

Introduction

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1 National democracies in a globalized world

Through what has been called by Samuel Huntington (1991) 'the third wave', started in 1974 by the Portuguese revolution, the most part of the international community is today and for the first time in history composed of democracies. After the collapse of fascist regimes in Southern Europe, Latin America and Asia, and communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) during the last quarter of the 20th century, the beginning of the 21st century is witnessing a democratic revolution in the Arab World. According to the findings of *Freedom in the World 2012*, the 2012 Freedom House annual report on political rights and civil liberties, in 2011 in the world there were 117 electoral democracies and 87 liberal democracies representing, respectively, 4,500 m. and 3,000 m. people (Freedom House 2012). That could lead to the conclusion that democracy has defeated all its rivals.

Nevertheless, despite this process, democracy has never before shown such worrying signs of weakness: today, many scholars point out that we are facing an increasing crisis of democracy, mainly caused by globalization. Democracy must be reconsidered in the light of globalization and global challenges, which cause problems that cannot be addressed within national borders. As a matter of fact, there is no national solution to climate change, or nuclear proliferation, or the international financial and economic crisis, or mass illegal migration. Yet normal democratic procedures are inextricably bound to the institutions of the national states, which can address only second-class issues.

While at national level, where the democratic powers still lie, there are fewer and fewer important decisions to be taken, at the international level there are not democratic institutions, but governmental actors (the Great Powers) or non-governmental actors (such as banks and transnational corporations, global civil society movements, mass media, criminal and terrorist organizations, etc.), which are beyond any democratic control. The feeling widely shared among citizens is that the most important decisions have migrated away from institutions under their control and towards international power centres free from any form of democratic supervision. For genuine democrats, it is unacceptable to leave these important decisions without popular control. Of course, there are powerful conservative political forces that oppose this project, as they think that the United Nations (UN) and any international organization are not, cannot and should not be democratic institutions.

At the world level there is a widening gap between the states, the power of which remains substantially confined within national borders, on the one hand, and market and civil society, which have acquired a global dimension, on the other. The latter have become global while politics remain national. This contradiction has a heavy impact on democracy. The problem can be summarized by the fact that, as George Monbiot points out, 'in our age everything has been globalised except our consent. Democracy alone has been confined in the nation state. It stands at the national borders, suitcase in hand, without a passport' (Monbiot 2003, 1). Under these circumstances many authors ask themselves how long democracy can survive in a world in which citizens are excluded from decision making on the future of mankind. Democracy is destined to decline, unless it becomes international. Globalization must be democratized before it destroys democracy.

2 Why international organizations?

When it was first conceived by Immanuel Kant in his essay on perpetual peace (Kant 1988), the idea of international democracy was only a dream of reason. In other words, it was an impracticable project.

It is to be recollected that in the same span of time, during the American Revolution, the colonists claimed representation in the Westminster Parliament. It was clearly impossible to organize representative democracy within so vast an area that included the two shores of the Atlantic. *Opposuit natura* (nature was opposing), Edmund Burke (1975, 153) regretfully noted, adding that the obstacle was represented by the eternal barriers of creation.

Today, this impediment no longer exists. Aviation enables the representatives of all UN member states to gather every year in September in New York for the General Assembly meeting. This means that assembling a world government and a world parliament has been brought within the range of possibility by the evolution of technology.

In his *Principle of Federation*, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon wrote: 'The twentieth century will open the age of federations, or else humanity will undergo another purgatory of a thousand years' (Proudhon 1979, 68–69). In the light of this forerunning prediction, we have to explain first why the 20th century was the age of international organizations, and second why they have shown the tendency to democratize their structures.

Governments' answer to regional integration and globalization has been to pursue international co-operation, not by choice, but due to the absence of alternatives. There is no national answer, in fact, to problems that have regional and global dimensions. The ever more frequent creation of international organizations represents the road taken by governments for finding a solution to problems that they cannot solve alone. The most significant are the European Union (EU), for its tendency to evolve toward a federal shape of government, and the UN for its vocation to universality.

A quantitative datum is sufficient to appreciate the importance of the phenomenon of international organizations: the incredible speed at which their number has grown since the beginning of the 20th century. The systematic exploration of this field is provided by the *Yearbook of International Organisations*, where the evolution of the phenomenon is constantly monitored and updated. In order to perceive its dimension, the following data are sufficient. According to comprehensive criteria utilized by the Yearbook, which includes not only the international organizations instituted by states, but also those promoted by international organizations, the intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) numbered 37 in 1909 and their number grew to 7,608 in 2011, while the number of active non-governmental organizations (NGOs), at 176 in 1909, has grown to 56,834 in 2011 (Union of International Associations 2011, 33–35).¹

International organizations assure co-operation and a minimum amount of norms necessary to assure the international order without the support of an organized government. They manifest the need to assure guidance to international politics and economy, without resorting to new powers at international level or even to a world government. Whereas they imply the existence of state governments, they consider non-essential the institution of higher levels of government on the regional and world planes. However, they represent a landmark achievement: a step toward a peaceful management of international relations.

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3 The stages of development of the mode of production and the enlargement of political communities

In order to explain the proliferation of international organizations, I suggest using the theoretical lens of historical materialism. It is a cultural tradition almost completely forgotten. This is due in part to the fact that it has been swept away by the disrepute that affected Marxism after the fall of the communist regimes. This is a gross mistake, because in Marxist thought there should be a distinction made between the normative aspects (the communist ideology) and the ones that are just of a theoretical nature (historical materialism). In fact, in the body of Marxist thought it is possible to isolate the core of a scientific theory—historical materialism—that allows one to know (more precisely, to describe, explain and forecast) a significant part of historical and social reality. The explanation of historical and social facts presupposes a theory, that is to say a set of uniformities typical of empirically observable behaviours. These uniformities are constructed through an abstraction procedure that isolates some elements from within the inexhaustible multiplicity of empirical data, and co-ordinates them in a coherent framework. The result of such a procedure of abstraction, which Max Weber called ‘ideal type’, does not coincide with reality, but is the indispensable instrument for assessing its significant aspects with regard to the viewpoint the researcher has adopted. The scientific core of historical materialism can be included, according to Weber, in the methodological context of contemporary historical and social sciences and be considered as an ‘ideal-type’ concept. Weber explicitly recognized that ‘Marxian “laws” and developmental constructs—insofar as they are theoretically sound—are ideal types. The eminent, indeed unique, heuristic significance of these ideal types when they are used for the assessment of reality is known to everyone who has ever employed Marxian concepts and hypotheses’ (Weber 1949, 103).

With regard to the changing fortunes of the materialistic conception of history, he observed that ‘following a period of boundless over-estimation, the danger now exists that its scientific value will be underestimated’ (Weber 1949, 69–70). Weber wrote that reflection in 1904, hence in a political and cultural context quite distant from the present one. However, it retains all its topicality in an era, like ours, that has witnessed the collapse of communist regimes.

The fundamental assumption of historical materialism is that the first condition of human history consists of concrete individuals producing their means of subsistence through which they satisfy their basic physical needs. If we utilize this conception of history as a ‘simple, albeit fruitful, canon of historical interpretation’ (this expression was coined by Benedetto Croce (Croce 1914, 65)), the type of determinism exercised by the mode of production is not conceived as the sole factor influencing the nature of political, juridical, cultural and other social phenomena. According to this explanatory scheme, determinism does not proceed only in one direction (economic determinism), but is compatible with the mutual influence of political, juridical, cultural and social factors on material production. For instance, Max Weber, in his works on the sociology of religion, highlighted how a cultural factor—the ethics of religions—influenced the evolution of the economic systems.

If we accept the idea of a mutual influence between the different factors that contribute to determine the course of history, we can consider the mode of production as the factor that exerts a decisive impact on the structure and the dimension of the state and international relations. More specifically, a relationship can be established between the mode of production and the state dimension, in particular between the agricultural mode of production and the city-state, between the first phase of the industrial mode of production (utilization of coal and the steam engine) and the nation-state, between the second phase of the industrial mode of production (utilization of electricity, oil and the internal combustion engine) and the state of dimensions as big as entire regions of the world. With the scientific revolution of material production (and the revolution in telecommunications and transport) the World Federation becomes possible and necessary. There is, therefore, a specific relationship between the globalization process, which is nothing more than an economic and social integration process on a world scale, and the scientific mode of production. This process, as slow as its evolution may be, creates the economic and social basis for the formation of a global market, a global civil society and global forms of statehood.

It is important to specify that the processes of European unification and globalization belong to two different historical epochs and to two different phases in the evolution of the mode of production: the second phase of the industrial mode of production and the scientific mode of

production, respectively. The very changes that made great political unions possible make states that preserve the old dimensions insignificant and outdated. Just as national states after the Second World War were condemned to decline and be reduced to the status of satellites of the two superpowers, states like the USA and Russia, with dimensions once considered gigantic, are now declining under the thrust of globalization that is eroding their sovereignty.

From the examples illustrated above, to claim that the state is conditioned by the mode of production does not, however, mean that the latter lacks a relative autonomy and that it has an insignificant role in determining the course of history. What else but political autonomy can explain the formation of the Roman Empire in a phase of history in which the agricultural mode of production did not allow the construction of well-organized states larger than a city and the surrounding territory? After having defeated all of its enemies, Rome in fact became an empire that covered nearly the entire known world at the time. It is thus a political-military factor—the power acquired by Rome, which met no appreciable resistance by the other states—that explains the dimensions assumed by the Roman Empire. It must be emphasized, however, that the latter managed to govern, from a single centre, a territory so vast so that the internal divisions and the pressure of other populations at its borders did not cause it to break up.

It is also the autonomy of politics that explains the survival of city-states like San Marino, Monaco and Andorra, which are UN member states in an epoch in which the state tends to assume macro-regional dimensions. These examples illustrate the resistance that political institutions offer to change. Nevertheless, we should not forget that conserving old forms of political organization has a price: decline and subordination to states having another scale of magnitude.

4 The enlargement of the dimensions of the state and the peace process

The process of broadening the dimensions of the state illustrated above, which developed as a consequence of the great turning points in the evolution of the mode of production, is also a peace process among ever larger groups of human beings. The evolution of the mode of production is a blind force that constantly broadens the dimension of social relations until unifying mankind. The enlargement of the dimensions of the state is the political response to the need for governing this process. It is a true process of civilization in the course of which, through the law and the state, human societies expel violence from social relations by constructing ever larger political communities. Since state borders are also the borders between war and peace and between law and anarchy, the progressive broadening of the dimension of the state shifts war (in the mists of time tribal warfare) first to the borders between cities, then nations, then great regions of the world. We can formulate the hypothesis that the last stage of this process will be World Federation, which will make it possible to achieve the Kantian design of perpetual peace.

Kant defined peace as that situation that does not seek ‘merely to stop *one* war’, but ‘seeks to end *all* wars forever’ (Kant 1988, 117). Peace is not merely ‘the suspension of hostilities’ in the period between two wars (negative peace) (Kant 1988, 111). ‘The state of peace [is not] a natural state’, but is something that ‘must be *established*’ through the creation of a legal order and guaranteed by a power above the states (positive peace) (Kant 1988, 111). Defining peace as the political organization that makes war impossible, Kant rigorously identified the dividing line that separates peace from war, and placed truce (i.e. the situation in which the threat of renewed hostilities remains even though they have provisionally ceased) in the field of war. For Kant the fundamental condition of peace is thus the law, or better the extension of the rule of law to all social relations, particularly to the sphere of international relations. In other words, the peace process is a process of constitutionalization of international relations.

In the preceding sections I have illustrated the relationship between the mode of production and political institutions, which provides the most general conceptual framework for the analysis of international organizations. This theory can be articulated in four directions. From the great variety of theoretical models, I have selected the following elements, which can be conceived as the building blocks of a general theory of international organizations: a) economic integration; b) the political factor; c) the role of political leadership; and d) the cultural factor.

5 The stages of economic integration

Unlike the Philadelphia Convention, which framed in 1787, in the short span of four months, the Constitution of the USA, the dominant feature of the new rising regional organizations is that of a gradual process of integration starting from trade agreements. The EU is the model and vanguard of this process. In a very early phase of the construction of the EU, Bela Balassa drew up *The Theory of Economic Integration*, a classic work on the stages of economic integration. He defined economic integration as 'a process' that aims 'to abolish discrimination between economic units belonging to different national states' (Balassa 1961, 1). Moreover, he distinguished integration from co-operation, which aims 'at lessening discrimination' between national economies and belongs to the domain of the international agreements between independent states.

Albeit he did not assign due importance to the political conditions of economic integration, it is still useful to recollect his typology of the stages of economic integration and stress that he believed that economic integration leads to political unions and possibly to federations of states.

In a *free-trade area*, tariffs (and quantitative restrictions) between the participating countries are abolished, but each country retains its own tariffs against non-members. Establishing a *customs union* involves, besides the suppression of discrimination in the field of commodity movements within the union, the equalisation of tariffs in trade with non-member countries. A higher form of economic integration is attained in a *common market*, where not only trade restrictions but also restrictions on factor movements are abolished. An *economic union*, as distinct from a common market, combines the suppression of restrictions on commodity and factor movements with some degree of harmonisation of national economic policies, in order to remove discrimination that was due to disparities in these policies. Finally *total economic integration* presupposes the unification of monetary, fiscal, social, and countercyclical policies and requires the setting-up of a supra-national authority whose decisions are binding for the member states.

