone. It has escaped all forms of control and it appears impossible to put it back in. Only the reality principle, perhaps an unprecedented crisis, and the (still largely non-existent) will of the world's inhabitants (set in motion by complex molecular processes from below) might enable this apparently inexorable march towards chaos and barbarism to be gradually reversed. In the final years of the Second World-War Karl Polanyi analyzed the global crisis caused by the attempt at constructing the first world-wide market society which took place between the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. This crisis gave rise to fascism, Nazism and Stalinism (Polanyi, 1989). Now, 60 years later, we are once again witnessing an attempt at creating a world market, only this time it is even more pronounced, deregulated and globally reaching. And, with each day that passes, its ungovernability and sheer impossibility become ever more patent. And, as this book has made clear, the EU is one of the main world actors contributing to this reckless trajectory. However, it is a trajectory over which the EU itself has very little control.

Walking Towards Other Possible Europes (and Worlds)- Dismantling the “Clash of Civilizations” and Deactivating Growth

The task of denouncing and resisting this rising security-based and militarist “Europe” is becoming increasingly urgent if we are to imagine embarking on any process of emancipatory social, political and ecological transformation within Europe, as well as globally. Here we are referring to the “Europe” which capital needs in order to promote (and impose) its interests within and without the Union. And, as such, unmasking and opposing this “Europe” might be our most important task, without which it will be impossible to journey towards other emancipatory scenarios which are just and in equilibrium with the environment. The security-based “Europe” is orientated to impede (and if necessary repress) the emergence of resistances to the plans of power, and to make difficult (or even impossible) the free expression of transformative popular initiatives. Thus, defending civil and political rights, conquered through decades of struggle and today facing grave threats, becomes a task of paramount importance. Simultaneously, and no less urgent, is the need to reject the Union (and its members’) militarist thrust and struggle for the peaceful resolution of conflicts through dialogue, mutual knowledge, and above all the progressive elimination of the root causes that underlie such conflicts. This task is urgent, not only because the social dimension in our societies is increasingly endangered by rising military expenditures, but also because the growing militarization of the Union’s member states is a far reaching element in the attempt to nip in the bud any processes aimed at bringing about profound structural changes to these states. Finally, when considering the urgency at hand, it must not be forgotten that the increasingly unjust and predatory (not to mention neo-imperialist) relations which the EU is forging with the rest of the world may require defending militarily.

Paradoxically, it is hoped that this drift towards security and militarism can be justified on the basis of defence of “western values” (democracy, human rights etc), values which (according to the dominant discourse) are besieged by Islamic “international terrorism” and the Jihad and Al Qaeda in particular. However, in addition to this claim, this toughening of the state and the increasing use of foreign intervention is also being justified in the name of standing up to other threats which may exist in an increasingly convulsive world. Hence, it is of the utmost importance that we set about dismantling

these absolutely fallacious arguments aimed at inculcating fear and paralysis in society so that the plans of power get accepted without questioning. And, if we are to avoid complicity with these plans, this is an inescapable task. The spiralling “Clash of Civilizations” which appears to be being intentionally imposed on people is enormously destructive and divisive for emancipatory social movements throughout the world, as it encourages a whole assortment of different models of despotism to flourish. By presenting people with the artificial choice of accepting either Western despotism or Islamic despotism possible emancipatory transformations face suffocation. However, to passively accept this dynamic in “Europe” is simply suicidal for those who aspire to bringing about emancipatory social change. More than 15 million people of Muslim origin live in the heart of the EU, especially in the Union of 15. In these circumstances, burgeoning Islamophobia is further intensifying the “molecular civil war” which it is hoped that “those at the bottom” will be driven towards. It is also a sure way for the extreme (racist and xenophobic) right to gain a foothold, fostering dynamics of openly authoritarian politics that will be disastrous for any form of emancipatory transformation. Furthermore, it helps consolidate and further embolden mechanisms of patriarchal oppression within the Islamic world, where the streets are becoming ever more masculine with each day that passes (in fact, the mobilizations involve men exclusively). The same can also be said of “Europe” itself. Talk of including reference to “Europe”’s Christian roots in the actual “Constitution” has resurfaced, finding open support from the the new Pope, and important sectors of the European People’s Party. It is clear that this new “War of Religions”, which is being deliberately stoked, will clearly be detrimental for women. In Europe too, where women’s struggles in the public sphere have managed to somewhat soften patriarchal domination in recent decades, a gradual (and regressive) redefinition of relations of patriarchal control is also underway.

