Countries Emerging, Immersed, Submerged, and Adrift

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The term "emerging country" so much in vogue today describes not only a specific phenomenon but even more a broader trend that characterizes the current phase of international relations. The phenomenon that provides a starting point for this volume is economic. It relates to the spectacular growth of a certain number of countries (the most currently accepted version being the BRICs, i.e. the four countries identified by analysts at Goldman Sachs in 2003 as breaking away from the developing Southern countries to become major economic powers that share features of the North and the West without, however, joining their club). These countries call into question the dualist structure of the international economic system. This is clearly apparent in WTO talks: their rhetoric often likens them to Southern countries, but their dimensions and their interests sometimes bring them to hold positions close to those of the North, sometimes competing with them, sometimes investing in them and playing an essential role in their own balance and that of the world economy.

But this phenomenon, revolutionary in itself, in no way describes everything new about today's global landscape. States can emerge in other ways than through their economic power. Iran is emerging, especially since the demise of Saddam Hussein, as a potential regional leader, now promoted by the US to the rank of major threat. Hugo Chávez's Venezuela is emerging as the leader of an anti-American coalition. What is emerging more than anything else is not only the newfound power of certain states: it is a number of problems and tendencies and a general feeling of uncertainty and unpredictability that lend the so-called emerging powers their specificity.

Predictability has certainly never been a major feature of international relations. But since the thirty years of Western prosperity and the end of the Cold War, phases are following in increasingly rapid succession. Furthermore, strong trends that certain figures had identified decades ago, but which until now were moving in opposite directions, are today intersecting, thus giving rise to emergency situations that humanity must address even as it lacks the necessary instruments and consensus to face them. What can be said to be emerging more than anything else are "emergencies", while the new actors, new hierarchies, new solutions needed to replace an increasingly fragile old order are long in taking shape. The relevant question is whether we are going through a period of transition towards new international system or have entered a state of permanent contradiction between uncontrollable mobility of trends and networks and an insurmountable paralysis of institutions and governance.

Successive upheavals and underlying evolutions

Four progressively shorter phases, to simplify things considerably, can be identified in the international landscape since 1945. From the end of World War II to the fall of the Berlin Wall, the world in its East-West dimension was dominated by the Cold War, its North-South dimension by decolonization. The two processes sometimes overlapped, particularly in Asia. From a strategic standpoint, the existence of the atomic bomb deeply transformed war and peace by a balance of terror, to the point of giving its name to "the nuclear age". From an economic standpoint, the establishment of international institutions and the dynamism of Western economies ensured an unprecedented era of prosperity that contrasted with the relative stagnation of communist Europe, China's tribulations and the postcolonial difficulties of the Third World. This produced a similar contrast between an integrated and peaceful centre and a periphery threatened primarily by poverty and conflicts, even if some countries, such as Japan and the Asian Tigers, managed to emerge and join the centre.

The second phase, from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the destruction of the Twin Towers near Wall Street, seems to be on one hand a phase of military unipolarity marked by the triumph of "American hyperpower" and, on the other, one of hope for a "new world order" in which a collective security framework would be guaranteed by the UN and, at least in the eyes of the Europeans, by a concert of both multipolar and multilateral powers, acting to prevent conflicts by discouraging aggression and genocide and keeping the peace. Such optimism, in some respects confirmed by the scale of the anti-Iraq coalition in the first Gulf War, was put to a severe test by non-intervention in Rwanda, the failure of the UN and US intervention in Somalia, the delays, ambiguities and contradictions of the intervention in the former Yugoslavia, the failure of the Camp David negotiations

and constant aggravation of the Israel-Palestinian tragedy. However, the idea of a fight for human rights, the advancement of democracy and the duty to interfere has remained a vibrant one. For Western democracies, in any case, globalization rather than war, cold or hot, or nuclear weapons (despite India's and Pakistan's acquisition of them) was the focus of the period and in the long run was supposed to help integrate the East and South into the Western-based world society.

