ANNEXING THE THIRD WORLD NATION-STATE?

ATTACKS ON THIRD WORLD SOVEREIGNTY AND THE NEW RACISM IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

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Despite the crisis of neoliberal global capitalism and the blunders of "hard power" imperialism in the 'war on terror', the hegemony of global capitalism as well as that of a new imperial world order appears to be relatively intact around the world, except in parts of South America. While this hegemony is partly related to globalization of capitalism, I would like to argue that it also has to do with the success of ethical-political discourses which have helped create an ideological common-sense around a supposed inability (and/or undesirability) of some peoples and nations to govern themselves. Never fully accepted by Western states, and never fully enjoyed in its European sense by Third World states, the ideal of Third World sovereignty is under a heightened frontal attack by powerful nations in the post-Cold War era. The main focus of this paper is the racist logic behind the different forms of attack on Third World sovereignty in international politics. One form of attack comes from new articulations of "human rights" positioned in opposition to (Third World) sovereignty. Expressed through the notion of "humanitarian intervention" and the recent doctrine of the "Responsibility to Protect", international humanitarian discourse treats Third World peoples as wards of Western states. The other side of the seeming concern for helpless humans expressed in humanitarian discourses is often the contempt expressed for political regimes that act independently of U.S. political and economic hegemony. These include not just those declared "rogue states" in the "war on terror" but also countries, such as those which are part of the Bolivarian Alliance in the Americas. Whether the dominant discourses emphasize the need to "protect" segments of Third World populations under a new humanitarian order, or express resentment of Third World peoples acting independently of the hegemony of powerful states, what connects the new discourses on the Third World in international politics is the introduction of an unequal notion of humanity for Third World peoples, through denial of politics, citizen rights and rights to self-determination.

What we are witnessing in the post-cold war period is not just a continuation of *cover*t foreign interventions of the Cold War variety, or support for secession in, for example, Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador, but also the development, in foreign policy, in international law and in institutions of global governance, as well as academic and public discussions, of *overt,* ethico-political discourses about the legitimacy and desirability of foreign interventions.

In his 1994 book, *The New Ideology of Imperialism*, Frank Füredi was perhaps one of the first observers to detect an emerging new trend of a renewed ideological onslaught on the Third World by Western countries in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War. Revealing how the imperialists in the West were never able to resolve the moral and intellectual crisis of imperialism during anti-colonial struggles and in the post-colonial period and never completely left their colonial mindsets behind, Füredi traces the history of reactions to Third World nationalism. He finds that in the post-colonial period the reactions have ranged from defensiveness about colonialism to strategies of containment and accommodation / management of Third World nationalism. Crystallizing in the post-Cold war period, Furedi observes a trend

whereby there has been a denigration of the Third World and demonization of Third World nationalism, one the one hand, and a "moral rehabilitation" of imperialism, on the other.

In an environment where the Third World was seen to have replaced the Soviet Union as the main threat to stability, the shift in discourse has been so significant that for Füredi, by the early 1990s, it was "*not colonialism but decolonisation* that [was] likely to be treated as problematic" (Füredi, 1994: 98). In the emerging new discourse, Füredi finds it telling that that diverse concepts as nationalism, non-alignment and religious fundamentalism are often linked with one another with little regard for historical or analytical precision (Füredi, 1994: 3). Here, the tendency has been to discredit Third World nationalism often reducing it to ethnic nationalism, tribalism, fundamentalism or corrupt or dictatorial leadership. In this environment, implicit, or even some explicit, attacks on the right to self-determination and unquestioned acceptance of the moral case for Western intervention became commonplace immediately after the end of the Cold War, resulting, even as early as the beginning of the 1990s, in the relative absence of a serious opposition against Western interventions in Panama, Iraq, Somalia and Bosnia[i].