(Balassa 1961, 2, emphases added)

If we consider that the evolution of European integration has gone beyond the stage of the monetary union and currently is engaged in the construction of a fiscal and banking union, we can draw the conclusion that Balassa's theory has been confirmed by history, even though the process is still unaccomplished. It is to be noted that, albeit the aim of federation has not been attained, it would be incorrect simply to define the Community as a confederation. Its peculiarity is that its institutional order is the result of an interlacement of confederal and federal thrusts. It compounds the defence of national interests and the necessity to take decisions in common, which represents the typical aspect of confederations, but at the same time it has been devised so as to adapt itself to the step-by-step nature of the unification process, which, by creating an ever deeper 'de facto solidarity' (Monnet 1976, 355), subjects the Community institutions to a permanent tension and makes them evolve up to the goal of federal union. The history of European unification shows that the federation cannot be made through one big leap. 'Europe will not be made all of a sudden, nor by a coordinated construction' (Monnet 1976, 355). It is a process that progresses through a series of successive constitutional acts, which, for some aspects, may be compared to the formation of the modern state.

Let us consider a little closer the two models to see Europe's unification project: functionalism and constitutionalism. Monnet's functionalist approach is a method that allows partial sectors to be integrated, in order to create a de facto solidarity among the states and to make ceding sovereignty easier. Spinelli's constitutional approach suggests, instead, squarely confronting the problem of creating an irrevocable system of federal government. Historical experience has shown that the functionalist strategy has made it possible to initiate, but not to bring to conclusion, European unification. The conclusion of the process requires a mobilization of a constituent power and a constitutional solution. Therefore, the two approaches can be considered complementary: Monnet's has allowed to initiate the process of European integration, Spinelli's is indispensable for bringing it to conclusion.

6 The political factor

The observation of the slow ripening of an historical process enables the ascertainment of the existence of sufficient conditions for the successful outcome of a unification process. It points out only a possibility. There is no guarantee that an international organization and finally a state, or a federation of states, could come into existence as the product of the evolution of a unification process. Of course, the latter modifies the behaviour of national governments, since it weakens states' independence and leads them to seek a solution to common problems through co-operation. Economic integration and the functionalist method are an answer to the new needs of international politics.

However, the functionalist notion of a 'working peace system' (Mitrany 1943) through economic interdependence remains a half-truth. On the one hand, it is right when it highlights an economic and social prerequisite of peace: the driving force of the unification process (Haas 1987). On the other hand, it is wrong when it interprets interdependence as a self-regulated process. It neglects the political dimension of the process, i.e. the fact that it needs to be governed through political institutions designed to replace violence in international relations with the rule of law.

The contemporary expression of this idea is so-called 'market fundamentalism', according to which the free play of market forces promotes the universal spread of wealth, freedom and peace. The leaders of market fundamentalism did not confine themselves to abstain from intervening in market mechanisms, but practised also an active deregulation. In this way, they abdicated their responsibility to regulate the market and civil society. The consequence was the triumph of the economic and social potentates and the spread of violence of organized crime and international terrorism.

The economic order implies rules and a government, i.e. a political order. Without adequate institutions and rules, international economy cannot be regulated. It is worth recollecting that more than two centuries ago Adam Smith emphasized that the orderly working of market mechanisms is not only the result of the spontaneous weave of social relations. It requires public goods provided by the state, such as national defence, law and order, money and public works (Smith 1904, book 5, chapter 1). In the contemporary world, this list has been extended with the inclusion, for example, of income redistribution and antitrust policies.

Economic forces alone cannot generate the social cohesion necessary to make the market work. The latter takes shape from the laws that regulate it and in the context of the political order that governs it. Only the state can guarantee real market cohesion among clashing economic interests. Even though we do not neglect the mutual influence between economic structures and law and politics, the fact is that the market order is shaped by political power that makes the laws obeyed within the state's territory.

Lionel Robbins observed that the market is an institution needing 'a mechanism capable to defend law and order. However, whereas this mechanism, if imperfect, exists within nations, there is no similar mechanism functioning on the international plane' (Robbins 1937, 240). Therefore, he defined anarchists as those who believe in a spontaneous harmony among the market actors and came to the conclusion that to govern the world market, there is need for political institutions that perform the same functions on the international level as the state performs towards the national market, i.e. a World Federation. This logical conclusion has a weak point nevertheless. It does not explain how it has been possible, ever since the 19th century, to establish an embryonic form of world market without world government. Scholars of international political economy, a new branch of economic studies, have pointed out that in certain periods of history, hierarchies of power develop in international relations between states that perform the task of ensuring a relative international economic order, albeit with the precariousness and mutability typical of international relations. The role of the navy and the trading hegemony of Great Britain ensured the cohesion of the world market during the 19th century and the corresponding role was played by the USA during the 20th century.

This means that 'a hegemon is necessary to the existence of a liberal international economy', as argued by Robert Gilpin (1987, 88). The theory of 'international public goods without international government', elaborated by Charles Kindleberger (1988, chapter 9), shows that the functioning of the international market requires a 'stabilizer', a hegemonic power that guarantees that the international actors comply with common rules. This means that the dominant power exercises a military function, which assures a minimum of international order, and an economic function, which provides an international currency and the rules for international trade.

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The analysis of the relations between market and state makes it possible to come to a general theoretical conclusion that enables us to discern more clearly the respective roles of the economy and the mode of production. The economy is governed by politics, but the mode of production is the factor that determines, in the last instance, the course of history, despite the resistance offered by politics and economics. On the other hand, both politics and economics have relative autonomy as regards the mode of production, and represent essential elements for the functioning of the system of production.

7 Political leadership

The intervention of leadership represents the decisive element—the political will—that enables the evolution toward union to prevail over the opposite trend. The achievement of an international agreement is a goal that can be pursued within the framework of ordinary political processes and led by governments. As long as the established order is steady, the role of the great leaders is trifling. They obey a uniform scheme and are unable to change the course of events. Only when serious crises of the established order occur, a fracture opens that enables the leaders to head political change.

In this field, Altiero Spinelli's theory of action (Spinelli and Rossi 1988; Spinelli 1960) for political unification of Europe represents an indispensable reference point. The inspiration for the theory of federalist action comes from the experience of the unification of states, which is achieved not through war but by means of a democratic process, such as the foundation of the USA and, to a certain degree, Italian unification. The goal that federalist strategy shares with the other forms of state unification is the creation of a government over an area covered by many states. In areas covered by international organizations, the goal is the transformation of confederal structures into federal ones or, in other words, the transition from international to supranational organizations.

On the one hand, this objective is a treaty in which states agree to give up part of their power to a supranational government; on the other, it is a Constitution defining the structure of this union of states. Since the nature of the objective determines the character of the means to be used, Spinelli concluded that progress towards the construction of a European federation would not be possible without the agreement of the states, even though the latter represent the main obstacle to the transfer of powers to the European level.

The strategy of state unification is twofold in nature. It requires the combination of two political actors: one government-inspired and a popular-inspired one. On the one hand, the governments view political unification in terms of co-operation between sovereign states. The confederation, as a form of international organization that reconciles the maintenance of national sovereignty with international co-operation, represents their political objective. On the other hand, the federalists view political unification in terms of the creation of a supranational government. We learn from history that the unification processes become irreversible only when they attain at least the federation stage.

The fact is that, as Spinelli used to say, governments are at the same time the obstacle and the vehicle of political unification. They never spontaneously give up their power. Nevertheless, their agreement is necessary in order to sign the treaty establishing the transfer of power from the national to the supranational level. However, in order to force the governments to do that, the intervention of a political movement of popular inspiration is necessary. This means that neither of the two actors can achieve the goal of the federation on its own. Governments have the force, but they cannot use it for objectives that go beyond international co-operation. Popular movements do not have the force, but they have an initiating capacity, which can be used during moments of crisis in order to push governments to surrender part of their power to supranational institutions.

Federalist policy is an opposition policy, which questions the legitimacy of nation-states. This is what primarily distinguishes the federalist commitment from that of political parties, which struggle to gain control of national governments. The goal that federalist movements pursue is the construction of new supranational powers. This is an absolute novelty, even with regard to the political strategy of the extreme left or extreme right parties, which question the legitimacy of the government and the regime, but not that of the political community. The specific character of federalist policy is that it disputes the legitimacy not only of the national governments and regimes, but also of the national political communities. In other words, it aims to change the status of exclusive communities, which characterize the national

states, by uniting them into federal communities and transforming them into member states of federations, so that they can live together in peace while keeping their independence.

This implies that federalists do not identify themselves with any established authority: neither that of governments, since they wish to force the latter to surrender a part of their power; nor that of the political parties—either those that support the government or those that oppose it—which represent a portion of the balance of power on which the national states are grounded; nor even that of the international organizations, which are subordinate to national governments and federalists want to transform into federal communities.

8 Cultural identity

Legitimacy is a fundamental factor of cohesion for political communities. Owing to the pluralistic composition, in ethnic and cultural terms, of regional organizations, it is impossible to detect common cultural identities in such wide areas. On the contrary, federal or quasi-federal institutional arrangements are devised to organize pluralism and combine unity with diversity.

This means that the affirmation of loyalty toward political authorities that lead regional organizations is not a prerequisite, but rather the consequence of the achievement of a full-fledged supranational union endowed with control on the means of violence, fiscal resources and currency, which enable the union to be independent of member states. The empirical analysis, in contrast with Huntington's model of the clash of civilizations (Huntington 1996), shows that, generally, a shared cultural identity is not a factor of cohesion within regional organizations.

Many examples point out that deep dividing lines cross regional organizations such as those between the Sunni and Shi'a cultures in the Arab League, the Hindi and the Islamic cultures in South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Orthodox Christian and the Islamic cultures in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the innumerable ethnic and tribal divisions that cut across the African Union (AU), the survival of national identities within the EU and the emergence of subnational identities within member states. All those divisions are fomented by the states or by power groups that aim to break the unity of the states. Regional organizations have a weak political structure, hence their weak cultural identity or total lack of it.

A partial exception is represented by the EU, the most developed regional organization existing in the world, where a common identity is emerging in spite of the continuing subordination of its institutions to the member states. However, its nature is deeply different from the national one, as it is closer to the federal model of unity in diversity. In conclusion, the analysis of regional organizations confirms a result reached by the historical and political research on nation-building processes: that states create nations and not vice versa.²

9 The stages of the enlargement of the democratic state

The aforesaid peace process, that is a unification process between political communities in conflict with each other, is at the same time a process that promotes the extension of democracy to ever vaster areas. The criterion adopted by the authors of the *Federalist Papers* for classifying several forms of democratic government is that of dimension, which enables the identification of the stages of broadening this dimension.

Madison makes a distinction between democracy and the republic: 'In a democracy the people meet and exercise the government in person' (in Hamilton *et al.* 1901, 67). However, elsewhere he explains that in the democracies of ancient Greece, even though the people's assembly had deliberative powers, 'many of the executive functions were performed not by the people themselves, but by officers elected by the people, and representing the people in their executive capacity' (*ibid.*: 350).

Therefore, these democracies experienced some kind of representative government. Strictly speaking, they cannot be defined as forms of direct democracy, but rather as *assembly democracy*. This expression emphasizes the central role that the assembly of citizens used to assume, but also that direct democracy is a myth. It never existed, not even in the democratic city-states of ancient Greece. If it existed, direct democracy would only mean that human societies have no need for political reflection and political mediation, or—in the language of

Rousseau—that the general will can immediately coincide with the sum of particular wills.

The operation of human societies is not simply the result of spontaneous behaviours of individuals. Individual behaviours must be co-ordinated, and politics—through power—is that specific activity that produces the mandatory norms that ensure social cohesion. It is a complex activity that involves knowledge of the social reality, of the possible solutions to emerging problems and quest for possible mediation among conflicting interests.

Representative democracy, on the other hand, is realistic precisely because it recognizes and institutionalizes the political moment of human activity, thus raising it to the level of rational experience. In a republic (that form of government that in today's parlance is called representative democracy), wrote Madison, the people 'assemble and administer [the government] by their representatives and agents'. The difference between the two forms of government is that 'a democracy ... will be confined to a small spot', while 'a republic may be extended over a large region ... As the natural limit of a democracy is that distance from the central point which will just permit the most remote citizens to assemble as often as their public functions demand, ... so the natural limit of a republic is that distance from the centre which will barely allow the representatives to meet as often as may be necessary for the administration of public affairs' (Hamilton *et al.* 1901, 67–68).

Federal democracy is also a form of representative democracy, but is an institutional innovation because it duplicates democratic representation and is a distinct form of democratic government. While Madison considers federal democracy a variant of representative democracy, Hamilton was the first to understand that the Constitution of the USA was establishing a new form of democracy, what we now call 'democracy among states' or 'international democracy'. That is why Hamilton makes the federal principle part of the process of evolution of republican institutions.