Faced with the above, it is vital that we are able open up channels of mutual understanding aimed at breaking down prejudices and stereotypes, in order to go about countering and undermining the reciprocal hatred which is being bred in broad sectors of our societies. This will also be necessary in order for emancipatory movements on either side of the “Clash of Civilizations” to connect up with each other. This new “Iron Curtain” is being deliberately incited and imposed by certain sectors of both opposing “worlds”. And this is occurring even despite the fact that certain sectors are promoting the slogan of “Alliance of Civilizations”, a claim which, by failing to tackle the structural inequalities and the relations of domination, pillage and exploitation, as well as neocolonialism on which this “Clash” nourishes and is built upon, seeks to impose cosmetics and rhetoric over reality. Bearing this in mind, we must take heed of the fact that it is time to get busy. In fact, there is no time to lose. Our efforts must include deep reflection about our forms of life, and about the productive, economic and territorial model which accompany these and make them possible. This is where the structural causes of the ascendant conflicts lie, conflicts which are pitting us against the rest of the world, and against the Islamic world in particular, especially with the Middle East. “No Blood for Oil” must once again become a battle cry that animates this reflection and resistance, just as the same slogan was wielded in the 90s by US social movements resisting the first Gulf War in 1991. Only by going straight to the roots of these conflicts, as well as their historic and cultural origins, will we be able to find points of encounter between both “worlds”, so as to walk together, mixing ourselves, towards the gradual overcoming of these misunderstandings. Only in this way will we be able to set about transforming our societies, within a wider process of global change. Such a process will be fraught with difficulties, but it is nonetheless absolutely essential. Furthermore, if we have the will, the courage and the wisdom to undertake it, it might also be possible.

In this respect, the meeting “Enlazando Alternativas 2”¹⁹ which will take place this May in Vienna, in parallel to the EU-Latin American Summit. The meeting is an attempt to foster familiarity and mutual knowledge between networks of social movements in both “Europe” and Latin America, so that they are able to come together to resist the new dynamics of “European” and global capitalism which is no longer imposed by neoliberal policies and already existing free trade alone, but increasingly being backed up by security and militarist policies. The fact that Latin America is home to a wide range of important resources (including fossil fuels), and that it is the region with the greatest biodiversity of anywhere in the world are not coincidental. This is what motivates efforts that are afoot to guarantee, come what may, the progressive appropriation of these resources and riches, in order to continue driving “European” growth (a process which has generated an enormous accumulated ecological debt over the centuries) (Russi, Kucharz and Bárcena, 2006), as well as guaranteeing unrestricted access to its markets. It will only be possible to put a halt to this dynamic, which is increasingly based on plunder, destruction and generating inequality, by weaving bi-regional networks of resistance and social and ecological transformation on both sides of the Atlantic. And, in this sense “Enlazando Alternativas 2” must be seen as a very important step in this direction.

However, for such transformation to occur, it will also be necessary to begin to question the West’s totem, namely the concept of economic growth itself. This is the God against which no one can blaspheme or criticize, and which the West has imposed for decades (or rather centuries) on the entire world. This itself is a form of fanaticism and lack of real freedom of expression²⁰, even though it has already been interiorized already by a large part of humanity. And, once continuous growth proves itself to be unfeasible, anti-ecological, and responsible for an increasingly unjust and ungovernable world, perhaps the journey towards a more just and sustainable world will entail a process of “de-growth”? This debate is slowly getting underway all over the world, but it is a very difficult process. France is a good example of this. Little by little, the meeting which took place four years ago in Paris: “Undoing Development, in Order to Remake the World” (www.apres-developpement.org), as well as the Network of Growth-Objectors for Post Development and other similar initiatives, have begun to spur this absolutely vital debate. However, this debate has been virtually absent, until now, within the institutional and non-institutional left, as well as, for the most part, within the World Social Forums. On the other hand, it is occurring, in one form or another, within certain of the so-called anti-globalization networks (such as PGA, Via Campesina, Zapatista and indigenous organizations, etc). The discussion has also been very marginal within the European Social Forum, and indeed its inclusion was even vetoed in plenary sessions at the ESF in Paris (2003) by some of the main promoter organizations behind the event. However, despite this, the debate (which is still in its very early stages) is already taking place at the street level in France, and an important space has opened up in the current atmosphere of mobilization and critical citizen reflection. In the face of the ever more patent limits of growth or development based around global capitalism’s need for constant expansion and accumulation, and of its social and ecological consequences,

¹⁹ The earlier meeting, Enlazando Alternativas, took place in Guadalajara, Mexico in 2004, in parallel to the final summit of heads of state and governments between the EU and Latin America. The upcoming meeting will be accompanied by a Permanent Peoples’ Tribunal which will put various European transnational companies on trial for the role which their destructive role in the region.

²⁰ Either by way of naked and repressive censorship, or by way of more subtle, but equally effective measures, such as the spiral of silence which discourses, practices and resistances which go contrary to the prevailing economic logic are subjected to by the big media.

perhaps it is hardly surprising that such a debate should have opened up. It could not be any other way.

