

Latinity among Nations and Civilizations

Alain Touraine

For a long time, the history of the world has been largely the inner history of the western world and particularly its great powers. Among the most important States and societies today, many have belonged to the British Empire, or more often in the twentieth century to the United States, without underestimating the importance of other colonial empires. Russia, Turkey, Japan have likewise created colonial empires. In modern history, what has most escaped these empires and these dominions has been the action of great nomad populations, mainly coming from Central Asia and conquering India, Western Asia and Turkey, until this one, it is turn, penetrated the heart of Europe. One must evidently also acknowledge that not a few populations juridically depending on a great European power, have lived a largely independent social and cultural reality, this has largely been the case of Indian populations in so-called Latin America.

The most important fact early in this century is that the western world, while advancing on nearly all grounds: from science to health, from arts to architecture, is increasingly run over by other worlds, other modes of modernization.

This judgment can only be understood if we briefly define what one can call the western model of modernization that has exercised for a long time a strong hold on nearly the whole world and of which I assert here that it has lost and loses everyday more and more of its monopoly.

In a few words, we must remember that opposite ensembles like China and the Arab World, which had often achieved the highest level of civilization, but did not care first of all about their unity and their integration, Western Europe has created a kind of society and chiefly completely different States and ruling elites. The great countries of Europe have concentrated their resources in the hand of one ruling elite: knowledge, power, money, education. The model has also created as a compensation the inferiority of other categories pushed as far as possible. Which explains that all explanation systems are deservedly speaking of the importance and classes or further the elites by the way of the western world. Salaried workers, colonized peoples, women and children, to a great extent have been defined by this inferiority rather than by their feature.

This strong polarization has been best represented by the image of the steam machine, whose energy production is as great as the potential difference between the hot pole and the cold pole. The western modernization model has pushed this potential difference to the maximum. But the extremely brutal character at the same time effective of western modernization could not work because several kinds of institutions have been developed that have prevented the explosion

of opposing poles. The first kind of institution that has prevented this explosion is evidently the series of measures, repressive or not, which are called social control instrument. But unlike other parts of the world, the western system has mostly stressed repression, rather than the search for conformity. Perhaps Michael Foucault's book *Surveiller et punir* was interpreted as a general definition of western society; it leaves no less than it had the obsession with confinement, surveillance, and further more directly repression. This one is less exercised in the name of religious or political principles, that in the name of society itself and its ability for integration, adaptation to change, and mobilization.

It would be unfair to give these control instruments a predominating importance. All in all, Western Europe has followed another path, by creating mediation and representation institutions. Dominated categories had the possibility of being liberated, often in violent manner, sometimes in negotiated manner indeed even prepared in advance by law. The western world has been, at least as much as the world of power, and the initiative, the one of right topped by the development and independence of the judicial system to the point that major western countries have overdeveloped institutions in charge of defending individuals and citizens against the State itself.

This brief description does not go back to the description given by classical sociology and the presents society as a system whose main functions are setting goals, means for achieving them, formation of new members and repression

of deviant ones. It is even a contrary image that one must have of society, the one I have just indicated and that rests on extreme inner tensions at the same time that on creation action of an outstanding conquest capability, which had indeed given conquering countries a quick supremacy, backed by their weapons, their science, their administrations and by the output of their investments. But it is about a quite complex system, which allies resource concentration to conflict management and liberation of the spirit products

It is harder to define this “holding together” of the elements of this system. The most current explanation is the creation of the national State, taking the place of absolute monarchies and also of city-States, which has given political unities “sovereignty” exercised inside itself becoming legitimacy even more than on outside rivals.

This brief presentation is sufficient to introduce a general hypothesis: one of decomposition, or weakening or further overflow of this modernization mode by others. More precisely, the hypothesis introduced here is that this western modernization model has been jointly overflowed by two other types of modernization: on the one hand an extreme capitalism that breaks away from all institutions and social life rules and particularly overflowing national States, as completely as the one that overflows or at least weakens the National State.

The other overflow comes from a completely opposed horizon: it is about moving great ensembles that had remained motionless at the time when the west rolled off, car-

ing about their integration and their balance more than about the foreign world by knowledge and weapons. China is an example of this new development that already weighs heavier on the whole world. Whereas the west has dealt with its dynamism and its conflicts by a growing inner differentiation, which goes farther than the famous separation of powers, in other models, we watch the contrary to a unifying mobilization process, on the direction of single more total center or even totalitarian of power.

Little does it matter here that this center is political, ethnic or religious nature, it is really about a general resource mobilization allowing making accelerated progress at a human cost that would not be bearable in other modernization models. One might make the hypothesis that in the vast Arab-Muslim ensemble centers are formed or even a general mobilization center, but its weakness prohibits transforming in industrialization and modernization bases and consequently devotes a large part of its resources to the struggle against the “foreigner” and particularly against the west, longtime colonizer, conqueror and missionary.