The science of politics, however, like most other sciences, has received great improvement. The efficacy of various principles is now well understood, which were either not known at all, or imperfectly known to the ancients. The regular distribution of power into distinct departments; the introduction of legislative balances and checks; the institution of courts composed of judges holding their offices during good behavior; the representation of the people in the legislature by deputies of their own election: these are wholly new discoveries, or have made their principal progress towards perfection in modern times. They are means, and powerful means, by which the excellences of republican government may be retained and its imperfections lessened or avoided. To this catalogue of circumstances that tend to the amelioration of popular systems of civil government, I shall venture, however novel it may appear to some, to add one more: ... I mean the ENLARGEMENT of the ORBIT within which such systems are to revolve, either in respect to the dimensions of a single State or to the consolidation of several smaller States into one great Confederacy.

(Hamilton *et al.* 1901, 30)

Hamilton asked himself what the institutions are that have made mankind progress to ever loftier forms of political coexistence. It is a very short list, which includes the separation of powers, bicameralism, judiciary independence and popular representation in the legislative bodies. It shows how the invention of new institutions is a rare occurrence in history. To this list he ventures to add the federal principle, 'however new and strange it might appear', and defines it as 'the enlargement of the orbit' within which 'the popular systems of government' revolve.

Only with the Constitution of the USA does the history of federalism begin. The preamble to the US Constitution starts like this: 'We the people of the United States ... ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.' The meaning of these words is clear. They mark the beginning of a new democratic era in the history of international organizations. With the US Constitution a Union of States was formed that was unprecedented in history: its constitutional bodies had a democratic and not a diplomatic structure.

Until that time the governing bodies of the Union of States were made up of state representatives and their decisions applied to the states, but with the US Constitution they were elected directly by the people and the decisions of the Union applied directly to the citizens. Federalism is thus a state, but it does not have all the characteristics that states had had until then: the unification of all powers in a single centre.

Federal institutions allow representative democracy to express itself on two (but potentially several) levels of government. Essentially, the federal system contains the formula for applying the principle of self-government to a plurality of governments coexisting within a democratic constitutional framework that includes all of them.

As Kant (1988) pointed out in his treatise on *Perpetual Peace*, the first condition for the formation of a World Federation is that the member states have a republican regime. In other words, without domestic democracy, an essential pre-requisite of international democracy is lacking. The election of a supranational parliament presupposes that free elections at national level can take place. This means that domestic democracy is a necessary, but insufficient, condition for international democracy.

The above-described typology of the forms of democratic governments (assembly, representative and federal) is elaborated on the basis of the relations existing between these three institutional innovations and the dimension of the democratic state.

With assembly democracy the democratic state could not be larger than a city, or rather the number of people who could gather in a square. Representative democracy made it possible to extend democratic government to the national scale. Federal democracy paved the way to the formation of a democratic government of such size as to embrace an entire region of the world, which can potentially spread to the entire world (through the extension of the number of levels of democratic government). Assembly democracy allowed the pacification of tribes and unification of them in the city-state; representative democracy allowed the pacification of cities and unification of them in national states; federal democracy represents the institutional innovation allowing the pacification of nations and unification of them within a federation; multi-level federal democracy represents the final stage of this institutional development, the stage of international federalism, on which depends the achievement of peace in the great regions of the world and in the world as a whole.

We can appreciate the extraordinary historical vision of the evolution of the forms of democratic government that are found in the *Federalist Papers* if we compare it with the point of view expressed by Robert Dahl, considered the most authoritative contemporary scholar of democracy. Dahl divides the history of democracy into three stages, but regarding the third phase, which he correctly defines as an attempt 'to create transnational "democratic" systems', he expresses this opinion: 'If the weakness of citizens in exercising final control of the agenda of collective decision-making is already a problem of the utmost seriousness in all democratic countries, then seriously internationalisation virtually nullifies the possibility' (Dahl 1997, 23).

Dahl recognizes the need to extend democracy to the international level and denounces, not without reason, the limits of the results achieved thus far. However, the blinders represented by the national point of view, which considers representative democracy to be the highest form of government, prevent him from appreciating the revolutionary innovations that are underway in the institutional construction site of the EU. The European Parliament is the first supranational parliament in history and the first attempt to extend democracy to an international level in a region of the world that had experienced the tragedy of nationalism and world wars. Of course, it is an unfinished attempt, but Dahl does not succeed in grasping its magnificent potential.

We can presume that anyone who had considered the functioning of the Westminster Parliament in the years immediately after the 'glorious revolution' of 1688–89 would probably have expressed similar reservations (the right to vote limited to a very narrow class of citizens, excessive power of the established interests of the monarchy and nobility, etc.). In reality that parliament is a pale anticipation of the House of Commons as it developed in the 19th and 20th centuries, but today we can readily say that the modern notion of representative democracy progressively took shape starting from that experiment, which made it possible to democratize the great territorial states governed by absolute monarchies.

Thus, today the EU is the laboratory for a new kind of statehood that meets a very widespread need in the world, namely constitutionalizing international relations. Its historical significance could be interpreted as the start of the fulfilment of the Kantian design of the 'universal republic'. If this is the meaning of European unification, it represents a stage in the history of the evolution of forms of government. It could be understood as the start of the era of federalism, which is destined to establish new forms of statehood based on solidarity among nations and international democracy.

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India is another important laboratory for experiencing democracy within a political community with many languages, cultures and religions, so that it could be conceived of as another model for world democracy. In fact, if Indian democracy truly is a successful test, since democracy has lasted more than 60 years in a country of more than 1,000 m. inhabitants, there is no reason to believe that similar democratic institutions are not fit for a community of 7,000 m. citizens, i.e. the world. Therefore, the difference is only of quantity, not quality, as Dahl believes.

10 The limits of democratic internationalism

We now have to address another highly controversial issue: how to extend democracy at the international level.

One of the most cherished research areas by political scientists is the democratization process. According to the above-mentioned empirical data provided by Freedom House, approximately 60% of states, representing the same percentage of world population, are electoral democracies. This means that the majority of the UN member states are democracies.

Starting from these empirical data, Francis Fukuyama (1992) formulated a philosophy of history according to which democracy has prevailed in its struggle against fascist and communist regimes, even though a complete success has not yet been achieved in a significant part of developing countries. However, democracy has obtained its strategic success, which marks the beginning of an era of peace.

Here, it is impossible to tackle an issue of such complexity like the relationships between democracy and peace. I shall confine myself to present a general overview of the theory of peace in democratic thought (democratic internationalism). Democratic thought assumes that war is a consequence of the authoritarian nature of governments and peace is the automatic and necessary result of the establishment of popular sovereignty.

In 1791, during the French Revolution, Thomas Paine proclaimed: 'Monarchical sovereignty, the enemy of mankind, and the source of misery, is abolished; and sovereignty is restored to its natural and original place, the nation ... Were this the case throughout Europe, the cause of war would be taken away' (Paine 1995, 342). When the theoreticians of the democratic movement thought about the future of international relations, they imagined that when the people pull down monarchic and aristocratic domination, in order to be masters of their own destinies, war would have become obsolete.

The fact is that they use the same categories to explain either international politics or domestic politics; they ascribe the causes of international tensions and war exclusively to the internal structure of states and they consider peace as an automatic and necessary result of the transformation of these structures. Therefore, democratic internationalism is a political concept which, from a theoretical point of view, does not recognize the influence that the international political system exercises on the internal structure of individual states and the autonomy that foreign policy has with regard to domestic policy. From a practical point of view, it considers the struggles for the democratic transformation of the individual states as a priority and assigns a subordinate role to the goal of international peace and international order.

The contemporary theory of democratic peace—Doyle (1983) and Russett (1993) are its most renowned exponents—belongs to the same stream of thought. It has emphasized the fact that democracies do not wage wars against each other and from this empirical evidence they have drawn the consequence that democratization of all states will lead to world peace. Undoubtedly, the tendency of democracies towards peaceful behaviour lies in the structure of democratic government. In fact, democratic institutions hamper—but do not prevent—governments in resorting to violence in international relations. This restraint does not exist in those states where power is concentrated in a single constitutional organ (absolute monarchies, right- or left-wing dictatorships, etc.).

However, other empirical evidence is neglected by those scholars: the fact that the progressive assertion of democracy on the national plane has not been accompanied by democracy in the relations among states. This limit shows how insufficient is the establishment of democracy only at national level. In a world of independent sovereign states, which do not recognize a higher authority, the resort to violence is necessary to settle disputes that cannot be solved peacefully. In such a world, law and democracy are imperfect, since security is the first concern of every state. The pursuit of security imposes to sacrifice every value of political coexistence to the *raison d'état*, i.e. to the survival of

the state in a context of international anarchy. The history of the past century clearly illustrates how freedom was sacrificed to fascism and socialism to Stalinism. Therefore, the development of democracy within the states is influenced by the international system of states. Without a global law, which provides security and freedom to all world citizens, the liberal and democratic regimes of the individual states are obliged to seek security in armies and armaments, with the risk of an authoritarian degeneration of their constitutions. This means that no constitution and no democratic regime can attain perfection as long as the principles of the rule of law and democracy are extended at world level. As Kant (1988, 34) wrote: 'The problem of establishing a perfect civil constitution depends on the problem of law-governed external relations among nations.'

This leads us to consider the problem of international law. International relations are regulated by international law, which lacks a distinctive character of law, i.e. the power that makes it directly applicable to all members of the international community. This is the political foundation on which law rests. It has been observed by Edward H. Carr (1942, 219–20) that international law 'lacks three institutions', which are essential parts of any developed political order: 'a judicature, an executive and a legislature'.

1. International law recognizes no court competent to give on any issue of law or fact decisions recognised as binding by the community as a whole ...
2. International law has no agent competent to enforce observance of the law ...
3. Of the two main sources of law—custom and legislation—international law knows only the former, resembling in this respect the law of all primitive communities.

(Carr 1942, 219–20)

The international legal order based on judiciary, executive and legislative institutions has a name that Carr does not use: federation. The establishment of federal institutions both at the level of the great regions of the world (starting from Europe) and at the global level is the only way to submit international relations to a legal order and democracy. This is the way to subject international relations, which are still the field of diplomatic and military clash between states, to the rule of law and popular control and, at the same time, to combine international democracy with state independence.

11 The limits of the intergovernmental approach

Governments welcomed the idea of international organization, because it does not question state sovereignty. This formula is based on two dogmas:

- that it is possible to find a solution to the principal international issues exclusively through co-operation between sovereign states; and
- that states will never willingly and irrevocably delegate a portion of their power to a supranational authority.

The formula of international organization justifies the present world order, which pretends to entrust to the sovereign states the regulation of global market and international civil society, but in reality entrusts it to the strong powers that exercise their predominance over world politics (the big powers) and over the world market (multinational banks and companies), and also to illegal powers like organized crime and terrorism. At the same time, it excludes the people from participation in the making of fundamental decisions on which their destiny depends. In other words, it helped to dispel what governments fear most of all: the spectre of supranationality.

Of course, it is to be recognized that the existence of international organizations represents a first preliminary step on the way to international democracy. A necessary, even though insufficient, step. In fact, they are the arena in which states exercise co-operation—that is, the alternative to violence as a tool to solve international disputes.

However, the price to be paid in terms of effectiveness and democracy for the adoption of the intergovernmental approach—i.e. the belief that international co-operation and international organizations can solve every international issue—is very high. On the one hand, executive powers able to give binding force to common decisions are lacking at international level. On the other hand, the decision-making procedures are mostly submitted to the veto power of member states and exclude, with few exceptions, the democratic principle of majority decisions.

This principle is generally rejected for the reason that it is incompatible with the defence of national interests and state sovereignty.

12 The decline of power politics and the affirmation of the rule of law

We have come to the crucial, and generally neglected, question of the international factors that promote or hamper the advancement of democracy. If we accept Kant's statement that a fully fledged democracy requires a World Federation that will stop violence between states, the problem we have to address is how to approach that goal.

The followers of the realist school of international relations maintain that the international order is the product of the action of a leading power, the so-called hegemon, which plays the role of stabilizer of the international system. The fact is, though, that when power is distributed unevenly, the predominant states are inevitably inclined to violate international law and consequently to hamper the affirmation of democracy at the international level.

The development of democratic processes requires that power not be centralized, but be divided between many power centres. Montesquieu's (1989) theory of the division of powers maintains that individual freedom and citizen's rights are protected by the mechanism of checks and balances. The principle of limited government is indeed the framework where the efforts to protect individual freedom may be successful. A similar principle is active at an international level, even though with a much lower level of institutionalization, when the system of states has a multipolar structure. According to Raymond Aron's (1966, chapter 7) theory of international relations, this is the form of the system of states that most effectively restrains power politics.

The main lesson to be drawn from the history of international relations is that the good functioning of a system of rules is dependent upon the power balance between the actors of a system of states. If a state wields a predominant power, it can allow itself to have no respect for the rights of other states. The observation of the current evolution of the world system of states shows that after the bipolar post-war system and the unipolar system formed after the collapse of the communist bloc, the world balance of power is shifting toward a multipolar system.

This means that the overcoming of the asymmetry represented by the hegemonic role played by the USA in international relations is opening the way to a long-run process that could lead to the strengthening and democratization of the UN. It is the balance of power that leads states to respect common rules. In other words, the current evolution of world power relations toward multipolarism could be the trigger for institutional change, and more specifically for democratic reform of the UN.