This paper focuses on the role of the ethical and political delegitimization of Third World sovereignty in developing and sustaining the hegemony of a new international order. What is claimed to be a "post-Westphalian" new world order, based on principles of human rights and democracy, has become hegemonic in its attack on Third World sovereignty precisely because of the plurality of its actors and the ambivalence of its goals. As Nicolas Giulhot mentions in the case of Cold-War human rights activism, sometimes it is precisely an ambivalence that may lead to the success of a hegemonic project:

> "…this field of international policies has developed as a bridge or as a common ground between progressive, internationalist areas of American politics, on the one hand, and a cadre of cold war strategists on the other. The success of this agenda lies precisely in its ambivalence, that is, in its capacity to lend itself to different interpretations and to accommodate different strategies, whether those of genuinely concerned activists and dissidents, or those of State Department planners." (Guilhot, 2005: 9)

In addition to the direct influence of the U.S. foreign policy circles, it is possible to identify a number of different intellectual and political forces behind the de-legitimization of the nation-state. One of these has been the enormous popularity and influence of Benedict Anderson's concept of nations as imagined communities. As Brennan (2001) and Dirlik (2002) argue, the popularity of this work has led to an over-stated conception of the nation as only or purely a cultural construct.

A second source of influence came through the visions developed in different parts of the political spectrum after the Cold War about the possibility and desirability of a post-Westphalian order. In the left, cosmopolitan visions of democracy and global citizenship (and ultimately, a cosmopolitan vision of sovereignty as an alternative to national sovereignty) were developed by David Held, Jürgen Habermas and Daniele Archibugi.

Although not necessarily directly connected to the left theoretical visions of cosmopolitan democracy, but also contributing to increased cynicism, in principle about national sovereignty in general, but in practice about Third World sovereignty, has been the embrace, in the post Cold War period, by feminism[ii] and other social movements of a human rights framework which tended to approach the nation-state with cynicism, if not complete negativity. The attack on Third World sovereignty is not only legitimated, but also significantly energized by the ability of "post-Westphalian" discourses to successfully incorporate and articulate concerns raised (by human rights activists, feminists, those concerned about ethnic nationalism, and other critics) and visions (such as that around "cosmopolitan democracy") developed in the left. I suggest, therefore, that despite the economic and political crises of capitalism and imperialism, a "passive revolution" holds different political constituencies together.

This paper focuses mainly on the post-Cold War humanitarian discourses to uncover the popular appeal the attacks on Third World sovereignty. It discusses three main problems with the humanitarian cosmopolitanism. In addition to the concerns, now raised by many scholars, that humanitarianism has become a tool for imperialism, the paper discusses two important problems related to the inner logic and implications of humanitarian cosmopolitanism. Not only is humanitarian discourse based on a racist and colonial mentality in ascribing different types of humanity and political existence to peoples in different countries, but it is also inherently anti-political and anti-democratic in its politics. After an identification and discussion of the problems with humanitarian cosmopolitanism, the paper concludes with a discussion of possible ways to rethink the question of sovereignty.

Humanitarianism as an Imperial Weapon:

The most glaring problem with the new discourse and practices of humanitarianism has to do with the hypocrisy involved in the use of these discourses. In recent decades, humanitarian discourses and their institutional manifestations have been used, to use Amy Bartholomew's terms, as "swords of empire" to justify imperial interventions (Bartholomew, 2004). Several recent studies have documented and analyzed the recent changes in the nature of humanitarian activism. They have highlighted the trends towards professionalization, institutionalization; and corresponding move from principles of neutrality and peacefulness to militarization and cooperation with Western foreign policy (Chandler, 2002; Foley, 2008; Rieff, 2003).

Observers are alarmed that some of the institutions of a so-called post-Westphalian order such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) have focused exclusively on African countries. Mahmood Mamdani warns that "[i]ts name withstanding, the ICC is rapidly turning into a Western court to try African crimes against humanity". Under these circumstances what ICC achieves may not be more than a practice of "politicized justice" (Mamdani, 2008). The selective application of universal principles and international law means that the principle of national sovereignty is simply being replaced by imperial sovereignty. Under the present conditions, the U.S. can simultaneously define the universal and opt-out of its application and force. While the U.S. leads "humanitarian interventions", and be an enthusiast for war crime tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda, it can oppose the universal jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.

There is now a significant amount of research and analysis looking into the inconsistency and hypocrisy involved in the claims to humanitarian cosmopolitanism in recent international developments. As, or more important, than the questions on consistency however, are questions pertaining to the inner logic and implications of humanitarian cosmopolitanism.