If we accept this hypothesis that must be—at least very briefly—presented, a question is imposed on the western world itself, but the answer brought to this question of the greatest importance to the whole world: what is the future, of the western world that has progressively lost, mostly in the twentieth century, its inner power, that is, the strength of its tensions and its internal struggles. Once this citizen movement has overthrown absolute monarchies the labor

movement has limited employers' authority, colonized are liberated and the tutelage that they suffered and that women have acquired thanks to the feminist movement freedoms and forms of equality that seemed rather a century off reach, the western world is not reduced to becoming a simple consumer world, taking advantage of for a time perhaps quite long, remarkably higher standard of living, freedom and creativity than the rest of the world, but has lost all dynamic principle, all investment and conquest capability. This question should be particularly asked in Europe but also in the United States being a part in central manner of the western modernization mode, they are also the center of an empire, which at first was of economic and technological nature and that we have named by convenience the globalization universe.

It is indeed first the formation of this new organization mode that we must be interested in. Because its novelty is often misunderstood and conceived in a too narrow manner. It is imagined that production and exchange internationalization and the growing influence of the financial system over the economy ensemble essentially constitutes what one calls globalization. However, all these phenomena were already predictably and well defined in the early twentieth century. They were then called imperialism, particularly among German thinkers, a word whose meaning were very close to the one of globalization and also forebode the same ambiguities. Indeed, what is deeply new is that the economy global application separates it from the ensemble of social,

political, cultural institutions and even of private conducts in a large part of the world. This break of the economy and of what was called society, drags along its decomposition that tries to reduce itself to a set of initiative or even control management, whose capability for action is considerably weaker than the one of state-nations. It is often spoken about local government, corporatism, voluntary organization and quite a few other forms of limited, localized power often reduced to influence mechanisms, But nothing takes the place of the State as the unifying principle in the social ensemble.

Globalization therefore has, as a direct consequence and even as direction what we can call the end of economic-social ensembles under the authority of a national or local State. We have been accustomed, particularly by modern historian to speaking of economic-social ensembles, as if these two categories could be separated one from the other, that we have often hardly understood that this separation has been accomplished and continues to deepen since the early twentieth century, but in much since that totalitarian system to which I will slightly refer less visible manner have been undone and that the illusion even inside the west of the total modernization mode has resulted in bloody failures.

Globalization has increasingly isolated the United States from developed Europe, in fact, not from the economic and technological preeminence of the United States, but indeed that the latter, in the name of its power itself, became in charge of managing to its profit, world affaires by replacing, where applicable, weakened European National States. The

United States today appears as a blend of two sets of realities that are often in contradiction one with the other. The first is to push farther the capability for creating conflicts and conflict resolution mechanisms that characterize the western model; the other face is responding to the pressure by foreign pressure of mobilization of the same kind, centered on objectives at the same time religious and warlike, rather than economical and technological.

Whereas European countries to which we must add Japan, keep certain strength in production, consumption and communication order, none of these countries can claim a hegemonic role and even an important intervention in world affairs. We see it with particular clarity in the Middle East, where western Europe does not interfere in the struggle between Israelis and Palestinians, which is of central importance, but only finding Palestinian resistance, without having said a single word in the search for durable negotiations and solutions.

This duality of American society and State is so neat that it entails a growing ambivalence from others in the world toward the most powerful one among them. It is true that the United States has carried to the highest level the western model features; it is well as true that it has built its own hegemony, that they manage more and more according to religious, ideological or properly imperialist principles.

It is this search for hegemony that had led the most important countries to try to create new modernization mode that they introduced into a westernized world itself, to sev-

eral degrees, it is true, mobilization and action methods as we have seen and that we see in action outside Europe. We have spoken of totalitarianism in that case, and the most extreme case was of nazi Germany, because this country was in the very center of western modernization history, when it was insisted largely deservedly, on components or non-western of the soviet system that was imposed on the eastern half of Europe and at the same time a large part of Central Asia and even more in huge China, and in developing countries such as Vietnam, North Korea and others.

The victory of democracies over totalitarian systems marks the highest point of western history, its most glorious achievement, because it is principles of freedom and creativity that have outweighed countries such as Germany or the Soviet Union that had equal or superior material resources and technique. When we must speak of the western model weakening in light of more state-controlled and societal model, we must not forget that this western model has demonstrated in the course of the twentieth century its ability to give victory to the best of itself against the worst of itself.