While political realism continues to focus the study of international relations on international anarchy and security, over the course of the post-Cold War era the role of military power, understood as a crucial resource for solving international issues, has been progressively weakening. The new forms of foreign policy do not obey the incentives of the territorial conquest and use of violence to solve international conflicts. Because of globalization and the erosion of state sovereignty, economic power has considerably increased its importance and the effects of international anarchy are significantly mitigated. The fundamental reason for states' interest in international co-operation and particularly in institutionalized co-operation lies in the fact that many issues, once considered purely domestic (such as economic integration, protection of the environment or human rights, terrorism, organized crime), have become international. States cannot address regional and global issues unilaterally and in mutual isolation. Therefore, they are obliged to co-operate. Moreover, almost every area of international co-operation has been formalized into international institutions and organizations, which provide unquestionable benefits for states, since they help them to negotiate agreements and to manage global issues. In one word, they make international co-operation easier.

The 2008 financial and economic crisis accelerated the tendency toward a multipolar redistribution of power, replacing US monopolism. Although the USA remains the mightiest military power, it still cannot control world politics. In battle the USA might defeat all its enemies, such as the Taliban and Saddam Hussain, but it has proven unable to build peace. This confirms Hegel's remark regarding Napoleon—the powerlessness of the winner—and applies particularly to the asymmetric wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Despite the irreversible decline of its power, US behaviour continues to be inspired by the

Westphalian principles of absolute state sovereignty and it is unwilling to recognize supranational authorities not subject to its control.

The current most significant proof of this attitude is its opposition to any thought of renouncing (to use Giscard d'Estaing's famous expression) the 'exorbitant privilege' of the dollar as an international reserve currency. Thus, the USA carries on printing money to finance its colossal deficit abroad—brought about by excessive consumption and by wars—and in effect to devalue its debt, with the result that the world is now paying the old declining power's bills.

In world politics the USA has increased international disorder and monetary instability, and it is now clear that the power system called *Pax Americana* is approaching its end. Tomorrow's map of world power will be shaped by a new international leadership not limited to the G8 countries, but including the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India and China) and other emerging actors in world politics and the global economy. The BRICs still belong to the Westphalian world and are naturally proud of their own identity and independence, but while eager to assert their influence in the world, they are nevertheless involved in regional integration processes through organizations such as Mercado Común del Sur, or Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), the Eurasian Economic Community, SAARC, and the 2009 China-Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) agreement on a 90% tariff barrier reduction. Within these great world regions the development of federal arrangements following the EU model offers a political formula that could tame nationalism and avert the tendency toward the formation of dominant regional leaders such as Brazil, Germany, India, Japan, Nigeria, etc.

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the communist bloc have removed in many regions of the world, notably Africa, Latin America and South-East Asia, the clash between communist and fascist political forces and paved the way for the advancement of democracy and economic and social reforms at national level, and the so-called second wave of regional integration. To the extent that regionalism contributes to the formation of building blocks of a multipolar world order, it provides an answer to the demand for stability and international co-operation without hegemony.

Also at the regional level, the dominant position of a state in the military and economic spheres represents a factor that hampers the advancement of international democracy and the rule of law. The USA has an overwhelmingly dominant position in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and similar predominance is exerted by Russia, India, Nigeria and Brazil in their respective regional organizations (CIS, SAARC, the Economic Community of West African States—ECOWAS—and MERCOSUR), which means they hinder the formation of democratic supranational communities. This is not to suggest that the leadership of an élite is not a requirement for the successful outcome of a unification process. Hegemony is a stabilizing factor of the international order. The role played by Prussia and Piedmont in the German and Italian unification processes, or that played by the USA in NATO and the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC, later the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development—OECD), and the USSR in the Warsaw Pact and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), shows the importance of a dominant power in promoting cohesion in a group of states.

The USA has supported several international organizations, being a member of them, like NATO, or not, like the European Communities. As regards European unification, the USA played the role of external elite and provided Europe with the necessary security framework.

The peculiar character of the EU lies in the fact that the internal elite position is held not by one, but two countries, i.e. France and Germany. Moreover, the EU system is characterized by a balanced distribution of power in which all countries can articulate their specific interests on an approximately equal basis. Finally, it is to be added that a powerful impulse to unification has come from the USA, which played the role of outside elite, in order to strengthen the Western bloc in the planetary competition of the Cold War.

The EU is the vanguard of a process moving from power politics to the rule of law in conflict resolution. Violence has been abandoned as an instrument for settling interstate disputes and replaced by a mutually agreed legal order. European unification is the process of constructing peace through a progressive constitutionalization and democratization of interstate relations. In effect, therefore, the EU can be defined as being a post-Westphalian community.

Political realists neglect the new factors in the present international situation which contain power politics and predict that regional

organizations will struggle for dominance according to the traditional pattern of power politics (Buzan 1991; Luttwak 1990; Mearsheimer 1990). Traditionally, regionalism has been conceived mostly by the developing countries as the way to overcome their condition of dependence and more precisely by the Latin American and African countries as the way to fight, respectively, against American and European neo-colonialism. More recently China and India have seemed to follow similar patterns of behaviour. However, the way of self-centred regional development, inspired by Raoul Prebisch, has been replaced, since the end of the 20th century, by new forms of open regionalism, which enable the regional organizations to exploit the benefits of globalization. This means that to some extent, regionalism and globalism do not clash, but can coexist.

Of course, the possibility that the birth of a new global order could spring from another world war cannot be excluded. It would be in keeping with the constituent role traditionally played by warfare. However, today the resort to war is restrained primarily by the existence of weapons of mass destruction, which would cause such widespread devastation that it would leave neither winners nor losers. In effect, the use of such weapons would amount to collective suicide.

Second, the unbearable cost of the armaments race, worsened by the financial and economic crisis, has convinced the great powers to stop seeking military superiority and has driven them instead to pursue security through co-operation rather than competition.

Third, globalization has exposed how powerless individual states and even international organizations are in their attempts to govern the world market. This realization has triggered a concomitant tendency toward co-operation in their attempts to solve the financial and economic crisis without a reform of the Bretton Woods institutions: that is, without strengthening the international organizations.

Moreover, neither the old nor the new protagonists in world politics and economics seem fit to bear the burden of safeguarding world order alone. If history confirms this diagnosis, we will be able to assert that the cycle of US monopolism, begun after the collapse of the communist bloc, was not the latest but the final attempt by any single state to achieve world hegemony. Therefore, the inescapable need for international co-operation could pave the way to redrawing the world order according to the principles of constitutionalization and democratization of international relations. This conclusion is in keeping with Carr's (1945) prediction, which dates back to the end of the Second World War: regional organization is 'the intermediate unit', which 'is likely to be the operative factor in the transition from nationalism to internationalism'.

13 Regional organizations as building blocks of a reformed UN

The UN Charter (Arts. 52–54) clearly acknowledges the role of regional organizations for the maintenance of peace and security. They represent one of the most significant novelties in international relations of the 20th and 21st centuries. It is difficult to imagine that the construction of world peace could be the result of negotiations among some 200 member states. In fact, the constant increase in the number of the UN member states (today there are approximately four times as many as in 1945) shows an alarming trend toward fragmentation and anarchy. The huge disparity in size and power of member states represents the most serious flaw of the current structure of the UN.

Regional organizations represent an intermediate government level between the nation-states and the UN. It is noteworthy that there are great differences in the dimension of the regional integration processes. The idealist thrust toward the great dimension—like the Bolivarian project of a federation of the Latin American peoples or pan-Africanism and pan-Arabism—coexists with subregional integration processes, which are in keeping with the realities of the dimension of economic and social interdependence.

The achievement of peace at the regional level is a condition to promote peace at the world level. A regional level of government is an indispensable vehicle to make the working of the UN more efficient, just and democratic. Regional groupings of states are an alternative to the current UN structure based on power hierarchies determined by the differences between states of varying dimensions and the fragmentation of the UN into an unmanageable number of states. In other words, the reduction of the number of actors within the international system of states makes negotiations and co-operation easier.

It is to be noticed that the UN adopts an outdated notion of region, which is roughly based on the division of the world into continents,

with one relevant exception: the distinction between Western and Eastern Europe, an inheritance of the Cold War that still survives. In order to regulate the distribution of posts within the UN, member states are divided into five groups: Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Western Europe and Eastern Europe. The Asian group includes also most Pacific islands. The Western European group includes also Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the USA, which is not a member of any group, but attends the meetings of the Western European group as an observer. The Eastern European group includes Russia.

However, regions are not continents. For instance, Asia includes six regions: four regional organizations—the CIS (which also includes the European part of Russia), the Arab League (which also includes Northern Africa), SAARC and ASEAN—and two regions—China and Eastern Asia (Japan and the two Koreas)—which are not framed within any regional organization.

Regional organizations, as far as they bring together groupings of states, could be conceived as building blocks of a world community, an intermediate level between nation-states and global institutions. They should not replace states, nor eliminate their autonomy. They are the framework where rudimentary legislative, executive and jurisdictional bodies can take shape in order to enable these institutions to address issues of regional dimension. The subsidiarity principle suggests that nations should be represented at the regional level and the great regions of the world should be represented at the world level (Etzioni 2001).

The EU is the first international organization for which a strengthened observer status was recognized in the UN General Assembly, which enables it to speak, circulate documents, present proposals and amendments (UN General Assembly 2011). This status of the EU is a step that will pave the way to an increased cohesion of other regional groupings of states in the General Assembly, so that they can later express themselves in the Security Council and transform this body into the council of the great regions of the world.

It might be thought that this change in the structure of the Security Council could promote an evolution toward a more democratic, just, balanced and peaceful world order. First, all the states, and no longer the strongest ones as now, could be represented in the Security Council through their respective regional organizations. Second, the hegemony of the great powers and the inequality among states could be progressively overcome by reorganising the UN into groupings of states of equivalent dimension and power. In particular, the developing countries of Africa, the Arab world, South Asia, Southeast Asia and Latin America could find in their economic and political unification the way to free themselves from their condition of dependence. Third, the unjust discrimination between permanent and non-permanent members could be overcome by replacing the right of veto and unanimous vote with the majority vote (Levi 2004, 4–5).

14 Toward a multi-level government

This design suggests rethinking and reorganizing the state, not abolishing it. This reorganization of political power at different territorial levels has been called 'multi-level governance' in the contemporary political science literature (Pernice 1999; Marks and Hooghe 2004). This expression echoes the federalist vision of political institutions, which enables rethinking and questioning the traditional model of the unitary state. Federal government has received its classic definition from the pen of Kenneth C. Wheare (1964, 11), with these words: 'that system of power sharing that allows the central government and the regional governments to be, each in its own sphere, coordinated and independent'. Since the federal principle is applicable to a constitution that distributes power on more than two levels of government, it is appropriate to call this institutional arrangement 'multi-level government'.

It is a simple delusion to think that the destruction of the nation-state alone could be the vehicle towards more elevated forms of solidarity. It is true that the nation-state has been the expression of the deepest political division and the strongest concentration of power that the world has known. However, the examples of Yugoslavia and Somalia are well known and show how the collapse of the state is equivalent to a return to primitive barbarism, to ferocious, selfish tribalism, and to obsolete forms of solidarity based on ethnic or religious ties.

Faced with these phenomena, one can do no less than appreciate the positive aspects of national solidarity in overcoming local, regional and class self-interests and the great role that nation-states have played in our history. France, Spain, Italy and Germany have unified populations

with a variety of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds. To be sure, this unity has been achieved through centralization, i.e. by sacrificing pluralism.

Indeed, post-national space is not a well-known region and unfamiliar territory. The contribution of federalism to understanding, and therefore to identifying the limitations of national experience, lies in the denunciation of the exclusive character assumed by the ties of national solidarity. These do not tolerate any loyalty towards communities that are smaller or larger than the nation itself. However, national solidarity does not have to be cancelled in the globalization era, but it must be considered as a necessary step towards wider forms of solidarity between nations headed by federations as large as great regions of the world and between great regions bound in a world-wide federation. At the same time, national solidarity does not exclude other forms of solidarity within regional and local communities, but can coexist with them. The federal model is an institutional formula that allows for the coexistence of solidarity towards territorial communities of different size that may range from small local communities to the entire world.

15 The establishment of international courts, the first step on the way to constitutionalizing international relations

Hans Kelsen's most significant contribution to the evolution of the phenomenon of international organizations lies in his vision of the stages of the process of constitutionalizing international relations. He stresses the strange similarity between the anarchy in primitive communities and that of the international community. On this similarity he bases the assumption that the transition from primitive society to the state offers a guiding criterion with regard to the present evolution of the international community. In other terms, the transition to the world federation is a long-term process comparable with the formation of the state, which consisted of a continuous process of power concentration.

Long before parliaments as legislative bodies came into existence, courts were established to apply the law to concrete cases. It is interesting to note that the meaning of the word 'parliament' was originally court. In primitive society the courts were hardly more than tribunals of arbitration. They had to decide only whether or not the crime had actually been committed as claimed by one party, and hence, if the conflict could not be settled by peaceful agreement, whether or not one party was authorised to execute a sanction against the other according to the principle of self-defence. Only at a later stage did it become possible completely to abolish the procedure of self-defence and to replace it by execution of the court-decision through a centralised executive power, a police force of the State. The centralisation of executive power is the last step in this evolution from the decentralised pre-State community to the centralised community we call State.

