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His recent Published works include:

(1) *De la globalización al caos y a la crisis Análisis de algunos aspectos centrales de nuestra época* (book). Mexico City, 2002.

(2) *Quórum No. 70* (2000). Los líderes políticos del siglo XX (primera parte)

(3) *Quórum No. 71* (2000). Los líderes políticos del siglo XX (segunda parte).

(4) *Quórum, No.72* (2000). Algunas contradicciones y tendencias del comportamiento cíclico de los estados y los mercados en el capitalismo avanzado, México y América Latina.

(5) *Quórum No. 73* (2000). Los ciclos largos y la tendencia secular del empleo asalariado femenino. Algunos ejemplos internacionales

Contemporary Globalization

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Globalization is an elastic concept, to which everyone bestows the characterization that they wish, but in this essay I will refrain from reviewing the world literature on the issue in order to concentrate on my interpretation of globalization.

Globalization has been a generalized process involving the extension of trade and the capitalist socio-economic formation (with its historical base in Western Europe), with its structures, institutions, and values, to all the corners of the planet and the deepening of its different temporary modalities on a planetary scale, although in its initial stages this expansion coincided with the extension of pre-capitalist values and structures and institutions, mainly feudal, although also characteristic of slave-holding societies.

As such, it began in the 13th-14th centuries in the small Italian city-states and extended first throughout Western Europe and then later on a global scale, especially following the major geographical discoveries of the last quarter of the 15th century.

This process has not been lineal, but rather has been subject to economic cycles and other lengthy hegemonic periods of domination (100-150 years) and other processes that were also long, although involving lesser periods of time (46-60 and 22-30 years). That is, in these cycles, periods of expansion have alternated with those of decline (with their elements denoting setbacks), of this above-indicated secular process.

The general direction in which this process has moved is from the center to the periphery. In its initial stages, the center was comprised of empires and city-state or small states (Holland) and gradually it evolved toward a process of world hegemony involving a superpower, especially in the case of Great Britain (1815-1944) and the United States (1945-2007 -?). At the moment, there are at least five categories of countries in which the process of globalization is occurring: 1) the hegemonic country 2) other central countries 3) countries of the semi-center (Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, etc.) 4) semi-peripheral countries (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, China, etc., and 5) peripheral countries.

The current stage of globalization, which began at the beginning of the 1970s and has lasted until the present day (which, for the official thinkers of the system is the true globalization), is marked by the following characteristics:

1. As of the beginning of the 1970s, this was a long period of economic decline or phase B of the Kondratiev cycle. It is not a new phase, but the end of a long phase that has its beginning in the last decade of the 19th century. It is, in fact, the decadence and extreme rationalization of the main features of this period, which were based on oil and the internal combustion engine, as well as in electricity, as the main motor forces, around which a techno-economic system was formed, which gradually replaced the system based on coal and the steam engine.

As of 1973 we have a long period of a falling tendency in the rate of profit of the productive activities and also a declining trend in the rhythm of growth of the GDP of the different countries that comprise the world economy (with their corresponding exceptions). The long-term saturation of the markets of the basically traditional products, has led to the emergence of this trend, as well as the permanency of considerable idle capacity and excess capital accumulation, which as of the 1970s increasingly shifted to the financial-speculative sphere. Starting from 1995-97, the problems of the world economy have worsened, giving rise to an international recession in the 2000-2003 period and to a subsequent weak recovery that is concluding in 2007. As of this year, as indicated in the recent annual report of the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), we could be slipping toward a deep depression of the type that began in 1929.

Table 1							
GDP							
Economic dynamism in decline							
Percentage change, yearly average							
	1960-69	1969-79	1979-90	1990-95	1995-00	1990-00	2000-05
U.S.	4.2	3.2	3.2	2.5	4.1	3.3	2.6
JAPAN	10.1	4.4	3.9	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.2
GERMANY	4.4	2.8	2.3	2.1	2.0	2.1	0.7
EURO 12	5.3	3.2	2.4	1.6	2.7	2.2	1.4
G 7	5.1	3.6	3.0	2.5	1.9	3.1	

Taken from Robert Brenner, statistical annex to “Prosperity and Crisis in the World Economy: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.” IIEc-UNAM, 24.05.07

2. This long period (or wave) of decline of the international economic model based on oil has been called globalization by the neoliberals in order to try to emphasize its “positive” features and mask the negative.

The deepening of the contradictions of the above-mentioned model indicates that it is historically obsolete, that most of its branches and sectors use mature technologies, its markets are relatively saturated, and that the transition to a new model is clearly underway, based on a new source of energy and its corresponding engine, namely, natural-hydrogen gas and fuel cell engines. But this transition will take place following one of humanity's greatest economic catastrophes.