September 11, 2001 changed all that. The eruption of apocalyptic terrorism in the centre (in all meanings of the word) of the international scene threw the fundamental givens of the international system utterly off balance, perhaps for the entire predictable future. First of all, a group of individuals using modern means of communication and destruction in the service of a brand of fanaticism that makes them accept or seek suicide can now inflict on all societies, including the most powerful country in the world, damage of which it was once believed only states were capable. Secondly, the blow was struck from the centre, but its perpetrators came from afar, mostly from an ally of the United States, and their organization and allies or accomplices are spread throughout the world. Differences in nature between imperial power, state power, and the power of sub- or transnational groups were placed in a considerably different perspective by this blow, especially if one pictures those groups in possession of nuclear or biological weapons in the future. The same holds true for the opposition between an integrated and peaceful centre and a divided and violent periphery, and, in the final analysis, for most of the standard geopolitical givens, such as the opposition between land and sea powers, or suggestions of a decisive role for certain geographical situations, such as the *heartland* which, according to Mackinder, supposedly dominates the "World Island", itself supposedly dominating the world.

But these perspectives are valid for the long term. In the short term, it is not the September 11 attacks that changed the world, it is Washington's reactions and the world's reaction to this reaction. The United States, feeling both innocent and vulnerable but at the same time militarily all-powerful, has gone on a "global war on terror" and then on an offensive aiming to do away with tyranny in the world and promote democracy. But this twofold undertaking has only resulted in a spectacular increase in what the reactions to 9/11 had already pointed up: the gap between America's perception of the world and that of almost every other country. Although Western peoples and their governments demonstrated their solidarity with the United States, the sceptical or contemptuous reactions of large swathes of public opinion in the South, especially in Muslim countries, was already striking—displayed in forms ranging from Bin Laden T-shirts to contentment at the punishment inflicted on the arrogance of the powerful, and including dissemination of conspiracy theories implicating the United States or Israel. By lumping together Al Qaeda, the various insurrectional movements of minorities seeking independence and countries in the "axis of evil", starting with Saddam Hussein's Iraq, the

United States war against the latter, its deceitful justifications, its failings and its infringements of human rights in treatment of prisoners, and more generally, its imperialistic attitude reflected in its assuming the right to change other countries' regimes or attack them preventively, have provoked an unprecedented drop in Washington's popularity and credibility, even among its closest allies, from the United Kingdom to Turkey. The more conciliatory attitude adopted after 2004, with plans to promote democracy taking precedence over the war on terror, a greater opening up to multilateral diplomacy, an effort to make progress on the Israeli-Palestinian problem and to reach a common position with the Europeans towards Iran, has certainly relaxed the atmosphere within the West, especially in US relations with France and Germany. But the plan for universal democratization failed in the face of national resistances, the demands of *Realpolitik* and especially the thoughtless reaction to the Palestinian elections, which the US first called for and then contested when the polls handed victory to an adversary of Washington. For the South, the upshot of the second phase is identical to that of the previous one: hypocrisy and powerlessness, even if the excesses of Al Qaeda in Iraq and the rise of Iran give the Americans, at least temporarily, grounds on which to reach an understanding with certain Arab groups and countries.

In short, the crisis in US/world relations seems indeed to lead to the conclusion that the era of American domination and, through it, Western centrality is coming to an end. The United States continues to be by far the most powerful country in the world in terms of "hard power" (if defined by military resources and wealth) and "soft power" (if defined as the preeminence of technology and popular culture). But it now fails to translate either into a political victory.

Since 2003-04, we can consider that we have entered yet a new phase of international affairs, characterized first of all by the crisis of American, and consequently Western, hegemony. This crisis and, we can confidently claim, this relative decline have been greatly hastened and accentuated by the policies of the Bush administration. But other, more general factors, have strongly contributed and made them inevitable. Some pertain to recent political developments: the United States' financial dependence on China, the rise in oil prices, Europe's virtual paralysis as regards foreign policy, especially in energy and military matters (Gomart 2007-2008), Russia's new rise in power and its much more aggressive policy towards Europe and the United States, and China's, India's and Brazil's spectacular economic achievements. The term "multipolarity" can be confusing because it suggests equality and equidistance between poles that are actually very far apart. The fact remains that some countries that have made it their watchword have seen their hopes come true, but often ironically so: for instance, the expected rise in power of Europe and Japan never actually materialized, and they have been replaced by emerging countries, including India and Brazil, whose arrival on the forefront was hardly anticipated in Western assessments (Hassner 2007).