(Kelsen 1944, 21–22)

Kelsen concluded: 'We have good reasons to believe that international law ... develops in the same way as the primitive law of the pre-State community.' He assumed that the creation of an international court represented the first step on the way to world federation. The institution of an International Criminal Court (ICC) in 1998 seems to be a confirmation of that assumption. It is the sign that the world is approaching an order in which the subjects of international law are the individuals, and no longer only the states. Also the institutional evolution of the European institutions confirms this assumption. The first stage of the development of the European Communities was the establishment of a common market and, in order to regulate the orderly working of market mechanisms, it was necessary to resort to the European Court of Justice (ECJ). As a matter of fact, the first Community institution that asserted itself as a supranational power was ECJ; then the European Parliament, as a result of its direct election, increased its powers and progressively asserted itself as a supranational legislative assembly. In the end the governing power of the European Commission will come.

The experience of the European Communities is widely shared by other regional organizations, where the establishment of courts of justice responds to the need to regulate market integration, decide on commercial disputes, interpret and apply treaties. To the extent that they are endowed with binding powers, their activity is more effective.

One of the most significant advancements on the way to development of judicial powers at an international level is represented by human rights courts, as well as the ICC. The first example is represented by the European Convention and the European Court of Human Rights, established within the framework of the Council of Europe in 1950, which is the most advanced system of international human rights protection. Similar courts—the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the African Court of Human Rights that merged with the African Court of Justice in 2000, when the AU was established—have been created within the framework of the OAS and the AU. Also the East African Court of Justice has human rights jurisdiction.

Unlike the traditional international courts, which have the power to settle conflicts between states, these tribunals have the power to protect individuals against governments' violations of human rights. More specifically, the ICC has the power to indict and punish individuals, whatever their office might be, and end impunity. The human rights courts enable citizens to take legal action against their governments. The new principle that these courts assert is that individuals can submit complaints regarding human rights violations and member states can be condemned.

This is the newest trend of international law in the contemporary world: the trend to go beyond the distinction between international law, which traditionally applied to states and regulated relations between states, and domestic law, which applied to individuals and regulated relations between individuals. In other words, with these courts a first step is taken on the road leading to the creation of a direct power of international organizations—global or regional—over individuals. This means that a first step has been taken on the way to limitation of state sovereignty and to the assignment of a state-like feature to the UN and other regional organizations.

16 Shapes of international organizations

This research has confirmed that economic integration represents the building block on which regional organizations are founded and furthermore that it roughly develops according to the stages identified by Bela Balassa. Also, those countries that have not achieved any significant progress on the way of economic integration (like the Southern African Development Community—SADC) plan to move towards customs union, common market and monetary union. All integration processes respond to the same needs (growing interdependence) and meet the same obstacles (the resistance opposed by national sovereignties).

It is noteworthy that the East African Community (EAC), the sub-regional organization that in Africa plays an avant-garde role, and is the only international organization that in 1999 signed a treaty after the reconstruction of the Community, lists four stages of the unification process in a way that echoes Balassa's scheme: customs union, common market, monetary union and political federation.

The most elementary form of international organization is a free trade area, which can simply work on the basis of intergovernmental structures. It enables member states to benefit from the enlargement of the market dimension. No supranational institutions are necessary to regulate economic transactions at the international level. At the utmost, it sets up a dispute settlement mechanism, which was created, for instance, within NAFTA and the World Trade Organization (WTO). This is confirmation of Kelsen's theory regarding the development stages of international organizations, according to which the first stage of an integration process is the affirmation of jurisdictional bodies.

Moreover, there are regional organizations that have gone beyond the stage of the free trade area. For example, the Central American Integration System (SICA) is a customs union, while MERCOSUR is an unaccomplished customs union. There are regional organizations that have established supranational institutions—for instance, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States (CEMAC), which issue the CFA franc (African Financial Community franc), a currency formerly belonging to the French franc zone and currently aligned with the euro—before having achieved the preliminary conditions (a common market) for an effective operation of those institutions. This is an inheritance of the colonial period and the role of the external élite played by France in regional integration in Central and Western Africa after the Second World War.

On the contrary, SAARC is the typical example of a dormant international organization because of the military clash between the two leading countries, India and Pakistan, in Kashmir. This shows that the

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best assurance of success in the challenge of economic integration is that this goal is pursued in a climate of peace and security. This is the reason why the need to go beyond economic co-operation and integration is so largely felt.

The security structures can be provided by the same regional organization that pursues economic integration, like ECOWAS, which received a security mandate in 1993 after the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. However, there are examples that show that security can be provided by an external organization, like NATO, as regards EU defence, and the AU, as regards the whole continent (with the exception of Morocco, which is not an AU member).

The AU is an example that shows how international organizations represent a stabilizing factor of an international community made up of countries in most of which the state-building process is still unaccomplished, as they are torn by ethnic, tribal and religious conflicts. The Constitutive Act of the AU states that the Union 'promotes democratic principles and institutions', and that governments which come to power through unconstitutional means are not allowed to participate in the activities of the Union and are suspended from the exercise of their rights. Albeit these provisions do not have a binding character, they point out at least the aspiration to promote the above principles on the continent. Similar stabilization goals are pursued by the peace-keeping operations promoted by the AU and the other subregional organizations, like the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), ECOWAS and SADC, which can be conceived as subregional pillars of the peace and security policy of the AU.

As regards the institutions of the regional organizations, the inter-governmental structure represents the universal rule with the relevant exception of the EU. The EU's leading experience proves that it is strong in the spheres where it can decide according to the majority rule. It is weak where the unanimity rule is in force, like foreign and security policy, rising EU revenue and institutional revision. A real decision-making capacity exists when a common interest is recognized as a higher value. This value is union, and the veto hampers union. In particular, it is to be remarked that the essence of statehood is solidarity that springs from public goods that state offers and protects. As it has been frequently noticed, the veto prevents solidarity.

For instance, amendments to the SADC Treaty are adopted with a three-quarters majority and decisions on ECOWAS military interventions are taken with a two-thirds majority. Both examples prove that an aspiration to supranationality exists in the above organizations.

There is another element that is necessary to a union of states: sufficient resources to give the common government the means to perform its tasks. Doubling the EU budget, i.e. increasing its resources from 1% of gross domestic product (GDP) to 2%, could enable the EU to address its most urgent tasks, first of all a sustainable development plan. The example of ECOWAS, which introduced a community tax of 0.5% on imported goods from third countries, highlights the existence of a trend toward supranationality in this organization.

17 The EU: a model for international democracy

The analysis of the structures of international organizations shows that these are diplomatic machines within which governments pursue co-operation. The EU represents the world's most advanced experiment in international organization and a model in the pooling of national sovereignty. Behind this experiment there is an historic choice: the decision of the core nations of the European continent—first of all, France and Germany—to turn their back on power politics and relegate nationalism to the past. If the EU fails, the most ambitious model for international organization will fail with it.

The fate of the European political model matters enormously because globalization has thrown up a set of vital issues that cannot be solved by any one nation, however large. All of these issues demand international structures and the EU—for all its flaws—has 60 years of experience in the difficult task of getting national governments to work together for the common good.

At the beginning, the EEC was a union of six countries. Now it stretches from Lapland to the Mediterranean, and from Poland to the Canaries, and includes 28 countries. It is a Community of 500 m. inhabitants, where 24 official languages are spoken and includes approximately 100 ancient ethnic minorities. It has an executive commission, a parliament, a chamber of states, a court of justice, a central bank, a currency, a citizenship, a legally binding charter of fundamental rights, a legal personality (i.e. the right to sign treaties), a flag, an anthem, a passport. National borders have been abolished. This proves

that the EU has acquired many typical characters of statehood, even though it is not a federation.

The unification process has developed with the ups and downs characteristic of a difficult undertaking such as the overcoming of the sovereignty of an increasing number of states that joined the original core of six states.

It is worth recollecting two dates that represent milestones in the history of European unification. The first is 10 June 1979, when the European Parliament was first elected by universal suffrage. This represented a qualitative leap in the construction of European unity, with the European Parliament becoming the first supranational parliament in history. It is an innovation that could change world history. Democracy, which usually stops at state borders, has become international. In future it could become global with the transformation of the UN General Assembly into a World Parliament. Pascal Lamy (2004, 13) argued that the impact of globalization 'has transformed the European project'. Therefore, '[t]oday, we cannot think of Europe without thinking of the world and vice versa'.

Recently, an increasing number of international organizations have been enriched with parliamentary structures, which represent the response of national parliaments to the globalization process and the erosion of their power. In other words, they attempt to shift parliamentary control over governments at international level. Most of them are made up of national parliamentarians, but the European Parliament, which represents the most advanced evolution of this category of international assemblies, is directly elected.

The European Parliament is the laboratory of international democracy. Since its direct election it has increased not only its legislative powers but also its control powers over the Commission, understood as the potential European government. This means that the democratization of the EU has been a mighty tool for strengthening European institutions. On the whole, the lesson we can draw from history (and utilize for UN reform) is that both the strengthening and the democratization of the institutions contributed to promote European unification.

The second date is 1 January 1999, when the European Central Bank was established, thus opening the way to the circulation of the euro in 2002. It was an historic step on the road toward the construction of a European sovereignty. However, a currency without a government represents a contradiction that cannot be maintained forever. It can be surmounted only by the creation of a system comprising a budget authority, a federal government provided with taxing powers, and parliamentary institutions endowed with legislative and control powers.

However, the euro has been a great success. It accounts for a little more than a quarter of world reserves. Since December 2006, the quantity of euro notes in circulation in the world has overtaken the dollar. Within the short span of five years, the euro has become the second most important international currency and a pillar of the international monetary system. This means that the euro is the starting point of a transition toward a polycentric international monetary system and, as an integrated global market cannot work with many competing currencies, towards a world currency. Just before the first meeting of the G20 in 2009, Zhou Xiaochuan (2009), the Governor of the Chinese People's Bank, proposed that the US dollar should be replaced by a world reserve currency. Taking the European Monetary System, the ancestor of the euro, as an example he identified two transitional objectives: a) enlarging the Special Drawing Rights basket of currencies to include the currencies of all major economies; and b) granting the International Monetary Fund (IMF) a part of its member states' reserves.

What is the historical significance of the grand design of European unification? The most important achievement of the EU is undoubtedly peace. After centuries of warfare, Europe has never before lived so long in peace as it now has in the post-Second World War period which coincides with the beginning of the process of European unification.

The EU is the most intensively regulated region of the world. Its political institutions impose restraints on what sovereign states may do in their relations with each other, and in this it shows the way to what the UN could become in the future: namely, the guardian of international law and the framework of a process of constitutionalization of international relations.

The European integration process has weakened national governments, compelled them to co-operate in order to solve together the problems they are unable to cope with separately, created a European civil society beside national civil societies, established European institutions that go far beyond the intergovernmental ties typical of international

organizations, and represented a decision-making mechanism that depletes progressively national institutions. In international organizations, like the WTO and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the EU is represented by the European Commission, which negotiates and speaks with one voice on behalf of the EU. This is part of an evolution that paves the way to a European seat in the UN Security Council and the long-term transformation of this body into the Council of the great regions of the world.

The European unification process has advanced to such a stage that war among EU member states has become inconceivable and this result has been achieved even before the creation of the European Federation. First of all, the EU, even without renouncing the military dissuasion imperative, tends to pursue security through interdependence, international co-operation and the extension at international level of a network of rules and institutions. In other words, slowly and imperfectly something like a process of constitutionalization of the EU is taking shape. This point of view is close to Mario Telò's (2001) concept of Europe as 'civilian power', albeit he is not inclined to accept that a federal arrangement could be the target of European unification. It is true that the EU is still not a full federation, though the institutional evolution toward this goal started in 1950, when Schuman in his famous Declaration proposed the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the first form assumed by the European Community. In this document the ECSC is defined as 'the first step in the federation of Europe'.

It is wholly unrealistic to plan fusion among nation-states—that is, among forms of political organization based on power centralization and international antagonism. The EU represents a rejection of such nationalism which knows no other way to pursue unification but imperialism. The EU is not and will never be a state in the traditional meaning of the word. It will rather be a federation of states. The nascent European Federation is facing the task of promoting mutual tolerance and solidarity among nations. The vitality of the European unification experience springs from the attempt to reconcile unity on the one hand with the Old Continent's diversity of peoples on the other. It relies on the principle that the result of any attempt to suppress differences will be worse than accepting them. The experience of the European Community brings ample evidence that the epoch of world wars has passed. The enlarged EU, which now includes most Central and Eastern European countries, represents the overcoming of the Cold War.

In spite of these successful achievements, the construction of European unity is an unaccomplished project. The EU still has only a limited capacity for action. Its budget is only 1% of European GDP. Monetary unification was not followed by a fiscal union, a full-fledged government of the European economy and a political union. The euro is exposed to the winds of the international crises, as it does not have a government that coins it, armed forces that protect it, a foreign policy that represents it in the world. Moreover, the proposed rapid reaction force agreed upon in 1999 has not yet been established.