How Many Types of Humanity? The Racist and Colonial Logic of Cosmopolitanism

A second major problem with the recent attacks on nation-state sovereignty has to do with the implicit or explicit racist and colonial logic they are based on. Rather than being based on a universal critique of nation-state sovereignty, they represent a specific critique of Third World sovereignty.

> "Cosmopolitan regulation is in fact based on the concept of sovereign inequality, that not all states should be equally involved in the establishment and adjudication of international law. Ironically, the new cosmopolitan forms of justice and rights protection involve law-making and enforcement, legitimized from an increasingly partial, and explicitly Western perspective." (Chandler, 2003: 343)

An emerging conceptual attack on Third World sovereignty became apparent almost immediately after the end of the Cold War. In one of the early articulations of this position in the post Cold War period, Robert Jackson (1990) argued that compared with the "positive sovereignty" of the modern European states, statehood in the Third World was based on "negative sovereignty", defined simply by a formal-legal freedom from outside interference. Lacking the capacity to self-govern, Jackson calls Third World states "quasi-states" only able to stand as sovereign states thanks to international aid and new ideas and principles in international law, Jackson grudgingly cites, around anti-colonialism, self-determination and international legal equality. Defining his own position as a critique of this "international liberalism" (1990: 10),

Jackson laments the changes in the international order in the post-colonial period and questions whether the "quasi-states" deserve sovereignty:

> "What has changed is not the empirical conditions of states but the international rules and institutions concerning those conditions… the freedom and positive sovereignty of states expressed by the traditional balance of power system has been interfered with and subjected to new normative regulations: weak, marginal, or insubstantial states are now exempted from the power contest at east in part and treated as international protectorates." (Jackson, 1990: 23)

> "Ramshackle states today are not open invitations for unsolicited external intervention. They are not allowed to disappear judicially… The judicial cart is now before the empirical horse. This is entirely new. The result is a rather different sovereignty regime with an insurance policy for marginal states." (Jackson, 1990: 23-24)

Rather than a right to self government or principles of the legal equality of nation-states, Jackson defends a notion of sovereignty based on capacity. On the basis of this notion of sovereignty, what Jackson proposes as an alternative to the post-colonial international regime is not necessarily very different from that of the colonial period:

> "…in a post-colonial but highly unequal world such as ours, there ought to be various international statuses ranging from outright independence to associate statehood to international trusteeship which are determined by the circumstances and needs of particular populations." (Jackson, 1990: 200)

Even though Robert Jackson's attacks on Third World sovereignty might have been rather novel in the early 1990s, it seems that in time, his ideas as well as their practical implications have come to represent the new hegemonic position in international governance. The result is that rather than a so-called "post-Westphalian" transition, what we are experiencing today is a transition to imperial sovereignty. Mahmood Mamdani (2008) argues that the so-called transition we are experiencing from the old system of sovereignty to a new humanitarian order is "not a global but a partial transition", 'confined to those states defined as "failed" or "rogue" states'. The result, he argues is a bifurcated international system, very much like that of the colonial period when state sovereignty existed in some parts of the world but was absent in most of Asia, Africa and the Middle East. One part of the bifurcated international system is defined by sovereignty and citizenship, the other by trusteeship and wardship.

What makes the bifurcation a particularly racist one is the fact that the logic of bifurcation in this framework applies not just on states, but also on peoples. Costas Douzinas (2007) argues that there is not one, but three types of humanity for cosmopolitan humanitarianism: The victim, the

evil-doer and the rescuer. The first two are elsewhere. The "rescuer" is the white Western subject. According to Douzinas, "(t)he premise and appeal of humanitarianism is distance and alienation" (2007: 16). What the humanitarians have towards the victim is not sympathy out of a shared sense of humanity and experience, but rather pity and a sense of superiority (2007: 16). A most important characteristic of humanitarian discourse is precisely its attempt to erase the interconnectedness of histories and experiences.