On the whole, however, we have witnessed a spectacular culmination of developments starting a fairly long time ago, and the confirmation of diagnoses that were premature when first formulated. Napoleon Bonaparte in the early 19th century predicted that when China awakened, the world would tremble; Alain Peyrefitte used the expression again in 1980 (Peyrefitte 1980); the prophecy has been fulfilled today. In 1913 Oswald Spengler announced the decline of the West (Spengler 1948) and in 1934 added that the spread of technology would turn against it (Spengler 1934). This diagnosis is more credible today. In the 1950s, it was expected that several dozen countries would have the atomic bomb by 1980. Proliferation has been much slower, but a considerable acceleration is feared today. In 1848, Karl Marx took the world market for granted; in 1970 the Club of Rome announced an energy crunch; today both forecasts have come true or else are realistic. Isolated or minority voices have for decades been warning that if the level of consumption and pollution in developed countries became universally widespread, the planet would not survive (Diamond 2008). Global warming, once ignored or disputed, is now recognized virtually unanimously as a fact that carries major risks, at once physical, human and economic.

Along with US hegemony, globalization is also in crisis. There, too, it is objectively only a relative crisis. Many aspects of globalization, those having to do with the communications revolution, the more general evolution of technology, planetary interdependence, the rise of new producers and consumers, are inevitable and irreversible. The fact nevertheless remains that it increasingly provokes reactions of fear and rejection. The opening up of economies and the primacy of markets lead to a lack of control and overheating, and a quest for immediate profit and a lack of intelligibility that lead to crises such as the subprime crisis; it is virtually impossible to control flows that have become excessive, and this, plus the ineffectiveness of measures against corruption and money laundering, makes predicting the future of the system impossible. In all countries, including the United States, a resurgence of protectionism can be noted, potentially causing conflicts with China, as well as the return of the state via sovereign funds. The latter, which represent a spectacular and healthy reversal, come primarily from the South, naturally arousing concern in the North about their political utilization (Wallerstein 2008).

Here, perhaps, we touch on the most important dimension, which in some respects results from technical, strategic and economic evolutions but which influences them in return at least as strongly. It is the human, cultural and religious dimension. From civil wars to climate change, from famine to identity crises, everything contributes to setting emigrants who can no longer live in their homelands against Northern populations who cannot or do not want to accommodate them or who at best turn them into second-class citizens: suspicious, insecure and uprooted. These emigrants then become the spearhead of another revolt, that of

traditional societies destabilized by the invasion or the spectacle of Western customs, which encourages the rise of religious fundamentalism.

If we add to that the rise in ethnic tensions in certain regions of Africa, which challenge the borders established with colonization and long perceived as guarantees of stability, and the rise of religious tensions, particularly in the Muslim world following the Shia awakening, the oppositions between globalization and identity fragmentation and between cultural traditions and modernization collide, producing an explosive mixture. Emerging countries, at least some of them, play a role of moderator in that they are linked to the former Western centre by interdependence and to the periphery by their investments, which are more welcome than those of the former colonizers. But they are also subject to wariness and envy from the outside and social and ethnic tensions on the inside.