On the other hand, widening the Union without first strengthening it threatens the cohesion of its political institutions and carries with it the hidden danger of the EU regressing to the status of a free trade area. During the past half century the construction of the EU was based essentially on economic integration under the protection of the USA. In future the EU will exist only if it is able to become a global actor.

In spite of the success of European integration in promoting welfare, peace and international democracy within the EU borders, the European institutions have serious legitimacy problems. For instance, citizens' participation in European elections is constantly diminishing. In 1979 it was 63% and in 2009 had fallen to 43%. The simple explanation lies in the fact that the EU, owing to the lack of a government, sufficient financial resources and power to speak with one voice in the world, is perceived as a distant body that ignores the concerns of its citizens; to face the global economic crisis, it imposes sacrifices, promotes austerity, cuts social expenditure and generates unemployment.

Asian, African or Latin American politicians have often looked to the EU as a successful model of regional integration that has increased peace, democracy and prosperity across a formerly war-torn continent. Potentially, Europe can play a crucial role in the development of a new world order based on a commitment to regulate the global markets, to cut greenhouse gas emissions and to promote international democracy and world peace. The dream that the model of the European Communities could be a stage of the organized world of tomorrow was conceived since the beginning of European unification. Jean Monnet, the architect of the European institutions, argued that with the Schuman Plan, 'the dream of new forms of international relations was

becoming reality, peace seemed possible, cold war was passing' (Monnet 1976, 398). It is easy to mock European federalism, but the alternative is simply to leave global problems unresolved and renounce regulating conflicts between nations.

18 The democratic deficit of the EU

The contradiction between the dimension of the social and political problems and the dimension of the democratic powers that should solve them represents the most critical aspect of the situation in which the EU finds itself today, a situation commonly referred to with the expression 'democratic deficit'. The fact that the substance of EU power lies in the Council, the intergovernmental body with a diplomatic character which on important matters (like foreign and security policy, the amount of the EU's own resources and constitutional revision) decides in secret and by unanimous vote, gives the measure of the democratic deficit of European institutions. It operates on two levels: that of the current affairs administration (the Council of Ministers), and that of the definition of the fundamental political guidelines (the European Council of the Heads of State and Government). The centrality of this body in the EU power system, justified by the need to defend anachronistic national interests, represents the most serious distortion of the democratic principle.

The democratic deficit presents two aspects. On the one hand, the Council, keeping for itself the monopoly of decision-making power over the most significant matters, like the foreign and security policy, taxation or constitutional revisions, is taking legislative powers away from the European Parliament, which has not yet acquired co-decision powers over all of the matters on which the Council decides. On the other hand, the Council decides by unanimous vote, not by majority vote, on matters of great importance, as the democratic principle would require.

The way the European institutions are organized is strangling democracy, because it prevents the citizens from choosing their government. As the most important decisions are taken by the Council and not by the Parliament, the confidence circuit between the people and their representatives at the European level is missing. This makes the democratic legitimation process of the European institutions very weak. Moreover, the centre of gravity of party politics has remained at national level and the European elections are dominated by domestic political issues. The European election is not yet the democratic act by which the citizens carry out the choice of the European Union's government. The citizens elect the European Parliament by universal direct suffrage, and this is the proof that a democratization process of the European institutions is underway; however, it remains unaccomplished, because the European Commission, the potential government of the EU, is not elected by citizens, but nominated by member states. The President of the European Commission is appointed by the European Council, and de facto by the Franco-German directorate, but it could be directly elected by the European citizens, provided that they are entitled to choose between alternative party leaders and programmes. It is meaningful that the Lisbon Treaty states that the proposal of the candidate to the Presidency of the European Commission is put forward 'taking into account the' outcome of 'elections of the European Parliament' (art. 17).

In spite of this potential democratic development of the European institutions, who governs Europe continues to be the European Council, the composition and decisions of which are not influenced by the popular vote. Although there are institutions of a federal nature in the EU architecture (a court with supranational powers, a parliament directly elected by the people and endowed with co-decision powers, a single currency and a central bank), its structure still has a fundamentally confederal character, because its institutions are still subordinated to national governments.

In order that the people keep economy, security and constitutional rules under control, democracy must take on international dimensions. It must, in other words, govern international relations. To pursue this objective, a European government is necessary. It is true that the European Parliament has progressively increased its legislative co-decision powers, but in order for its decisions really to count, they must be supported by a strong government, capable of winning the opposition of the strong industrial and financial multinational groups, of organized crime and of the other non-state actors who operate at international level; a government capable of making the general interests of the European citizens prevail. In fact, no democracy is known to stand without a government.

All this shows that there is a democratic deficit in the EU, and the charge is well founded. However, as reported by the earlier quotation from Dahl, he expressed scepticism about the possibility that international organizations could be submitted to democratic control, due to their distance from the citizens. Andrew Moravcsik (2004) has developed this line of thought regarding the EU. He squarely argued that there is no democratic deficit in the EU. This position stems from the principle of heterogeneity of domestic and international institutions and the idea that international relations cannot be constitutionalized or democratized and that there is no chance that democracy can work beyond state borders. He shares a familiar argument from the Eurosceptics, i.e. the lack of a European *demos*. In other words, he condemns the idea of European and international democracy as utopian (Moravcsik 2004, 336–63). For those who conceive only one form of democracy—the one that may be practised within the framework of the nation-state—the possibility of other forms of democracy is excluded and even unthinkable. However, the fact is that, as historical research has pointed out, the national peoples are the product of the nation-states, and not their premise (Albertini 1997). Likewise, the European *demos* will be the result of a multinational statehood. Therefore, the success of the construction of European unity depends on its ability to plan a new form of statehood not based on a national, but a multinational (i.e. federal) people and citizenship. However imperfect and unaccomplished the evolution of the European institutions, the formation of the European *demos* is a work in progress, which is developing at the same pace as the democratization process of the EU.

As I shall show in the next paragraph, the national blinkers prevent the above-mentioned scholars from seeing that international democracy is an experiment that is developing all over the world. The European Parliament is not an isolated case. More than 100 international parliamentary institutions have been created over the second half of the last century—most of them since the end of the Cold War. The European Parliament represents only the most advanced, albeit unfinished, project.

19 The spread of regional parliamentary institutions in the world

The more the regional integration processes erode national democratic institutions, the more they foster the need for international democracy. In other words, the formation of integrated markets and civil societies at the regional and global levels require the extension of popular control on the international plane.

The number of international parliamentary institutions (IPIs) is constantly increasing. According to the data provided by Claudia Kissling, the author of the most exhaustive investigation on the subject, 'before 1990, 40 IPIs existed, between 1990 and 1999, 51 new ones were founded, and since 1999, 71 newly established IPIs can be counted' (see Chapter 3 in this volume). The extraordinary advancement of international democracy in the post-Cold War era is the expression of the citizens' aspiration to participation, representation, decision making and control in the sphere of international relations, even though this aspiration begins to be partially satisfied only within the EU and is far from giving citizens a real influence on international politics in the other international organizations.

The IPIs can be classified into four categories. The first is represented by international associations of parliamentarians, whose field of action are international organizations such as Parliamentarians for Global Action. They are not NGOs, since they are members of parliaments and perform a public function. There are 52.

Second, there are international parliamentary organizations, like the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in which members of national or international parliaments represent their respective institution at the international level. In other words, they are parliamentary not governmental organizations. This means that they cannot succeed in exercising legislative functions in international organizations. There are 19.

Third, there are international specialized parliamentary agencies, which operate within the framework of international organizations and co-operate with them, like the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO or the Central American Parliament (Parlacen). There are 13.

Lastly, the most important and developed type of IPIs is represented by the parliamentary organs of international organizations, like the Pan-African Parliament, the parliamentary body of the AU, which is the parliamentary body of a regional organization. However, there are parliamentary assemblies that belong to subregional organizations, like

the ECOWAS Parliament, or to inter-regional organizations such as the Joint Parliamentary Assembly of the ACP-EU countries, which belong to four regions (Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific Islands). There are 26.

It is to be stressed that three of these assemblies are directly elected, like the European Parliament, the Parlacen (in Central America) and the Parlandino (in the Andean Community),³ and that the Parlasur (in MERCOSUR) will be elected shortly. Moreover, the direct election of the Parliament of CEMAC, foreseen by the founding documents of the Community, has been repeatedly delayed. Generally, these assemblies have advisory powers, with the exception of the European Parliament, which has co-decision powers shared with the Council of Ministers.

We are used to generalizing the experience of the EU as a model for the analysis of the process of democratization of international organizations. According to this model, the direct election of the parliamentary organ precedes the transfer of the decision-making power at the supranational level and is the preliminary condition of it. However, it is worth remembering that, on the contrary, there are several international organizations endowed with supranational powers that are assigned to the intergovernmental decision-making mechanisms, not to the parliamentary organs. In South America, MERCOSUR and the Andean Community, in Africa, CEMAC, EAC, ECOWAS, WAEMU are examples of this specific shape taken by the integration processes out of Europe. It is true that such supranational powers are weak, but unquestionably this is the first stage of the formation process of supranational institutions in the above-mentioned regions. This choice depends on the need for a supranational management of regional issues and the immaturity of democratic institutions in Latin America and the fact that those institutions are nascent or completely lacking in Africa. The fact is that poorer developing countries very often lack the resources and experience in the management of democratic institutions to promote a system of regional government that can function effectively.

Moreover, it is to be reported that the Legislative Assembly of EAC exercises legislative powers, shared with the heads of state and government, without being directly elected.

Lastly, there are international organizations with founding acts that specify that federation is the ultimate goal of the unification process they promote. This purpose was explicitly expressed in the well-known Schuman Declaration, which dates back to 1950 and marked the starting point of the first European Community (the ECSC). This is also the case of the EAC.

20 Three preliminary conditions of international democracy

Three preliminary conditions are necessary to approach a working democratic system at the international level. First of all, the need for international democracy does not assert itself at the beginning of a process of integration. It rises at a stage of the integration process when the erosion of national decision-making institutions has developed and is largely perceived. This implies the existence of common problems that national governments cannot resolve on their own. Therefore, initiatives to keep economy and/or security under citizens' control can be undertaken.

Second, preliminary conditions of a stable international order (regional or global) are institutions that stem violence. As stated by Kelsen, courts represent the first step on the way to the establishment of a legal order. In fact, democratic institutions cannot survive in an environment characterized by violence. Furthermore, it is to be stressed that the democratic structure of member states is a necessary, albeit insufficient prerequisite of international democracy. In fact, elections at supranational level cannot take place if the voting right is not recognized at national level.

Third, democracy beyond state borders is the great innovation of the federalist design. Its significance lies in the fact that states submit their will to decisions made according to the majority principle. That principle marks the dividing line between intergovernmental co-operation and supranational organization. It is the vehicle to go beyond the narrow idea of national interest, the basic principle on which international relations still rest. The unanimity principle and the right of veto prevent the assertion of the idea of a general interest of a union or a community of states.

No accurate definition of international democracy appears in the League of Nations and the UN Statutes, which are organizations of states, not of citizens. The International Labour Organization (ILO) is

the first international organization that rejected the unanimity rule since 1919 and asserted the majority voting rule in the International Labour Conference (Claude 1956, 129). The evolution of the contemporary world society shows a growing role of majority voting in international organizations. To cite a single example, the UN General Assembly operates without the veto principle in carrying out its functions.

21 The construction site of international democracy

International democracy is an underdeveloped field of studies. It lacks a solid theoretical apparatus that allows international democracy to emancipate from domestic democracy. Extending democracy beyond state borders does not mean simply to duplicate the structures of national democracy at international level. International democracy cannot be achieved simply by taking the roads travelled by national democracy, but requires institutional innovations. As the dimension of democratic communities becomes larger, also the articulation, differentiation and complexity of political institutions increase. The institutional laboratory of the EU shows that the European Parliament is only the most evident aspect of international democracy. Although it is a necessary aspect, it is not enough. Albeit we can represent the EU as an unaccomplished federation, the features of unprecedented forms of federal institutions are already apparent in its structure. Two main characteristics can be identified: the higher degree of power decentralization and member states' independence (according to Delors's model of the 'federation of nation-states') and the great extent of opening up its institutions to the external world.

I shall outline the most significant institutional innovations. A look at the features of the EU institutions shows immediately the distance from the constitutional model of the USA, which is the oldest and most successful experiment of a federal union.

First of all, the institutional architecture that is taking shape in the EU shows that the directly elected European Parliament is a necessary, but insufficient, element of international democracy. On the one hand, voting in the European elections does not exhaust the problem of democracy at international level. Some 30 years after the direct election of the European Parliament, the Lisbon Treaty has introduced a new instrument of participatory democracy, the European Citizens Initiative (ECI), which entitles 1 m. citizens to ask the Commission to promote a legislative proposal. The ECI is the implicit recognition of the limits of representative democracy and the need for new forms of democracy. At the same time, it shows a possible way to bridge the gap between citizens and the European institutions.

On the other hand, international democracy combines participation and representation of both states and citizens at international level. The most innovative character of the EU model of international democracy is the role that national governments play at the European level. They tend to become the actors of the emerging supranational political order.