> "We shed tears… out of a sense of superiority and charity rather than out of shared history, community or humanity. If we have a shared history, humanitarianism in its celebration of our goodness erases it.…. The horrors visited by the West on its 'others' are conveniently forgotten and displaced. Horrible atrocious acts are only committed by the evil inhuman other." (Douzinas, 2007: 15)

What is striking about some of the discourses advocating "humanitarian intervention" is that what sounds like a form of xenophilia expressed for the dependent other may be the other side of the coin for a contempt for Third World political subjects acting more independently. Also interesting are the ways "humanitarian intervention" can be advocated through overtly racist language about the people targeted as recipients of humanitarianism. An article calling for the overthrow of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in the *Ottawa Citizen* exactly the day before he was ousted through a joint U.S./Canada/French intervention is quite telling. The author not only declares Haitians as incapable of self-government, but he also refuses to accept that foreign invasions and interventions might have had anything to do with Haiti's problems:

> "Haiti has been celebrated patronized and excused for two full centuries. It has a history of false dawns and great expectations and unbelievable tyranny. Through which it would appear no real progress has ever been made in creating a people who are susceptible to self-government. '
>
> 'The country is the victim of that reverse racism which refuses to demand that an "oppressed people" behave reasonably even under duress and instead blames outsiders for all their problems. '
>
> 'The persistent breakdown of "civil society" is the cause of persistent foreign intervention not the consequence of it." (Warren, 2004)

The Anti-Political and Anti-Democratic Politics of Cosmopolitanism

A third major problem with recent discourses and practices of cosmopolitanism has been that they involve a form of politics that is inherently anti-political and anti-democratic. This is the case whether we are talking about the politics of "humanitarian intervention" or the politics of

"state building" (Chandler, 2006) which I will discuss later in this section. Combined with some of the racist premises integral to liberal cosmopolitanism, this anti-political politics prescribes a very marginal humanity to Third World peoples. A racist logic is integral to the anti-political nature of humanitarianism. Not only does the discourse invisibilize the connectedness of the histories and present relationships of the fortunate and the misfortunate; and presents Western governments and corporations (which might be directly implicated in the poverty, and misfortunes of the recipients of humanitarianism) as the savior. There is also the fact that humanitarianism is conditional upon the absence of political agency on the part of the recipient. Politics, it seems, is the prerogative of the imperial power and its (consenting) citizens.

Cosmopolitan discourse not only tends to simplify and caricaturize nationalism, in the Third World context, reducing it to its ethnicist, tribalist variants, but it also tends to see sovereignty as intrinsically in tension with, if not always contradictory, to human rights, not acknowledging how the very enjoyment of human rights may be contingent on sovereignty[iii]. This position overlooks the differences between human rights and the political and substantive rights of citizenship. Reminding that without citizenship, the "human" is reduced to 'bare life', Zizek questions the value and integrity of the human rights perspective:

> "Paradoxically, I am deprived of human rights at the very moment at which I am reduced to a human being 'in general'…What, then, happens to human rights when they are the rights of *homo sacer*, of those excluded from the political community; that is, when they are of no use, since they are the rights of those who, precisely, have no rights, and are treated as inhuman? Jacques Ranciere proposes a salient dialectical reversal: 'When they are of no use, one does the same as charitable persons do with their old clothes. One gives them to the poor." (Zizek, 2005: 127)

Mahmood Mamdani also underlines the weakness of human rights compared to citizen rights. He argues that in celebrating human rights, the international humanitarian order does not acknowledge citizenship. Instead, Mamdani suggest, "it turns citizens into wards… If the rights of the citizen are pointedly political, the rights of the human pertain to sheer survival… The new language refers to its subject not as bearers of rights –and thus active agents in their emancipation— but as passive beneficiaries of an external "responsibility to protect." (Mamdani, 2008)

The language of cosmopolitan humanitarianism defines the targets of humanitarian intervention not with full humanity, including political agency, but rather with pitiful dependency. Douzinas argues in the eyes of the West, the recipients of humanitarianism are:

> "… an amorphous mass of people… The victims are paraded exhausted, tortured and starving, but always nameless, a crowd, a mob that inhabits the exotic parts of the world. As a former president of the Medecins sans Frontiers put it, 'he to whom humanitarian actions are addressed is not defined by his skills or potential, but above all, by his deficiencies and disempowerment. It is his fundamental vulnerability and dependency, rather than his agency and ability to surmount difficulty that is foregrounded by humanitarianism." (Douzinas, 2007: 13)

