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# Response to Galtung

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# Response

Rado Bradistilov

## I. Introduction

The end of the Cold War caught scholars of transnational life unprepared to indicate new directions for mutual understanding, peace, and prosperity that could fully utilize the favorable circumstances at hand. Although one should realize the immense potential for restructuring to make a new world order, one should be wary of a backlash these developments might provoke. As a respondent to Dr. Galtung's paper, I want to share both my optimism and concerns and to formulate my views on the coming world order.

The foremost lesson I picked from Dr. Galtung's paper is that one cannot contemplate world peace and stability without optimism and belief in the good will of humanity. I accept, too, that no matter how problematic this huge task might seem, one should still believe in its possibilities. This is not to negate reason and intelligent skepticism in the service of sheer idealism duplicative of those of the past.

## II. Global Problematique

Every historical period has its basic questions, which best express the essential constitution of its times. The present historical moment, beginning with the end of the Cold War, is characterized by vast political, socioeconomic, and cultural shifts. As in any other period, the upcoming world order will be accompanied by its own ideals, specific goals, and potential conflicts.

I would like to thank Dr. Galtung for his articulation of the various conflict formations that exist or are likely to arise in the world of today and tomorrow. To avoid repetition, I will not discuss the already mentioned conflicts of human vs. nonhuman, gender, race, generation, and class. Instead, I would like to add two more, which, in my opinion, are very relevant but not fully attended to in Dr. Galtung's paper. They are the global clash of cultures (including heritage, religion, and ideology) and the conflict over capital.

Before explaining why I believe these two issues should be included in the list of potential conflicts, I would like to discuss another concept that takes center stage in Dr. Galtung's work—the concept of democracy. Dr. Galtung defines democracy “as rule by which rulers have the consent of the ruled.” Other popular definitions are “government of the people,” “rule of the majority,” “the absence of hereditary class distinctions and privileges.” I agree with Dr. Galtung that democracy is the most applauded principle in the world today, but I hesitate to accept its universalism in the new world order. I also think that trying to achieve democracy is important, since it is believed to best express the demands of the individual, but I would like to differentiate between the concept of democracy and what would be “global governance” through “global democracy.” During the Cold War years, the West concentrated on establishing democracy inside countries one at a time, but the current situation demands that global democracy be established as a world system. Consequently, the main challenge facing the international community is the emergence of such a democracy available and acceptable to all. But, despite some agreement on conceptualization, democracy is still a process that, in practice, is interpreted differently by different people at different times. It is with this caveat in mind that I move on to discuss the two major tension points mentioned earlier. How we come out on both will significantly shape the order of the world to come.

### **A. The Global Clash of Ideologies**

The history of human civilization has produced cultures so unique, so powerful, and so different from one another that they could be an immense resource to humanity, but they could also create serious complications with respect to seeking one global goal such as global democracy. As Dr. Galtung points out, the world of today is surely not a democracy. We are witnessing a global movement for democratization, as has been the case in Eastern Europe since 1989, but there are numerous societies at the present time that are either barely democratic or crudely oppressive. The moral issue I see is that most societies have emerged from different circumstances; so, why are we so prone to believe that democracy would be the logical answer to each

and every one? That is not to say that some nations would choose to be oppressive or that their citizens enjoy being persecuted, but maybe there is another system — one different from “Western-style” democracy — that they would want and that would suit their needs and heritages. Moreover, it is well to remember that when one is talking about familiar democratic societies, one usually accepts that these commonalities exist: (1) a Judeo-Christian world-view, (2) a geographical proximity, and (3) a similar history, cultural heritage, and evolution.

These are some of the common characteristics of the majority of today’s democracies, and it is naïve to believe that they have emerged by chance. Consequently, these distinctive traits create separateness rather than convergence. According to Samuel Huntington, the cultural, ideological, and religious differences will not only shape the face of tomorrow’s world order but will become the most alarming indicator of potential conflicts.<sup>1</sup> A superficial comparison between the “industrialized” Northwest and the “developing” South provokes some important conclusions: Christianity, even though it holds an important place in the list of world religions, is not the most common form of religion; and the societies inside the democratic zone, in spatial and quantitative terms, pale in significance relative to the rest of the world. In reality, then, democratic societies are in the minority. As a result, if democracy is to be adopted by other societies, there have to be great incentives. Some of the questions one might ponder are: Why would “outsiders” (i.e., nondemocratic states) want to be democracies? What would assure their equal representation in the global democratic system? Why would they not be better off on the “outside,” inventing their own procedures?