The member-states' governments are represented in the Council of Ministers, which plays the role of chamber of states and shares legislative power with the European Parliament. This means that the EU cannot exercise the legislative power without the consent of the majority of member state governments. The representation of governments, instead of individuals, is seen with suspicion by democracy scholars. A Council composed of representatives of governments is mostly considered a breach of the principles of federalism.

However, on deeper consideration it is to be recognized that the states' independence is more pointedly assured by representatives who are members of government of the states rather than by representatives directly elected by the people, like the US Senate. If one chamber is based on the principle of direct election, the other should be based on a different principle, for example the representation of vested interests, which in monarchies are the chambers of aristocratic extraction and in federations are the chambers of states, the mission of which is to protect national interests. The role of higher chambers in bicameral systems is to mitigate the temporary emotions that occasionally dominate popular assemblies. In federations, the members of higher chambers are not selected from within a class, but from within the states, which are democratic institutions. Moreover, federal systems allow the balance of undesirable predominance of the interests of the most populated and developed states through a higher representation of the less populated and/or less developed parts of the union.

What is, according to mainstream opinion, the principle of democratic representation of states in international organizations? The principle of equal sovereignty of states. It brings together 193 member states of the

UN General Assembly. Yet, owing to the inequality of states' size, China is not equal to San Marino. Likewise, in the EU, Germany is not equal to Malta. Any attempt to consider these states equal contradicts the democratic principles. The institutional evolution of the EU shows several attempts to overcome the principle of the equality of states. The voting system adopted by the Lisbon Treaty (art. 16) for the Council is an attempt to shape a new form of majority—the so-called qualified majority—i.e. 55% of the states representing 65% of the population of the Union. However, this system over-represents more populated countries. The most coherent application of the democratic principle of the weighted voting within the Council seems to be that proposed in Romano Prodi's 'Penelope Project' (Tognon 2003), the double simple majority, i.e. the majority of states representing the majority of the population.

Therefore, the decision-making process should be the result of the will of both the majority of the representatives of the citizens and the states' governments. The weighted representation in the chamber of states is more suitable than the equal for counterbalancing disparities in those federations, or quasi-federations, like the European, where large differences in size exist among member states.

Another crucial question regards the admission criteria to the EU. Unlike the UN, EU membership is reserved for democratic states only. Since the beginning, the European Community has been conceived as a union of democratic states. This principle was codified by the Copenhagen criteria (1993), which assert that representative democracy and human rights protection and market economy are admission conditions to the EU. The great merit of the above-mentioned admission criteria lies in the fact that they were used as a powerful lever to expand democracy to the surrounding countries wishing to benefit from EU membership: first the fascist regimes of the Mediterranean area, then the communist regimes of Central and Eastern Europe.

Moreover, since 1997 (Treaty of Amsterdam), the EU has established a mechanism for the protection of democracy in its member states, applied to Austria in 2000 and threatened against Hungary in 2012. This is a typical requirement that characterizes federal constitutions. For example, art. 4.4 of the US Constitution assigns to the USA the power to guarantee to member states 'the republican form of government'.

The parliamentary system, already contemplated in the European treaties, has the advantage, compared to the presidential one, of ensuring uniformity in the political aims of the parliament and the government. It gives the power to give and revoke its confidence in the government, according to the model of the British cabinet system, only to the chamber directly elected by the people (the European Parliament). Granted that this is a procedure already present in other federations (Canada, Australia, India, Germany, Belgium), but what is new is assigning the presidency of the federation to a collegiate body, the European Council, which has the power of designating the head of government and of dismissing Parliament. Its collegiate nature provides a warrant of representation to all nationalities in the federation, and provides the national governments with the power of exercising important constitutional prerogatives at the federal level. All this contributes to shelter the federal institutions from the risks of centralization experienced by all existing federations.

Growing interdependence among federated societies and among the two government levels into which the federations' power is divided has brought about forms of co-operative federalism. It made everybody aware that it is not possible for two separate government levels to coexist on the same territory without somehow co-operating with each other. Consequently, the tendency has arisen to overcome the system of exclusive competences and to develop shared competences, even including foreign policy, as in Belgium, Germany and Switzerland.

Foreign policy represents the privileged ground on which member states' independence can express itself within a federation. Foreign policy can be conceived as a shared competence according to the model of Belgian, German and Swiss constitutions, which bestow the power to stipulate international agreements upon federated communities. Moreover, in the bosom of the European federation, a form of two-headed executive could take shape, the pallid antecedent of which lies in the Constitution of the French Fifth Republic, which divides the responsibility of the executive branch between the premier and the president. Likewise, the European institutions architecture assigns to the European Council (the collegial Presidency of the EU) the power to define the general political directions and priorities of the EU, and to the European Commission the executive powers. In order to promote the evolution of the EU institutions toward the federal model, the decisions within the European Council should be taken by majority vote.

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The European Federation will be articulated into several government levels. Already the EU has started off in this direction, as it recognizes three government levels: European, national and regional. This is an answer to the crisis of the nation-state, which makes it necessary to transfer powers and competences to Europe and to the smaller territorial communities within the nation-states. Moreover, to prevent centralization at the regional level, local communities and intermediate bodies must be recognized as independent government levels inside the federation.

The concern of preventing over-expansion of bureaucracy, caused by the presence of two administrative systems—the federal and the national—in federations such as the USA, suggests the adoption of a single articulated administrative system that delegates to national and subnational administrations the execution of the decisions taken at federal level. Moreover, the EU has adopted the model of the so-called ‘reticular capital’, which decentralizes the functions of government in different cities: the European Parliament not only in Brussels but also in Strasbourg; the Central Bank in Frankfurt; the Court of Justice and the Investment Bank in Luxembourg. This model represents a remedy to fight against demographic congestion and institutional hypertrophy in Brussels.

The limited amount (1% of European GDP) of financial resources made available to the European level is the expression of a political choice that confers the redistribution function on national governments and concentrates social expenditure at national level. If we consider that the average level of public expenditure in the EU member states amounts approximately to 45% of GDP, and in federations like the USA, Germany, Switzerland, Canada and Australia amounts around 20%–25% of GDP, it would not be realistic to foresee an evolution of the EU budget that could even approach the levels of the existing federations. The *MacDougall Report* (MacDougall Committee 1977), published in 1977 on *The Role of Public Finance in European Integration*, asserted that to provide Europe with an economic government, the amount of the European budget should rise from the current 1% to 2%–2.5%, and to 5%–7% if defence policy is included.

22 How to think about UN democratization

The EU is a form of political organization that allows, for the first time in history, the peaceful coexistence of consolidated nations, and could start the federal reform of the UN. For example, the bestowal on the EU of a seat on the Security Council could pave the way to the transformation of this body into the Council of the great regions of the world. The reorganization of the world order on the basis of these groupings of states represents not only an alternative to the power hierarchies determined by the difference between states of varying sizes, but also to the world fragmentation into a chaotic host of small states and statelets, contrasted with very large states. This is the way to overcome the unjust discrimination between permanent and non-permanent member states. This is the way leading to the replacement of the right of veto with the majority vote. In order to promote world unification and federal reform of the UN, the European Constitution could assert the willingness of the European federation to renounce its sovereignty in favour of the UN and to place its armed forces at the disposal of a world police corps.

The UN architecture, reformed along democratic lines, would give shape to a bicameral legislative system composed of the Council of the great regions of the world (the upper chamber) and the General Assembly transformed into a world parliament (the lower chamber). As far as the governing functions are concerned, they would be performed by the office of the Secretariat-General. So far this body has been subordinate to the choices of the Big Five that hold permanent seats on the Security Council. The UN democratization process would progressively reduce Secretary General’s subordination to the Security Council, so that he could receive his investiture (and, if that be the case, non-confidence) from the world parliament.

It might be supposed that the Secretary-General would perform the role of prime minister, while the various specialized UN organizations would perform the functions of ministries: for instance, the WTO would be the ministry of international trade, the FAO the ministry of agriculture, the World Health Organization (WHO) the ministry of health, the ILO the ministry of labour, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) the ministry of telecommunications, the IMF the ministry of finance, the World Bank the development bank, and the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) the world

central bank. All these bodies would be submitted to control and oversight by the world parliament.

Control of the global economy, overcoming the North–South divide, sustainable development and the assurance of general security all require a strengthening of the UN Secretariat-General as a potential world government, by assigning it its own resources and by creating a security corps for emergency military intervention. Of course, the realization of this project would meet the opposition of the forces of national conservatism. It is probable, however, that the European federation, having itself grown out of overcoming national sovereignty, will be more inclined than other states to bestow new competences on the UN.

The idea of a world government continues to raise distrust and hostility not only, as natural, on the part of the supporters of national sovereignty, i.e. the nationalist circles, but also on the part of many figures of democratic thought, first of all the advocates of cosmopolitan democracy (Archibugi 2008; Beck and Grande 2004; Held 1995). The fear is that an authoritarian and uncontrolled power, a kind of planetary Leviathan, could come about. The study of history does not offer any certainty about the capability of free government institutions to challenge the test of time. Despotism is always to be feared. However, three objections could be raised.

The first is that the lack of government, i.e. anarchy, implies war as the inevitable consequence and this is an even worse evil than a world government. Einstein, in keeping with this thesis, asked himself ‘Do I fear the tyranny of a world government?’ and replied ‘Of course I do. But I fear still more the coming of another war. Any government is certain to be evil to some extent. But a world government is preferable to the far greater evil of wars, particularly when viewed in the context of the intensified destructiveness of war’ (Nathan and Norden 1960, 349). If we want to eliminate the use of violence and assert the principle of the rule of law on the global plane, it will be necessary to award the world government coercive powers. The supporters of cosmopolitan democracy pursue the objective of a world parliament and an international court of justice, but consider impossible and anyway undesirable the institution of a world government. A partial exception is represented by David Held who, although never using the expression ‘world government’, admits that government functions could be fulfilled at the world level, first of all by the use of coercive powers.

With a world government it would become possible to eliminate a traditional function of government, i.e. defence, which is necessary only in a world divided into sovereign states. Universal and enforceable disarmament is necessary for building a lasting peace. This does not mean that the world government would be in a position to fulfil its functions without armed forces. Although it would not wage war, nor have foreign relations, it would have the obligation to keep public order. Thus, the armed forces would play only a police role.

In addition, the elimination of war would weaken one of the strongest factors of tyranny and despotism, the search of security in the face of external threats, which has often driven states to limit the freedom of individuals and to erode the institutions created for protecting human rights against the abuses of public powers. There is ‘no example of modern autocratic government ... which does not draw its internal strength from an external threat’, noted Eric Weil. Therefore, since ‘in a World State, threat and possibility of aggression would disappear’, power concentration to face security threats would become unnecessary (Weil 1984, 240). However, there is another, unobserved consequence: world government would likely be the weakest form of government experienced in human history.

Second, a world government is generally set in the context of a unitary state model, and not a federal model. It is absurd to conceive a world government as a form of state endowed with the same characteristics that the sovereign, independent and mutually competing individual states had. The world government is presented by its detractors as the automatic projection on the planetary scale of the unitary state model, which would concentrate in its hands all the powers of the states and would exercise its functions from a single centre. Actually, the unitary state, devised to govern spaces of national dimensions, is not the only possible form of power organization. So much so that most of the states that attained the dimension of a great region of the world (the USA, Russia, India) have a multinational arrangement and adopted federal or quasi-federal institutions. Likewise, regional organizations, first and foremost the EU, show a tendency to evolve toward a federal arrangement. That is to say, more complex institutions than the national ones, and several nations and a series of co-ordinated and independent governments coexist.

The evolution of world federation toward a centralized political organization seems highly unlikely. In other words, it is reasonable to think that it would not replace the individual states, but would recognize their autonomy. Many powers and functions would continue to be managed by individual states. The target of the peace-building process would not be a world state (which, as Karl Jaspers—1953—observed, would be an empire), but a federation of federations of the great regions of the world, which in turn would be federations of states, which in turn would be federations of regions, and so on. This articulation of sovereignty on several government levels avoids the concentration of power in the hands of a single constitutional body, and thus, wards off authoritarian degenerations. The world federation could be thought of as the summit of a pyramid resting on at least five democratic and independent government levels: the local community, the county or the province, the region, the nation-state and the great regions of the world. Most of the powers and functions would continue to be competences of the lower levels of government. That is suggested by the subsidiarity principle, which recommends bringing decisions as close as possible to the citizens, and awarding to higher levels of government only those competences that concern problems that cannot be solved in the bounds of local communities. Such a federal hierarchy would complement the checks and balances in member constitutions.

Third, if it is true that political coexistence is based on institutions tasked with preventing the resort to private violence, it is also true that in the world the idea is gaining ground that those institutions will receive the consent of the individuals who are subject to them. There is no reason why the principles of freedom and democracy, which have enabled humanity to expel violence from larger and larger political communities and march on the road of ever more advanced forms of political coexistence, cannot be extended on the global plane and regulate international relations.

Actually, there is no democratic regime that sustains itself without government. In order for democratic decisions taken by a world parliament to be really enforceable, they must be supported by a strong government, able to win out over the opposition of the powerful industrial and financial multinational groups, organized crime, international terrorism and all sort of non-state actors, and to make the general interests of mankind prevail. The extension of constitutional democracy at the world level through the institution of a world republic of a federal character represents a goal sufficient to meet the challenges of the interests of global economy and finance, as well as the clash among national egoisms.

