

Globalisation And Its Fall Out
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By Vandana Shiva

Neither Prosperity nor Peace

Globalization was imposed on the world with a promise of peace and prosperity. Instead we are faced with war and economic crisis. Not only has prosperity proved elusive, the minimal economic securities of people and countries are fast disappearing.

Hunger deaths have started to occur in countries such as Argentina where hunger was never a problem, and starvation has returned to countries like India which had driven away famine like the one of 1942 which killed 2 million people under colonial, and provided food security through public policy shaped by the democratic process of an independent and sovereign country. Even the rich economies of U.S., Europe and Japan are facing a decline. Globalization has clearly failed to improve the well being of citizens or countries.

It has helped some corporations increase their profits and markets, but many corporations like AOL/Time Warner and Enron whose non-sustainable growth was based on deregulation accompanying globalization have themselves either gone bankrupt or lost their value. Following the globalization path is proving to be a recipe for non-sustainability for the rich and impoverishment and destitution for the poor.

Peace was the other promise of globalization but terrorism and war is what we have inherited. Peace was to be a result of increased global prosperity through globalization. Increased poverty is the unfolding reality. And economic insecurity and exclusion is creating conditions for the rise of terrorism and fundamentalism.

Economic and political exclusion, and the erosion of national economic sovereignty is making many young men turn to terrorism and violence as a way of achieving their goals. The erosion of economic nationalism and the growth of economic security is also providing fertile ground for the rise of right wing fundamentalist politics, with parties using the reality of economic insecurity to fan the flames of cultural insecurity, and filling the vacuum left by the collapse of economic nationalism and economic sovereignty with the pseudo nationalist agenda of "cultural nationalism".

At the global level, the rhetoric of "clash of civilizations", and the war against Islam performs the same function as the exclusivist political agendas of cultural nationalism and fundamentalist ideology at the national level.

The Convergence of fundamentalism

Two forms of fundamentalism seem to be converging and becoming mutually reinforcing and mutually supportive.

The first is the market fundamentalism of globalization itself. This fundamentalism redefines life as commodity, society as economy, and the market as the means and end of the human enterprise. The market is being made the organizing principle for the provisioning of food, water, health, education and other basic needs, it is being made the organizing principle for governance, it is being made the measure of our humanity.

Our being human is no longer predicated on the fundamental human rights enshrined in all constitutions and in the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights. It is now conditional on our ability to "buy" our needs on the global marketplace in which the conditions of life -- food, water, health, knowledge have become the ultimate commodities controlled by a handful of corporations. In the market fundamentalism of globalization, everything is a commodity, everything is for sale. Nothing is sacred, there are no fundamental rights of citizens and no fundamental duties of governments.

The market fundamentalism of globalization and the economic exclusion inherent to it is giving rise to, and being reinforced and supported by politics of exclusion emerging in the form of political parties based on "religious fundamentalism"/xenophobia/ethnic cleansing and reinforcement of patriarchies and castism. The culture of commodification has increased violence against women, whether it is in the form of rising domestic violence, increasing cases of rape, an epidemic of female foeticide, and increased trafficking in women.

Globalization as a patriarchal project has reinforced patriarchal exclusions. Atrocities against dalits have also seen an increase as a result of globalization, with higher castes enjoying new power with their integration into the global market place and also wanting to usurp the resources of the poor and marginalized, especially dalits and tribals, for commercial exploitation. Land reform laws, which made the land rights of dalits inalienable have been undone. An attempt is under way to undo the constitutional protection of tribal land rights under Schedule V of the Constitution. Women, dalits, tribals, minorities are special victims of the social and economic impact of globalization. New movements of solidarity such as the Indian People's Campaign against W.T.O. are forging new alliances between diverse movements. However, people's movements are being overtaken by the emerging politics of exclusion.

Economic insecurity makes citizens vulnerable to politics based on exclusion. For those in power, or seeking power, a politics of exclusion is becoming political a necessity. It becomes necessary for filling the vacuum created by the demise of economic sovereignty and the welfare state and substituting a politics based on economic rights with politics identity.