Now we can, after these short indications, approach the question that it at the core of this reflection: what is the future, what are already the current trends of the European modernization model that has been extended and perennial not only in Europe, but in Europeanized territories, in first place Latin America but also certain more restricted spaces in Asia an Africa?. What may the resistance and initiative

force be in this European world in face of United States hegemony and on the other side, accelerated growth of a China submitted to an absolute power?

The first answers suggesting observation of current Europe are pessimistic. European constitution that has driven so many favorable effects also seems to have reduced the countries of the continent to be just members of economic interest association. Europe, no more than the Euro itself, are not capable of competing with American power. European countries seem to be more concerned with reducing their social security system deficits, or resuming an even modest economic growth. European country inhabitants, as such, do not take any responsibility or historical mission. This negative observation should be rejected or contested, but one must start by accepting it because it quite unarguably corresponds to the mediocrity climate dominating European public life, where traditional parties no longer seem to be opposed one to the others, where labor unions in many countries have lost the essential of their strength and mostly where general world problems only arouse a televiewer interest. If we do not wish to hold to this pessimistic but unarguably accurate finding, we must try to build an image of what Europe might be and what we could think and want.

But the first condition to reach such construction is to leave the European framework itself. Which is not hard because certain countries such as Great Britain are closely associated with the United States and former communist countries devote all their activities and their thinking to a

difficult integration into the European Union. The other countries have no unity, but something left of the driving role that had been performed for such long time par the Franco-German couple. But it is wiser to forswear the European framework very branded by the economy and choose a more proactive approach and consequently more detached from economic and territorial realities. It is here that the idea of *Latinity* might intervene, such as developed particularly by Candido Mendes from Rio de Janeiro. The advantage of this notion is of being absolutely *artificial*, that is, not defending a culture, a tradition or a language. The Latinity idea is first of all the expression of part of Europe, or even its totality, of bestowing on itself a creative role in today's world. We must not then say in all logic the world of Latinity to such and such objective, It is fairer to say and mostly more interesting to acknowledge that it is the will to create an independent project for Europe playing an important role in a world system dominated by increasingly marked plurality of modernization models.

The Latinity idea is linked first of all to the idea of non-power. But what characterized Europe where Euro-Latin and Latin American Latinity is the awareness of not possessing power and not looking for exercising power at world level. The Latinity idea has even introduced a will to define a society or a culture by foreign finalities into political power world, such as economic hegemony. The first formulation presenting itself to the spirit and best corresponding to the frame of mind of Europeans and Latin Americans

wants to give priority to phenomena and internal social players over all political-military representations or further military religious that have acquired such importance in today's world.

Even the fact that no political power or no religious force corresponds to what we call Latinity means that it is defined by secularization and that can also call secularism, and by the assertion that the powers of the State and even of institutions must be subordinated to rules and values subordinating everything that is social and political to requirements that are at the same time of freedom, democracy and human rights ethics. This wishful subordination, of all that comes close to power, all that constitutes power seems to place Europe in a situation of dependence, indeed even of insignificance. It is for no other simple reason that world problems are not dominated by a society or an empire but by competition indeed even the warlike relation among several social and geopolitical zones.

The role of Europe is more precisely what we call here that Latinity should exercise constant pressure on both east and west, the north as well as the south in order to re-penetrate democracy, secularization and universalism in all parts of the world and chiefly the ones where power outweighs social institutions and the ones over rights and individual and group demands. The formulation of such a role does not lead at all to banalities and limited statements to principles with no concrete effects. What we name Latinity must be in charge of constant will to intervene in all parts of the world

to have democracy or secularization triumph, mostly where these principles are accepted in principle and respected in fact.

It is no longer acceptable, for example, for the Latinity world to accept nearly without protesting official conducts by the United States that are in overt contradiction to the principles that have just been expressed and that are equally the basis of American constitution. At the time when the Iraq war was launched, in nearly all European cities where were manifestations against the war. Such initiative is exemplary of what may constitute a European will, which we call here Latinity, and whether it tries to correspond to a certain number of countries that keep where they conquered true initiative and movement freedom in comparison with the United States.

But this demand cannot be separated from the one leading it, in parallel, to condemn the absence of public freedom, particularly in China, or in other countries. This leads to very concrete position taking, such as, for example, supporting the independence of Taiwan has in fact become a democracy. It is not about the Latin world and for the European world to defend no matter which minority in no matter which context, but to the contrary constantly redeeming a priority for the defense of what is more directly binding an ethical and political conception resting on defending the universal character of individual rights.