Between insufficient governance and unlikely revolution

We should avoid caricature. First, the old order is not on the verge of collapse; US relations with the rest of the world, and in particular with its allies, are less disastrous than they were two or three years ago. Washington's rapprochement with France under Nicolas Sarkozy and Germany under Angela Merkel is notable, as is the strengthening of its ties with India and Japan. All of these continue to count on United States protection for their energy security. In the Middle East, the Sunni monarchies have drawn closer to the United States and Israel out of fear of Iran. That did not prevent the United States' attempt to remodel the Middle East from failing, a symbol of the West's growing incapacity to promote its ideas and interests in the rest of the world. Admittedly, Western societies themselves have not been transformed by the terrorist threat, barring a few exceptions. Above all, the emergence of India, China, Brazil and a certain number of other countries in Latin America, Asia and even Africa symbolizes economic progress and hope for the populations of the South. East Asia seems to be on the way to a peaceful integration. Recession or not, the world economic crisis is unlikely to bring about a collapse comparable to the one that occurred in 1929. Globalization has probably been positive on the whole for most of humanity. Certainly, it is threatened by problems that we have pointed out, and by the explosive situation in entire regions and key countries such as Pakistan, but the accumulation of all sorts of dangers has led to notable progress in gaining awareness of their gravity.

What can be expected to come out of this newfound awareness? Champions of liberal institutions talk about governance, but are less and less in touch with political, economic and social realities. Alterglobalists claim that "another world is possible" but are incapable of investing it with any substance or identifying the means to achieve it.

If the problems are global, solving them usually implies a common authority or a consensus among actors not only regarding the goals and global solutions, but

also the hierarchy of emergencies and the distribution of efforts and costs. Now in what could be called either a paradoxical or a dialectic fashion, the more the difficulty of controlling financial or human flows limits the power of states and the impermeability of borders, the greater the emphasis people place on their identity and self-interest and the more governments emphasize their sovereignty. The rise of emerging states only exacerbates this tendency and confirms Karl Deutsch's standard definition of international relations as "that area of human action where interdependence meets with inadequate control" (Deutsch 1968).

In fact, the emerging countries and more generally the large majority of the Southern countries insist primarily on their sovereignty. They consider, with some reason, that the rules of international society and good governance reflect Western conceptions and interests. This is flagrant in the field of human rights, where regional or ideological solidarities take precedence over legal or moral criteria. The Arab League refuses to condemn Sudan, the African Union to isolate Zimbabwe. Russia and China, world powers and permanent members of the Security Council, strive to serve sometimes as arbiters, sometimes as mediators, sometimes as balancers in conflicts that pit the United States and Europe against a given country of the South. Above all, China and Russia take advantage of these conflicts, when they arise from moves for sanctions or imposing of conditions with regard to human rights and their violation, to advance their pawns in the competition for strategic positions or energy resources, taking advantage of their indifference to the nature of existing regimes. Of course, the United States and European Union member states also often grant special treatment to both their clients or allies and their competing partner-adversaries that are too powerful to really feel threatened by them.

The limits of governance and multilateralism, due to differences in approaches and interests, are even more apparent when it comes to managing the world economy or resources such as water, oil or nuclear energy, as well as global problems facing the planet. Two examples are particularly persuasive. The United States refused to sign the Kyoto Protocol because some countries such as China are not subject to the same obligations. China, a mouthpiece for emerging countries, maintains that any new restrictions should first apply to countries that have been polluting for two centuries and should not hinder the development of newcomers. Likewise, Europeans, advocates of development aid, tend to levy duties on products from Southern countries in order to protect their own agriculture, thereby causing a loss of earnings that amounts to far more than the aid they grant.

The example of nuclear proliferation is caricatural. The NPT has a hierarchal or dual structure that favours those who possess nuclear weapons over those who aspire to such status. That does not prevent the former from contravening their own doctrine for political reasons (as in the US-Indian Treaty by which the United States, after inflicting sanctions on India because of its acquisition of the atomic

bomb, now grants it cooperation similar to that which NPT signatories enjoy, even though India is still not a party to the treaty) while demanding the imposition of special restrictions on Iran (barring it from enriching uranium) to punish it for having hidden its activities. American strategists who have spent their entire careers dealing with nuclear weapons, such as Henry Kissinger, all of a sudden are calling for their abolition, which the newcomers can only interpret as a measure directed against them. They implicitly reply: "Start by getting rid of yours, or else let us join the club of nuclear powers, and then we'll abolish them together." (Hassner 2007)