It becomes necessary for deflecting public attention away from the negative impact of globalization and explaining the lack of jobs and livelihoods, and the lack of basic needs satisfaction which result from economic globalization in terms of competition for scarce jobs and resources from "minorities" and "immigrants". Fundamentalism and xenophobia emerge as handmaidens of corporate globalization, dividing, diverting and distracting people, and thus providing insularity and immunity to the globalization project.

In India, every vote since 1991 has been a vote against globalization and trade liberalization which is creating 10 million new unemployed people every year, is pauperizing the peasantry and disenfranchising the marginalized. This changed in

2002 with the Gujarat elections which followed the massacre of 2000 Muslims and the violent engineering of the electoral agenda away from basic needs to a majority -- minority conflict and contest. The arithmetic guaranteed victory to the party which had created a divide between the majority and minority communities and sown mutual fear and hatred through rapes and killings. This violent and exclusivist agenda is now being developed for all forthcoming elections.

And while the killings were underway, and national concern was focussed on fighting communalism and fundamentalism, the globalization agenda was put on fast forward. GMOs were given clearance, Patent laws were changed to allow patents on life, a new water policy was introduced based on water privatization, and new policies were introduced to dismantle farmers livelihood security and people's food security. The 2003 budget has further pushed the globalization agenda, using the diversion of communal and religious divide to dissipate democratic opposition.

In the U.S. and U.K., the war against Iraq has become a convenient diversion from issues of globalization and the rise in unemployment and economic insecurity. A politics of hate is becoming the indirect support for the failed and failing project of globalization.

We need a new politics of solidarity and peace which simultaneously addresses violent and exclusion inherent to globalization, the violence of terrorism and fundamentalism and the violence of war. The different forms of violence and different forms of fundamentalism have common roots, and need a common response. Globalization is intolerant of economic decentralization, economic democracy and economic diversity. Terrorism and fundamentalism are intolerant of cultural diversity. And the war machine is intolerant of the "other" and of peaceful resolution of conflict.

The response to globalization is the protection and defense of our diverse economies at local and national levels. The response to fundamentalism is celebrating our cultural diversities. The response to war is the recognition that the "other" is not a threat but the very precondition of our being.

Imagine how different the world would be if it was based on a philosophy of mutual interdependence instead of the current dominant philosophy which is based on "If I have to be, you must be exterminated" -- or "Your existence is a threat to my existence".

In the world based on interdependence rather than domination, exclusion, extermination, Monsanto would not push a TRIPS agreement that treats the farmers whose seeds Monsanto has patented as "thieves". Monsanto, Syngenta, Ricetec and other Biopirates would recognize that their breeding is based on prior breeding by farmers.

If Biotech corporations could see that humanity depends on biodiversity, and food security needs pollinators and diverse plant species, they would not deploy genetically engineering Bt crops which kill bees and butterflies, they would not create herbicide resistant plants and wipe out plant diversity.

If President Bush could see the Tigris and Euphrates and the Mesopotamian

civilization as ancestors and recognize our common roots in a common evolution, he would not be rushing in to wipe out the historical roots with unmanned bombs and weapons of mass destruction.

If those who control capital could see that their wealth embodies nature's creativity and people's labour, they would not be creating rules of trade that destroy nature and the livelihoods.

The fundamentalism of the market and the fundamentalism of ideologies of hate and intolerance are rooted in fear -- fear of the other, fear of the capacity and creativity of the other, fear of the sovereignty of the other.

We are witnessing the worst expressions of organized violence of humanity against humanity because we are witnessing the wiping out of philosophies of inclusion, compassion and solidarity. This is the highest cost of globalization -- it is destroying our very capacity to be human.

Rediscovering our humanity is the highest imperative to resist and reverse this inhuman project. The debate on globalization is not about the market or the economy. It is about remembering our common humanity. And the danger of forgetting the meaning of being human.