One of the aims of this year's European Social Forum in Athens is to approve a "Charter of Principles for Another Europe", as consensed in a meeting in Florence in November 2005. Such a Charter would serve "to oppose social movements' strategy to the EU's strategy and to visibilize an alternative project for Europe, a project constructed from below" (Eguireun, 2005). However, perhaps it would be better to talk of other possible Europes in the plural, leaving them as an undefined but large diversity of possible alternative projects which exist (and should exist) in the fray (Fdez Durán, 2005). Such alternatives will only be realizable through a broad and radical democratic debate, realized, it should be clear, from below. That is, a diversity of projects, which remain to be defined, that range from the refoundation to the deconstruction of "Europe", as it becomes increasingly clear that reforming the currently existing EU is simply not an option. Many European networks and grassroots organizations are already generating an important reflection to this effect (Transform, Alterecolo, alternative European trade unionism, etc)²¹. Despite the fact that the reflection on these alternatives is not always taking place explicitly, since many of the organizations involved are very much concentrated on working in their local reality, they are nonetheless developing molecular resistances and alternatives which will also allow them to walk towards other possible worlds. Such constructive processes will play a fundamental role in the creation of alternative economic and social structures, as well as new institutional realities.

Future institutional realities are likely to be based around a diversity of decentralized configurations and networked interactions. They will not necessarily encompass a European dimension, may be more or less centralized and hierarchicalized, and may or may not want bureaucracy. This is especially likely if we are able to initiate a path of profound and radically democratic change from below, from the material and structural base of our societies and aimed at fundamentally changing the dominant economic, productive and consumptive model. Such change also needs to occur at the political level, constructing genuinely participatory and democratic dynamics starting at the most local levels. Such changes would mark a path towards more just and solidary models, both in harmony with the ecology and anti-patriarchal. Above all, such changes will become possible if we are only able to begin this journey. A multifaceted transformation is called for. We will need to work towards relocalizing our economies and encouraging solidarity over competition, at the same time as reducing motorized transport, putting a halt to urban development and the construction of infrastructures. The countryside is in need of revitalization. There is the urgent need to gradually close the cycle of materials, limiting our dependence on imported resources whilst at the same time restricting fossil fuel consumption and moving towards renewable energies. The scope of the monetary economy must be gradually reduced (i.e. reduce growth) and social control over money must be recovered, together with developing local currencies and barter systems. The market must be made subject to society, and the logic of profit and accumulation broken. Business conglomerates need to be dismantled, and self-organization in the work place encouraged in order to recreate new community based structures based on multicultural and intercultural diversity. Public and private spaces for gender equilibrium must be redefined based on placing respect and value on the tasks associated with care work.

²¹ Furthermore, of those already mentioned in our earlier text "**La 'Europa' (fortaleza y securitaria) a la deriva**" [ASK RAMON/BARBARA check consistency with translation used in other text]. (ATTAC, Unitary Committees for the No vote in France, European Left)

Rundown suburban areas cry out for regeneration, and the habitability and public space in the cities must be restored, and urban and suburban agriculture must be encouraged. The impact of the urban-agri-industrial metabolism must be reduced in order to reconnect our forms of knowledge and culture with the territory. And, it will be vital to clean up our devastated territorial and environmental systems, as well as gradually reducing the military, policing and penal expenditure and increasing social spending, etc, etc, etc. The above changes would, if brought about from below, would entail a very profound social transformation. Indeed, such a transformation would be nothing less than the creation of a plurality and diversity of “Europes” beyond (or rather closer by) the current EU and its member states. The task which lies ahead of us is to define and concretize these different Europes, Europes which in turn may relate harmoniously and cooperatively with many other possible worlds.

Madrid, February 2006

Bibliography

- ARRIGHI, Giovanni: **“El largo siglo XX”**. Ed. Akal (Cuestiones de Antagonismo). Madrid, 1999.
- ABRAMSKY, Kolya: **“Upping the Ante: Towards Dismantling Capitalism’s World-Wide Division of Labor”** Unpublished. December 2005.
- CE (Comisión Europea): **“Libro Verde de la Energía”**. CE. Bruselas, 2006.
- EGUIREUN, Josu: **“Por una Carta de Principios para Otra Europa”** (diciembre 2005). In Viento Sur (www.vientosur.info)
- FERNÁNDEZ DURÁN, Ramón: **“Marte versus Venus, o dólar versus euro”**. <http://www.nodo50.org>; **“Mars versus venus, or dollar versus euro”** (English versión) <http://www.tni.org> Madrid, 2004.
- FERNÁNDEZ DURÁN, Ramón: **“La compleja construcción de la ‘Europa’ superpotencia”**. Virus. Barcelona, 2005.
- POLANYI, Karl: **“La gran transformación”**. Ediciones La Piqueta. Madrid, 1989.
- RUSSI, Daniella, KUCHARZ, Tom and BÁRCENA, Iñaki: **“Deuda ecológica: Un concepto integral en la lucha contra la globalización capitalista”**. www.quiendebeaquien.org
- SALAFRANCA, José Ignacio: **“Sobre una Asociación reforzada entre la Unión Europea y América Latina”** (Proyecto de Informe).European Parliament..January , 2006.
- TORREBLANCA, José Ignacio: **“Las perspectivas financieras 2007-2013 en la UE”**. Real Instituto Elcano (www.realinstitutoelcano.org). 2005.
- VERHOFSTADT, Guy: **“Forging the ‘United States of Europe’ is key to the future”**. E European Voice, 2-12-05.