## **B. The Internal Conflict of Capital vs. Capital**

This conflict relates to the inner struggle of capital against capital inside the democratic and free market societies as they compete for international dominance. As Dr. Galtung points out, these societies come out of individualistic, competitive, and aggressive cultures. The logical question that arises is, why would the owners of the means of production (e.g., the transnational and multinational corporations) be willing to give up

their influence and power to benefit others? After all, the reality is that they do not usually concern themselves with moral issues if that would hinder accumulation and the implementation of their policies. History is replete with instances of multinational and transnational corporations actually cooperating with non-democratic regimes in order to take over new markets and enhance profits. Thus, one should be wary of the power of a sudden change of the soul of transnational capital.

To construct a model for global democracy, I believe one needs to present a perspective liberated from the usual weaknesses of Western thinking that always radiates reforms from the center. Some of these pitfalls can be seen through the ongoing experiences of many of the countries that are outside of the charmed circle of Western capitalist democracies. Let me make specific, brief reference to four of these "outsiders."

### *1. Bulgaria*

Since this is my native country, I use it as an example of a typical Eastern European society in transition to democracy and market economy, trying to fully integrate itself into the European and world structures. It is a good place to start in terms of what democracy might mean to people outside of the West. Before 1989, under the old Communist regime, the citizens of Bulgaria and Eastern Europe had no political freedom, never participated in free elections, and abuse and neglect of basic human rights were common. However, health care was free of charge and available to all, education was free (including advanced training), general literacy was much higher than in many democracies of the West, and chronic economic indigence and instability were practically nonexistent. Now in Bulgaria, health care and education take up an enormous part of a typical family's income, inflation borders on 100 percent for 1994, and the purchasing power of the people diminishes daily. The political enthusiasm that rose at the beginning of the change toward the democratization of society has yielded to a wave of pessimism and despair. Is this the democracy one would like to present to the world beyond? How is one supposed to believe that having the right to vote is more important than feeding one's children?

## 2. Iraq, Kuwait, and the Gulf War

Take the Gulf War as a perfect example of two very important characteristics of the present ordering of the world. The first one I find very encouraging, the second quite horrifying in terms of global democracy.

I was amazed at the quick and decisive actions the U.N. Security Council took to penalize Iraq for invading Kuwait. This, as Dr. Galtung points out, is an excellent example of international cooperation in a time of crisis. What worries me is the motivation for that cooperation. Why did the U.S. proclaim its concerns over the nondemocratic, almost feudalistic government of Kuwait only *after* the Iraqi invasion? What have been the consequences for democracy in Kuwait after the "rescue"? Did not the invasion by the coalition provoke a devastating civil war in now battered and impoverished Iraq? This is not to acquit Saddam Hussein's regime of the international crimes it glaringly committed but, rather, to challenge the correctness of the intervention. Was it *justified* by the lobbying of the transnational corporations (such as the oil and arms industries)? Was it the West's desire to demonstrate power at a moment when the Soviet Union and the bipolar international system were disintegrating? These are disturbing questions whose answers will affect the inception of a new democratic global governance.

## 3. Bosnia

Compared to the Gulf War, the raging war in Bosnia does not seem to spark as much decisive action by the U.N. and the international community. The economic embargo against Yugoslavia hurts not only millions of innocent people inside the country but also outsiders as well. (It is estimated that Bulgaria and other neighboring countries are experiencing heavy losses due to the embargo, hindering the prospect of economic development.) A few hundred "peacekeeping" troops and a dozen planes filled with humanitarian supplies do not compensate for the longevity and viciousness of the conflict. More people continue to perish in Bosnia than died during the entire 1991 Gulf War. Why, then, does the democratic and righteous West not react to this crisis in a way that would instantly terminate the atrocities? In what way

are peace and democracy in Kuwait more precious than the lives of the war victims in the former Yugoslavia? Why do the powers of the U.S. and Europe not take the initiative with similar alarm and decisiveness and direct the world's attention toward resolving the conflict?

It seems that there are other factors involved. I do not intend to be flippant, but could it be that it is still too early for President Clinton to act since the election is some time off? (We all remember how Bush's popularity skyrocketed during the Gulf War.) Maybe Brussels intentionally closes its eyes, having enough problems of its own in establishing a strong European Union? But, how can one think about global stability and order when Europe is unwilling to act together? Bosnia does not have Kuwait's oil resources, but nobody can convince me that the people of that country are less precious. How, then, are these "outsider" societies to believe in the correctness of Western-propagated democracy when the double standards of the world's democracies are apparent? Who would want *this* democracy, much less to globalize it? Crises like the one in Bosnia provide the best opportunities for the democratic West to convince the rest of the world through just and decisive action that global democracy is feasible and, furthermore, the only alternative. Only by seizing these opportunities can the West expect the cooperation and enthusiasm of the rest of the world.