"A-political" or "anti-political" may indeed be the terms that best capture both the self-perception of the cosmopolitan humanitarians and their expectations of the recipients of their humanitarianism. Zizek argues that "(t)oday's 'new reign of ethics'… relies on a violent gesture of depoliticization, depriving the victimized other of any political subjectivization." (2005: 128). Finkielkraut captures the irony of the kind of irony in the kind of xenophilia expressed in humanitarianism:

> "the humanitarian generation does not like men –they are too disconcerting—but enjoys taking care of them. Free men scare it. Eager to express tenderness fully while making sure that men do not get away, it prefers handicapped people." (Finkielkraut, cited in Douzinas, 2007: 20-21)

An interview on CBC radio's *The Current* on Wednesday, January 7[iv], demonstrates the irony of the humanitarian position. During the Israeli attack on Gaza, a Canadian humanitarian worker volunteering with the International Solidarity Movement protested the belligerent attacks on the civilians. The argument she used to defend the innocence of civilians in Gaza was interesting. The humanitarian activist said that most of the people who were killed and hurt in this attack were "not political at all." She did not say they were "not militants"; she did not say they were "not terrorists." She said they were "not political at all." No doubt uttered, in the case of this activist, in good faith, to argue the innocence of those hurt; to appeal to the sympathy of the Canadian radio audience in hope of their potential solidarity; the choice of words needs to be questioned. Perhaps unintentionally implied was the notion that Palestinians could only be considered "innocent" if they can present themselves as, and effectively accept, a state of pitiful, naked humanity, a child-like innocence and helplessness, a non-politico-human status, and complete dependence on the pity and charitable recognition of outsiders. There was also the implication, again perhaps unintentional, that resistance, struggle for dignity and justice, and an aspiration for self-determination are inherently illegitimate and suspect - as really or potentially "terrorist" - if they are exercised by Palestinians who disagree with the Western mainstream solutions to the Palestinian question. If, to deserve Western recognition and protection of their human rights, Palestinians need to strip themselves of politico-human status, there is the question of what is left of the "human" in humanitarian discourse (Arat-Koc, 2009).

Cosmopolitanism, whether dressed in humanitarianism or in "state-building" projects of global governance, tends to present itself as *apolitical*, disguising its political nature and political agenda. As Wendy Brown states, there are a number of very important political questions the avowed apoliticalness of the human rights framework refuses to address:

> "…there is no such thing as *mere* reduction of suffering or protection from abuse –the nature of the reduction or protection is itself productive of political subjects and political possibilities. Just as abuse itself is never generic but always has particular social and subjective content, so the matter of *how* it is relieved is consequential. Yes, the abuse must be stopped, but by whom, with what techniques, with what unintended effects, and above all, unfolding what possible futures? The pragmatist, moral and anti-political mantle of human rights discourse tends to eschew, even repel, rather than invite or address these questions." (Brown, 2004: 460)

Brown (2004) warns that the apolitical or anti-political politics of cosmopolitan humanitarianism may not just shape politics but monopolize political space altogether. Zizek also argues that rather than being neutral, "humanitarian interventions" are politically constitutive, and may even stand directly in opposition to collective justice projects. According to Zizek, the U.S. invasion of Iraq:

> "…was not only motivated by hard-headed politico-economic interests but also relied on a determinate idea of the political and economic conditions under which 'freedom' was to be delivered to the Iraqi people: liberal-democratic capitalism, insertion into the global economy, etc. The purely humanitarian anti-political politics of merely preventing suffering thus amounts to an implicit prohibition on elaborating a positive collective project of socio-political transformation." (Zizek, 2005: 126)

One of the central concepts of cosmopolitanism is "governance". Different from government, "governance" is a technocratic concept about the management of populations. Replacing *democratic politics* as the space in which issues can be debated, visions can be articulated and discussed, priorities set and changed, governance reconfigures politics in a significantly different way:

> "Governance entails an explicit reference to 'mechanisms' or 'organized' and 'coordinated activities' appropriate to the solution of some specific problems. Unlike government, governance refers to 'policies' rather than 'politics' because it is not a binding decision-making structure. Its recipients are not 'the people' as a collective political subject, but 'the population' that can be affected by global issues such…" (Nadia Urbinati, 2003, cited in Mouffe, 2005: 103-104)

The anti-political logic of "governance" applies to different cosmopolitan projects that challenge Third World sovereignty. David Chandler mentions that in addition to the 'hard power' of the 'war on terror', there are two forms of intervention that undermine sovereignty: 'humanitarian intervention' and 'state-building' interventions. What Chandler refers to as 'state-building' are initiatives by Western states and agencies, sometimes under the auspices of the UN, to intervene deeply into the policy-making and institutional structures of states to offer technocratic measures to 'build capacity', fight corruption, and promote 'good governance'. Compared to other forms of intervention, 'state building' appears as a contractual relationship, a relationship of partnership. However, in its intervention into decision making it blurs the lines between the national and the international and undermine democracy as popular sovereignty. The result, according to Chandler, is the development of 'phantom states, whose sovereignty is significantly transformed. For Chandler, in 'phantom states', governments have very weak links to their societies. They exist to carry out externally-dictated policies to the country, rather than representing the country's popular will to the outside world (Chandler, 2006).
It can be argued that the current demonization of some South American leaders in U.S. foreign policy circles might be precisely about their resistance to the specific form of statehood prescribed in global governance. The dominant discourse not only expresses an overt contempt for the independence from imperial control their politics strives for. It also represents these leaders and the Bolivarian project they are engaged in as inherently authoritarian. In a 2009 article, the *Foreign Policy* journal names the overthrown former president of Honduras, Zelaya, as part of a group of "the latest gang of strongmen" along with Chavez, Daniel Ortega, Evo Morales and Rafael Correa (Ecuador). With no discussion of whether these leaders represent popular sovereignty, the article them to be "the new face of the utopian-revolutionary dreams that have wreaked havoc and sowed totalitarian dreams across the region for so long" (Farah, 2009).

INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION: RETHINKING THE QUESTION OF SOVEREIGNTY

Given the seriousness of the implications of "actually existing" cosmopolitanism as it has developed in the post Cold war period, rethinking the question of sovereignty requires some rather urgent attention. While some of the dangers of nationalism and abuses of sovereignty by the state raise valid concerns about the contradictions and problems of a Westphalian order, there are also many important reasons to be concerned about the nature of the changes in the system of sovereignty that is developing in the post Cold War period. The racist, colonial, anti-political and anti-democratic nature of the recent attacks on Third World sovereignty, on the one hand, and the replacement of the post-colonial regime of nation-state sovereignty by an imperial one, on the other, suggest that rather than a post-Westphalian system, we have moved internationally to a new system akin in some ways to that of the colonial period.

Because of the actual problems raised by aggressive nationalisms and state abuses of sovereignty and violation of human rights, cosmopolitan discourses have created a great deal of confusion in the left of the political spectrum, on the part of groups and individuals whose foreign policy priorities are based on considerations very different than the question of power. There are, however, Third World intellectuals who express a clear position on how to approach the question of national sovereignty. Walden Bello, for example, argues that getting rid of repressive regimes is ultimately the responsibility of the people of a country. For Bello, in the Westphalian world that he believes we still live in, it is important for those in the South to be aggressive in their defense of national sovereignty.

> "Most of us would say that even as we condemn any regime's violations of human rights, systematic violation of those rights does not constitute grounds for the violation of national sovereignty through invasion or destabilization. Getting rid of a repressive regime or a dictator is the responsibility of the citizens of a country. In this regard, let me point out that not even during the darkest days of the Marcos dictatorship did the anti-fascist movement in the Philippines think of asking the United States to do the job for us.
>
> Now, for some people in the North, who belong to states that dominate the rest of the world, national sovereignty may seem quaint. For those of us in the South, however, the defense of this principle is a matter of life and death, a necessary condition for the realization of our collective destiny as a nation-state in a world where being a member of an independent nation-state is the primordial condition for stable access to human rights, political rights, and economic rights. Without a sovereign state as a framework, our access to and enjoyment of those rights will be fragile." (Bello, 2006)