The persistence of the trend toward a decline in the rhythm of growth of the world economy, which followed the long period of strong growth of 1945-1974, the golden age of international capitalism, has translated into a situation in which although in the 1970-1979

period the international economy grew by 4.5%, in 1980-1989 the corresponding figure was 3.4%, which declined to 2.9% in 1990-1999¹ and to 2.7% in the 1997-2006 period, with a similar rhythm in the 2000-2005 period, 2.6%. After the economies of the OECD member nations grew by 2% in 2003 and the world economy as a whole experienced a good turnaround of 5% in 2004² (in the U.S. electoral year), in 2005-06, growth was 4.9% and 5.4%, respectively, with a decline in this indicator expected in 2007.

3. Some of the other new elements of the international scenario, resulting from the crisis of the model, are:

(1) The deregulation of the financial, goods and services, money and capital markets. The extreme financialization of the world economy, with the corresponding rise of parasitism. The financial-speculative economy is divided into several segments and has reached a size that is twenty or thirty times that of the real or productive economy. While world GDP reached a total of \$48 trillion dollars in 2006, the derivatives sector, according to the Bank for International Settlements, which in 1989 barely profiled with a notional value of \$5 trillion dollars, in 2006 had already reached the \$532 trillion dollars mark (eleven times world GDP). Between April and June 2007 it barely reached the figure of \$536 trillion dollars³, in doing so registering weak growth, practically halting its vertiginous rise and creating multiple problems mainly for many of the banks and funds that its investors own, particularly Deutsche Bank and General Motors and Ford, among others.

However, it is necessary to add that this financial segment, for being the most developed, is not the only one. Together with it, there are the foreign exchange market, also with a high rhythm of growth and an enormous size, and the capital market with its diverse segments, etc.

The speculative bubbles have become an increasing extended development in contemporary society. The bubble of computer and informational technology companies' stocks and securities (1995-2001), was followed by the enormous real estate bubble (2001-2007), the biggest in world history, which is ending this same year.

(2) The restructuring of world industry with migration from branches with mature technology and low rates of profit in the traditional industrial centers toward countries with a cheap and docile workforce, undervalued currencies, abundant and low priced raw materials, state subsidies and protection, as well as political stability. The main forms of the

1 IMF, several years, The World Bank 1998, 2000, Jorge Beinstein, "Capitalismo senile", Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2001, Internet version, p. 62; Robert Brenner, "Declining Economic Dynamism", statistical appendix to "Prosperity and Crisis in the World Economy: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," Mexico City, 24.05.2007, P. 1.

2 "World Economic Outlook", IMF, Sept. 2003, P. 173

3 BIS annual report, 2007.

world restructuring of transnational corporations are subcontracting and maquiladoras, as well as the installation of their subsidiaries abroad. In most of the cases, the corporations have met with the cooperation of the local governments to eliminate any obstacle to their international plans, but a trend that has begun to recently emerge is nationalization, state control, or the extreme regulation of company operations with the purpose of sharing the benefits of their activities with the host countries (Bolivia, Venezuela, Ecuador, etc.).

(3) The restructuring of the production of the transnational companies, which have resorted to a very broad international division of labor within their foreign subsidiaries as a whole in order to integrate their universal or regional end products. In this context, the extreme rationalization of production takes place within companies, with the aim of intensifying the use of capital and labor and to obtain greater profits.

(4) Financialization of companies, which have increasingly resorted to the stock markets and the placement of paper and securities to obtain higher profits.

(5) Reorganization of the labor factor, with workplace flexibility, the promoting the elimination of trade unions or separating the workers from their unions, as well as crushing, brutally in many cases, strikes and other forms of labor protests. Other aspects of the current stage include:

(6) World unemployment having increased. In several advanced countries new forms of workplace management have begun to be established. These include a greater participation and responsibility on the part of workers in the organization of the workplace and the quality of the end product, as well as in some cases, in company management and leadership (quality circles, etc.). Government restructuring, with the sale of state owned enterprises in the economy and services (“thinning of the state”), decline in the number of state employees, reduction in social services, increase in the public debt, and the rise in subsidies to companies. General rise in the Asian economies, first of all Japan, and subsequently the four Asian “tigers”, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, the oil producing countries (with the exception of Iraq), China, and finally Vietnam, Cambodia, and India. The foreign and internal debt of the nations increases year by year, as is also the case with the states’ fiscal imbalances. World trade grows at significant rates in the first stage of the period, but in a second phase, it constantly diminishes. The transnationalization of the economy, that is, the prevalence of the large transnational corporations in the economy is reaching a point in which the 500 largest corporations produce more than 40% of world GDP. This indicates the emergence of megacorporations and their domination of the world, since their powerful strength allows them to not only dominate on an economy level, but also in the political, cultural and social fields as well.

(7) The current moment. We are facing a complex scenario, in which the most probable variant is that the recession that is beginning in contemporary capitalism will become a deep depression, in a crisis of capitalist civilization, similar in several aspects to those of 1914-18, 1929-1930s, and 1939-45. This would imply the collapse and closure of

countless companies, the growth of unemployment, the increase in social and political struggles, the rise in crime and violence and its corollary, an increased number of wars. But this also implies a move toward the left and the center-left in the governments of many of the “emerging” countries.