#### 4. Haiti

While the U.S. Government has not officially declared war on any country since WWII, interventions and attacks on Korea, Vietnam, Libya, and Grenada, among others, can hardly prove U.S. respect for others' sovereignty. President Aristide was ousted in 1991, roughly three years ago. Is the United States' delayed reaction just a coincidence? I realize that the refugee crisis has much to do with the current U.S. position, but according to leading foreign policy experts, the situation in Haiti has become so devastating since the embargo (e.g., in early September a gallon of gas cost eleven U.S. dollars), that, military intervention or not, refugees will continue to sail for the U.S. The question arises: Is the coming intervention really meant to cope with the crisis, or is it meant to send a message that the U.S. can

still invade other countries on the basis of national interest without even a formal declaration of war? If the military dictatorship in Haiti is pushed out and the elected president “returned” to power, how is his government to retain that power in the face of predictions that the country’s economic conditions could worsen immensely? In Haiti today, the average annual income is about \$125, and 1 percent of the population controls 50 percent of the resources. I would like to ask, then, how global democracy and governance would relieve Haiti’s agony? Is this second U.S. intervention going to make a lasting difference?

These four examples are only a small part of the problematique of today’s world order (or disorder). The following conclusions could be made based on the above examples:

- Democracy exists inside some countries but not in others. Moreover, the foreign policy of democratic countries does not always aid the establishment of democracy in other countries. The state in the West is still guided by remnants of imperialism and is oftentimes disabled by the pressures from domestic interest groups.
- The notion that the idea of democracy “won” the moral argument is probably true, but it carries the danger of a righteousness and smugness that could jettison accountability.

### **III. Global Governance**

I agree with Dr. Galtung that the most feasible way to build a system of global governance would be to use the already existing but revised international structures, such as the U.N.

I would like to present a crude sketch of what I view as one possible initiative toward the goal of global democracy and governance. I undertake this with the help of Susan Strange’s work.<sup>2</sup> She stresses that any intelligent reforming of the international system depends upon sophisticated understanding of how the main structures of power — security, production, finance, and knowledge — work as well as their relationships to the fundamental value preferences of all societies: security, justice, freedom, and wealth. First, all nation-states in existence should be recognized by the U.N. and then become active members of the organization in order to assure equal representation for all. On



the issue of equality, I believe that the format of the General Assembly, whereby each and every nation-state receives one vote despite population, area, or other factors, should be continued. The General Assembly would, therefore, function as a World Parliament.

The Security Council should be a subset of that World Parliament where, again, each country is to have one vote. I do not believe the current status of the Security Council (where the United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France, and China have veto power) is just. The power of vetoing the decisions of the Council is either to be terminated or mandated in such a way that, say, every five years, all members of the Security Council vote for a new Veto Block according to the countries' global performance toward global peace. This is my proposal concerning the security structure. The Security Council would have lower status than the General Assembly and would receive its directives from the latter.

Technology today advances at an immense speed. Jacques Attali concludes in *Millennium* that those who have access to these powerful machines will be the ones with real power in tomorrow's world order.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, I propose the establishment of a global Council for Technology where statesmen/women and scientists together (again with equal representation of members) would be responsible for ensuring efficient and fair use of technology.

This would be linked to the work of what I would call the Production Council. Its main purpose would be the balancing of social and economic conditions throughout the world. Progress in these areas could lead to favorable social and political consequences such as declining immigration, reduction of political and military coups, war, and genocide. Poverty, unemployment, and massive pauperism would also drastically diminish, perhaps eventually becoming a tolerable nuisance.

None of this, however, could be accomplished without a strong and unified financial structure. The Council of Finance would become the antithesis of the existing GATT. I propose the termination — or, initially, the minimization — of taxes and tariffs, thereby stimulating economic growth and increasing the living standards of what we call today the Third World societies. The Council of Finance would have as one of its tasks the

investigation of and control over the power of the transnational corporations. This is not to suggest the usurpation of the right of decision-making of each firm; rather, the objective would be to regulate the international activities of those firms in a universal fashion.

#### IV. Conclusion

I cannot elaborate on these sentiments at the moment. However, the complexities they conjure up are important to note. These issues should be approached with a great amount of care and patience in order to avoid bitter scenarios, such as those described by Attali. There is little doubt that the times are both beckoning and frightening. Dr. Galtung has incited us to aim high in our thinking toward a new and more humane world order. I urge everyone to stay attentive to global developments and participate in the intense discussion about where we ought to be, why, and how.

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#### Notes

1. Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations" in *The Clash of Civilizations? The Debate. A Foreign Affairs Reader* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1993).
2. Susan Strange, *States and Markets: An Introduction to International Political Economy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988).
3. Jacques Attali, *Millennium: The Winners and Losers of the Coming World Order* (New York: Times Books, 1991).