Instead of a conclusion, I would like to offer a few ideas about how to rethink the question of sovereignty. In an essay which helps relieve some of the confusion in the left regarding the cosmopolitan discourse, Timothy Brennan (2001) distinguishes between cosmopolitanism and internationalism. He argues that cosmopolitanism is often based on a privileged class position of middle-class travelers, intellectuals and businessmen and that it "envisages less a federation or coalition of states than an all-encompassing representative structure in which delegates can deliberate on a global scale" (2001: 77). Compared with the elite notion of "world government" envisioned by cosmopolitans, internationalism, according to Brennan:

> "… seeks to establish global relations of respect and cooperation, based on acceptance of differences in policy as well as culture… Internationalism does not quarrel with the principle of *national* sovereignty, for there is no other way under modern conditions to secure respect for weaker societies or peoples." (Brennan, 2001: 77)

A rethinking of national sovereignty may take different forms in the global South and the global North. In the global North, the rethinking may need to be informed by the deep racism and colonialism implied in present forms of cosmopolitanism. In terms of transnational engagement, this may lead to a shift from cosmopolitan humanitarianism to internationalist solidarity.

For intellectuals and activists in the North genuinely concerned with human rights, there is also the need to reflect on what the appeal of humanitarianism implies about the state of activism and politics here, remembering how it is constitutive and consequential for politics in the North, as well as in the South. As David Harvey explains, the timing of humanitarian activism directly corresponds to the rise of neoliberalism. It is therefore worth reflecting on how the humanitarian turn in politics might be both a symptom of and consequential for withdrawal from politics as active transformation for justice and equality. In Costas Douzinas' words:

> "Today we have abandoned both ideology and the attempt to understand the world.… This accords fully with the neo-liberal claims that the history has ended, that all history-moving conflict has been resolved and ideology no longer has any value. … The quest for justice, the great motivating force of politics has become anti-political… Political events are not analyzed concretely or examined for their historical roots; they are rather judged by the amount of suffering they generate…. the complexity of history, the thick political context and the plurality of possible responses to each 'humanitarian trajedy' is lost." (Douzinas, 2007: 20)

Shifting the Northern gaze from the pitiful state of "others" to the general state of politics in the world; and the connectedness of what happens in the South and the North may lead the way to a different type of politics than that of liberal cosmopolitanism. A different politics might be imagined, it may be useful to keep Wendy's Brown's question in mind:

> "Is the prevention or mitigation of suffering promised by human rights the most that can be hoped for at this point in history?... Is the prospect of a more substantive democratization of power so dim that the relief and reduction of human suffering is really all that progressives can hope for?" (Brown, 2004: 462)

Rethinking the question of sovereignty in the (former) Third World, two models might be worth considering. At the local/national level, a "politics of place" as defined by Arif Dirlik (2001) might provide alternatives to identity politics and ethnic nationalism, on the one hand, and neoliberal, imperial cosmopolitanism, on the other. Advocating a new form of politics informed by places, Dirlik clearly distinguishes "place-*based* politics" from essentialist "place-*bound*" nativism or ethnicist politics. The concept of place allows for a political imagination that is based on a contextualized and historicized understanding of the relationships, not only between society

and the natural environment; the local, regional and global; but also of the different peoples who have interacted and co-existed in places over time. Finally, at regional and international levels, a politics of place can be complemented with new forms of Southern solidarity. This may be along the lines of the Third World nationalism of the Non-Aligned Movement. Vijay Prashad (2007) argues that this Third World nationalism was a form of "internationalist nationalism". Currently, the Bolivarian alliance in South America provides a model which might help not just to counter attacks, but also form alternatives to the cosmopolitan order.

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NOTES:

[i] Today, the attacks are so widespread that they have become naturalized. Even the issue of territorial borders, otherwise considered to be one remaining remnant of the Westphalian regime relatively untouched, is discussed rather casually. See: Zachary, 2010

[iii] See Conlon (2004) for a different perspective on the relationship between sovereignty and human rights.

[iv] The podcast for the interview can be accessed through http://www.cbc.ca/thecurrent/2009/200901/20090107.html