23 How democracies promote their principles abroad

A topic that is strictly connected with the problem of international democracy is how democracies promote their principles abroad. Of course, the factors that might either enhance or reduce the likelihood of a successful transition to democracy are not independent of the international context. In this connection, we have to ask ourselves whether the US intervention in Iraq, which allowed elections to take place after the fall of Saddam Hussain's regime, has truly paved the way to democracy and generally improved the overall situation in the Middle East.

One of the consequences of the Iraqi war not foreseen by the US government has been the growth of terrorism, which did not exist during the Saddam Hussain era but has now taken root, and the strengthening of fundamentalism in the country. A real movement toward democracy is clearly impossible in a society suffering from daily terrorist attacks. The tragedy of overwhelming US military superiority lies in the fact that although the USA can win wars, it is unable to rebuild the states it has defeated and develop the social and political conditions for the establishment of democratic regimes. Democracy is, indeed, a much more difficult process than the overthrow of tyrants.

This observation leads to a further reflection. The USA is clearly opposing the activity of international courts, since it is not willing to recognize any international jurisdiction. Its refusal to recognize the pre-eminence of the rule of law contradicts the liberal spirit of a power with ambitions to play a role in the promotion of democracy abroad.

The EU also wants to increase the number of democracies in the world. Lacking a powerful military apparatus, it aims primarily to promote democracy in its neighbouring countries. The international influence, which the EU can exercise with the powers and competences with which it is endowed, lies in the force of attraction of its

economic and social model and the powerful dynamics of economic integration that spread beyond its borders.

EU enlargement has been an extraordinary success and proves the effectiveness of an innovative form of foreign policy. The so-called 'Copenhagen criteria' (1993) setting out the conditions that candidate countries have to meet—democracy, the rule of law, market economy, and the adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union—have given a powerful impulse for political and economic change, first in Southern Europe, where three fascist regimes (Greece, Spain and Portugal) survived until the 1970s, and then in Central and Eastern Europe. In order to face the increasing difficulties shown by the massive enlargement that occurred in 2004, a further criterion—integration capacity—has been introduced. It is no exaggeration to say that the attractive force of the EU made a decisive contribution to bringing about the end of those regimes.

The process has not ended yet. In spite of the opposition of France and Germany, negotiations with Turkey will start sooner or later, and the mere expectation of accession to the EU has already produced deep changes in its laws and institutions, such as the abolition of the death penalty, the recognition of the rights of the Kurd minority, and the elimination of the political privileges of the army. On the horizon we can discern the prospect of the pacification and democratization of the Balkans. This is the way to bury the horrors of civil war. The entry into the EU of Slovenia and Croatia are steps in this direction.

If it is true that the enlargement of the EU proves the success of European integration, it is also true that the increase in membership makes the unification process more difficult. Britain's entry into the European Community has unquestionably slowed down the process. Turkey's membership application introduces a new heterogeneous element in the EU. However, the enlargement represents a challenge that stimulates differentiated integration and the formation of a core of countries willing to proceed toward unity at a quicker pace, as shown by the examples of monetary union, the Schengen space and the fiscal compact.

Democratic changes can only succeed and endure within a framework of security linked to a prospect of development. Both these elements could be brought to the Middle East and North Africa by a process of regional integration. This is what was lacking in former US President George W. Bush's plan for a 'Greater Middle East'. The EU could promote such a regional integration process, starting with a peace-keeping intervention by European security forces to assure peaceful coexistence between Israel and the Palestinian Autonomous Areas. This could create a climate of détente in the Middle East and foster international co-operation in the region and the strengthening of the Arab League. Moreover, a development plan is needed, similar to the Marshall Plan that promoted European integration after the Second World War, with the task of stimulating economic integration in the region and contributing to the success of the Arab Spring.

24 The decline of political parties

The great revolutionary transformations marking the milestones of mankind's progress in history, have never been promoted by the established powers. These powers try to rule the new course of events with old ideological schemes and old institutions. Revolutionary change, which creates new institutions and higher forms of political coexistence, has always been the result of the storming into the political scene of new social forces. These forces provide a vehicle for new cultures, new values and new political institutions. While the political parties have lost their attraction force and their former capability for mobilization, no longer succeeding in motivating commitment from young people, all over the world a non-governmental movement has grown. This expresses itself outside traditional channels of political representation and is a manifestation of a new dimension of political participation. It operates at all levels of political life (but more efficiently in local communities and at international level, where the limits of the established powers are more serious) in the sectors of peace, human rights, international justice, aid to development, environment, cultural goods, education, health and so on.

The decline of political parties is a consequence of the crisis of the sovereign state. Faced with the globalization of social, economic and political life, national power offers an observation post that obscures reality as it is and prevents the mastering of it. Political parties are prisoners of the national states: like boats in a stormy sea, they find themselves in the trough of the wave, where they cannot see the horizon. Directed by powerless leaders, they depart from the real problems of

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humankind. Choked inside the tight limits of national states, the political decision making loses any meaningful relation to real processes. Here lies the main root of the decline of democracy even in the founding countries of this experiment—France, Great Britain and the USA—and the decadence of the moral and intellectual quality of political leadership. When, in the debate among political parties, the great goals, those that make it possible to think of the future, are gone, politics deteriorates progressively in a mere power game which keeps at a distance the most dynamic and vital energies in society. The political parties represent for this reason politics without a future.

25 The rise of the global civil society movements

On the other hand, the global civil society movements have tried to strengthen their influence over international politics. Wherever an international summit meeting gathers, a demonstration of global movements or movements for a different globalization is expected. These are citizens who protest against being excluded from representation within international organizations and pretend to have a say in international affairs. They are the most genuine manifestation of the world unification movement and of the necessity, largely felt by young people, to deal with the great dramas of mankind. They are at present a varied mass of small and large groups, linked by a common situation (globalization). It is a movement dragged by the current leading toward world unification, but lacking the instruments to rule this process. It is not yet aware of its institutional objectives, nor has it worked out a political strategy. It represents the future without politics.

Two different polarities can be distinguished. On the one hand, there are the movements that have taken on the role of opposing international organizations and globalization itself, often resorting to violence, and consider the international organizations as non-reformable. At the opposite extreme, there are groups that are integrated in the state system, are recognized by international organizations and behave according to a reformist attitude of mind. They participate in international conferences in an advisory capacity and exert real influence on negotiations, as occurred in the Rome Conference that adopted the Statute of the ICC.

The limit of most of these movements lies in that they have a one-sided perspective: each movement deals with one single problem. However, to the extent that they interpret new needs and are the protagonists of a process tending to redefine actors and roles of political life, we can formulate the hypothesis that they could become the vanguard of the international democracy movement.

All this proves that state-like structures such as a world parliament are indispensable pre-requisites for a full-fledged international democracy. They provide the channels through which civil society can exert influence on the decision-making process.

26 The global civil society forum

The Commission on Global Governance (1995), in the report published in 1995 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the UN, proposed the creation of a permanent global civil society forum. It was conceived as the vehicle to voice the expectations emerging from international civil society and to transmit them to the UN. More precisely, it was proposed that the forum should gather before the beginning of the annual session of the General Assembly and convey to it its claims.

This proposal reflects the impetuous growth of global civil society movements and the exigency to build a body representing them at world level. The Millennium Forum, held on 22–26 May 2000 at the UN Headquarters in New York, USA, has represented the dress rehearsal of the forum. It showed at the same time the potential and the limits of such an initiative.

Even though this experiment has not been repeated so far, it is not an exaggeration to state that it represented the first babble of global democracy. Awaiting the formation of a parliamentary body and political parties at world level (are the NGOs not movements anticipating political parties?), the forum was an assembly representing as close as possible the peoples of the world, or at least the most active part of them.

However, the limits of such an assembly must be pointed out. In the absence of international elections it is impossible to measure the degree of consent supporting the NGOs. The forum would be lacking real democratic representativeness, being the expression of civil society

movements and not the will of the people, which could only come from an election based on a free competition among political parties. It could be compared to the mediaeval parliaments in which the orders were represented, not yet the people. As these had the function of limiting the power of absolute sovereigns, likewise the forum of civil society would limit the absolute power of the sovereign states ruling the UN, first of all the five Security Council permanent members. That is, as the mediaeval parliaments are distant forerunners of the contemporary ones, likewise the forum of civil society might be an institution anticipating a world parliament.

27 A UN parliamentary assembly

Despite the proliferation of parliamentary assemblies at international level, the most inclusive international organization, due to its vocation to universality—the UN—is not endowed with a like body. Nor are the other main specialized agencies and organizations such as the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO. However, the need for democratizing these institutions is shown by the fact that the World Bank has established a Parliamentary Network and the WTO has established a Parliamentary Conference. Of course, the democratization process is still at the starting point, as those institutions cannot influence the agenda and the decisions of the institutions to which they belong. This shows how far the UN is from having attained that minimum degree of democracy that characterizes most international organizations.

The relevance of these attempts lies in the fact that they address the issue of the democratic deficit of those organizations. Their limit lies in its sectoral approach: it is a partial response to the challenge of international democracy. The process of globalization does not involve only trade flows, but concerns many other aspects of political, economic and social life, like security, international monetary and financial issues, poverty, human rights, environment, health, education and so on.

For example, the most recent among the economic and social international organizations, the WTO, is not dealing only with trade, but also with new, related issues such as unemployment, international migration, social rights, child labour, health, environment, etc. These problems are different aspects of the activity of international economic organizations, but find no appropriate answer, in the absence of the necessary powers and because of the plurality of bodies dealing with these problems. It will therefore be necessary to increase the powers of the new international economic institutions, and also to create a centre to co-ordinate functions that are presently scattered in many institutions operating independently from each other (G8, IMF, World Bank, WTO, ILO, UN Environment Programme—UNEP—, etc.).

All this shows, in my opinion, that the problems concerning the strengthening and democratization of the UN must be addressed together. The UN, as a whole, should be entrusted with new tasks, particularly those related to international commercial, monetary, financial, social and environmental relations, and a parliament should be constituted in the fabric of the UN system. Therefore, if the goal to be pursued is the democratization of the process of globalization, the democratization of the WTO or the World Bank is not enough.

The same conclusion could be reached if we were to consider the global civil society organizations. If it is true that the people of Seattle began to act during a meeting of the WTO in December 1999, it should be taken into account also that in the movement born in Seattle converge a great variety of claims (peace, human rights, environment and so on), each of them a response to the various aspects of globalization. All those concerned about peace, international justice, sustainable development and protection of human rights need a democratic world order through UN reform.

It is worth recollecting that the proposal for a UN parliamentary assembly was inspired by the example of the European Parliament, which, at the beginning, was an assembly made up of members of national parliaments and endowed with consultative powers. The proposal was conceived as a preliminary step toward creating a real world parliament directly elected by the world citizens and endowed with legislative powers. The establishment of a world parliament is, of course, a long-term objective, which can only be conceived as a gradual process, as shown by the institutional evolution of the European Parliament. Initially it was composed of members of national parliaments, then it was elected with universal suffrage, and finally it has progressively strengthened its legislative and control powers. The institutional evolution of the European Parliament, still unaccomplished, suggests that forming a parliamentary assembly could be the first step on the way to the democratization of the UN.

The creation of a UN parliamentary assembly could be conceived as the first step on the way to UN democratization. A possible way, suggested by Dieter Heinrich (1992), to create an embryo of a world parliament is the one suggested by Art. 22 of the UN charter, which provides for the creation of 'a subsidiary body' of the General Assembly, as deemed necessary to fulfil its functions, without adopting the amendment procedure, requiring unanimity of the permanent Security Council members and a two-thirds majority of member states. Such an assembly could evolve, according to the European Parliament model, to the point of turning the General Assembly into a world parliament. The African, Caribbean and Pacific and the EU Partnership Joint Assembly, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly, which include representatives of two or more continents, show that it would be possible to create a similar body within the UN.

David Held argued that, owing to the fact that several states have not developed democratic regimes, 'an independent assembly of democratic peoples ... is unlikely to be an assembly of all nations'. Probably, 'it would be an assembly of democratic nations which would, in principle, draw in others over time' (Held 1995, 273).

According to two US academics, Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss, a different way could be followed: a treaty instituting a world parliament. It could begin to exist after being ratified by a minimum number of states (20, according to the authors, but such a tiny body could not aspire to the appellation of world parliament). If we take into account that the EU member states number 28 and will increase in the future, 20 states seem rather few. Some 50% of the UN members and world population could provide a sufficient basis for the entry into force of the treaty. As Falk and Strauss (2001, 18) write, 'once the assembly became operational, the task of gaining additional state members would likely become easier. A concrete organisation would then exist that citizens could urge their governments to join. As more states joined, pressure would grow on non-members states to participate'.

Notes

- 1 According to the resolution 288 of 27 February 1950 by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which clarified the distinction between IGOs and NGOs, IGOs are established by intergovernmental agreements, while NGOs are not.
- 2 Among others, the following authors share the above-mentioned thesis: Albertini (1960); Gellner (1983); Kaegi (1942); Lüthy (1962); Proudhon (1959).
- 3 It is to be noted that in Bolivia direct elections have not taken place for the time being.

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