Such orientation would not be far from the one imputed to United Nations bodies by their founding texts. But what

brings the Latinity idea to the one of Europe is giving a concrete base to this United Nations universalism, which cannot be supported by a hegemonic power or holding a dominating position in international affairs. The weakness, one would say, of this position is the one into which the idea of intrusion right, drawn up by Bernard Kouchner has collided. It is certain that one cannot, in the name of human rights infringements, attack China or the United States, as one could eventually attack North Korea or condemn the Kuwait invasion that led to the first war against Iraq.

But the essential cannot be situated on an international or planetary level. It is the interior of the world that takes the word in the name of Latinity or Europe that the essential of the work must be accomplished. The treatment of minorities, the search for equality of chances, creation of new forms of positive discrimination, all these principles should transform political life of concerned countries and at least override a French republican egalitarianism whose counter-effects are often demonstrated.

The “civilization clash” has prevented understanding over the last decades the action of those who want to transform society not only by denouncing inequalities and marginalizing an important part of the population but mostly by bringing innovating responses to liberty, equality and justice demands. The question that must be asked is therefore: are the countries where social groups or institutions claiming for Latinity even indeed the European idea ready to apply in their own operation, and therefore in their own

laws and regulations different principles from the ones applied up to the present, but have only received their first expression at European level? In other words, are we ready to consider of core principles of our laws and our organization forms the defense of liberties that often appear as courageous but unrealistic in a past experience? Let us admit that there are territories where the weight of the State and its reason of state are less felt than in other parts of the world? And, is it reasonable to think that a Europe that has seen the birth of national States in his history has been dominated by wars and conflicts among national States, has become not a Switzerland at world scale but a place where new forms of fighting failures of poor operation are tried, even crimes by national and supranational institutions? This action turned inside out is the most important one, the one of that must give in concrete, territorial reality, to the Latinity or Europe idea. But we cannot separate a second important function that reducing as much as possible signs of conflicts.

Very heavy defeats have been followed by Europeans in settling conflicts in Bosnia; what to say of the weakness, to say the least, shown by several States in Rwanda genocide prevention or in the efforts to limit massacres. It is not artificial at all to think of a time where politics is often focused on war or oil supply, imagining that social and cultural problems, the defense of necessary universalist values to communication and to the defense of identities and cultural diversity can be combined. Nearly everywhere and in all domains, the difficulty in matching opposites, which corre-

sponds to the creation of situations producing ambivalent reactions to resort to an increasingly used by sociologists.

One must show the practical importance as much as the theoretical collective space redefinition as being governed by other principles than those of war, economic competition or political and religious crusades. One speaks so much about civilian society that it loses its autonomy or its influence over the world of the State. Its disappearance has been announced, which to the contrary hold an increasingly central place to the extent that the old European modernization model yields its place to new models either on the American side or the Chinese side and other countries. We can answer that the main purpose is to achieve civilian society rebirth, but it is more explicit to speak about and democracy rebirth campaign, because it only exists in the extent where citizens and therefore civilian society have the capability to exercise determining control and influence over all activities of the States, from public administration to international war.

In conclusion, it is not by these specific, political, economic and social characters, that the Latinity idea must be defined, it is first of all by opposition to the competing modernization model that destroys separation of powers, secularization principles and respect for human rights that had held a central place in the political idea system on which the first democracies born in Europe or North America were built. Whatever the chances are of achieving concrete objectives, it is of extreme importance to hear the voices and intervening initiatives designed to limits forms of competition

or conflicts among large state-controlled blocks; it is indispensable to establish new societies not on production forces and organization rules but on individual and citizen defense demands in face of the State, economic systems and even political strategies of organized groups at all levels.

Is it not possible to include in today's and tomorrow's world political geography the existence of a society and an imaginary region, but whose definition is built on what constitutes the most courageous and most effective part of European modernization mode from *Philosophy of Enlightenment*?

It is not a question here to appeal to a Latinity, a Mediterranean, a west charged with all virtues that are powerless in the midst of giants that are divided in the modern world. It is less a still nostalgic question of a reinvented past without almost no relation to a reality that was as brutal as our present. It must be made perfectly clear that Latinity is a live, important idea that because it does not designate an imaginary country, which also means, and this reminder is of great importance, that Latinity citizens are not born inside State borders whose origins are linked to the Roman empire. They should be considered as Latin, that is, as relatively unreal, all intellectuals that are American or Ukrainian or even Chinese who attach a predominant importance to the theme of liberty and democracy, brief, who see social life from the bottom, in a century where leaders perceive from above, atop nuclear warheads, like the Chief of Staff and central governments, It is therefore an appeal to a gathering and no

longer the greatest capacity for protestations and collective propositions, which are addressed in this speech on Latinity. We easily guess that Latinity borders can increasingly extent broadly and incorporate in its imaginary borders men and women of goodwill and courage everywhere in the world.