The non-proliferation regime is a perfect example of a structure that belongs to another era of the international system, which needs to be renegotiated in a more reciprocal and egalitarian light. At the same time it injects it with an example of an organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, that provides a precious dose of objectivity and relative independence. The IAEA is nevertheless reliant on states that do not hesitate to criticize it or disregard it, as we have seen with Iraq and Iran. The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Court are other examples of salutary but fragile institutions. In any case, it is this dual imperative—the enlargement and rebalancing of organizations and the creation of and support for technical agencies that are independent (at least in their functioning)—that can increase the credibility and effectiveness of multilateralism.

A dual movement in this direction can be detected, that has unequal chances of success. A rebalancing of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank that would bring an end to the intra-Western allocation of leadership positions has been announced. The G-8 may well be enlarged in the near future to include China, India and Brazil, ending a glaring anomaly. However, a similar reform of the United Nations Security Council is far more unlikely. The successive projects to achieve this have all run into two obstacles that can be found throughout the international system. The first is the resistance of the permanent members who want to keep their privileges, and particularly their veto that they do not want to see removed or shared. The second is due to the rivalries among candidates whose entry to the Security Council would grant them a role of special representatives of their region of the world. The two obstacles can be cumulative: for instance, Japan's candidacy encounters resistance from China.

Even if these oppositions were overcome, the Security Council could be paralyzed if the veto were extended to all of its members. If instead a new category were created, that of permanent members with no veto right, it would give rise to another inequality and new frustrations. If the veto right were simply abolished, the UN would be less inegalitarian, but cut off from power relations and any ability to act, like the OSCE. States are not about to renounce their privileges in a big jamboree, like the French nobles did in August 1789, any time soon.

What about societies? We have seen earlier that the problem of economic and environmental inequality cannot be tackled seriously without a radical change in lifestyle in developed countries, including emerging countries. But it is sufficient to look at the resistance of the American public to any idea of an energy tax or a voluntary reduction in energy consumption (for instance in the number of vehicles) to understand how utopian any idea of a peaceful and democratic revolution in favour of saving the planet is. The same holds true for world inequality, on the rise in non-industrialized countries and in those without raw materials, especially food, as it decreases in emerging countries. The big conversion, if it ever happens, will only be driven by necessity. This could take the form of a major catastrophe (nuclear war, epidemics, a gigantic natural or economic tsunami) or religious or totalitarian dictatorship which itself could only be established, especially on a world scale, at the price of a catastrophe as disastrous as the one it would prevent.

Today only partial reforms are accessible in certain domains and in certain regions. Of course they are not on a par with the urgency or the gravity of the problems and dangers facing us, but they can serve as examples and bring out convergences. What makes a direct overall or universal solution impossible is that apart from the very nature of the international universe, anarchic for lack of a world authority, there is not only a plethora of often contradictory problems and emergencies, but also the increasingly dire heterogeneity of the system itself. International society can survive without a world government if anarchy is reduced by the recognition of a hierarchical order of powers or a common conception of legitimacy (Bull 1977). But today power as well as legitimacy, those two key elements of any international system according to Henry Kissinger, are fragmented and contradictory. Between the power of states and that of networks or individuals, the power to destroy, seduce and construct, contradictions abound. As for legitimacy, it is seriously disputed and divided between democratic legitimacy, technocratic legitimacy, historic legitimacy and theocratic legitimacy.

A true long-term accord with no ulterior motives on the ultimate goals, and on the role and responsibility of each, hardly seems accessible in the current phase. But in the face of such risk of a general loss of control, we can hope that a minimal working code of conduct will take hold on this side of fundamental convergences to try to establish a fragile, always threatened balance between antagonism and cooperation, heterogeneity and interconnection, inequality and reciprocity.

For John Foster Dulles, brinkmanship was a strategy. For humanity in its current phase, it is rather a destiny.

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