



Globalisation Beyond the Economy

Rethinking the World Order

By Farah Rasmi

On November 18th 2018, I was on a bus back to Paris from Brussels, when we suddenly stood still for hours. The borders were blocked by the *Gilets Jaunes* protesters as they rallied against the new fuel tax laws amidst a larger anti-globalisation wave.

The surprising uproar of the *Gilets Jaunes* was highlighting broader concerns in the world economy, particularly in Western nations. A severe sense that the middle class and blue-collar workers were being left behind was already looming over many as globalisation allowed for jobs to be ushered away for cheaper labour abroad.

This year's Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated many of these concerns, as economic nightmares came to the forefront and what populists were warning and accusing globalisation of, seemingly came true. Preexisting lack of trust in the political elite and general dissatisfaction with the status quo have been evident in the rise of radical and populist parties in recent decades. Protectionist economic measures and nationalist politics have created a seismic shift in the global world order, causing concerns and theories such as [Westlessness](#) and [Slowbalisation](#) to emerge. Today, many believe that economic globalisation is on the verge of collapse.

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Economic globalisation, however, goes hand in hand with the internationalisation of people, services, information, and technology. For example, the ElCano Royal Institute in Spain categorises global presence in its [Index](#) based on three major categories: Economic, Military, and Soft. The latter include the movement and exchange of troops and equipment, as well as people “migrants, tourists, students, sports players in international competitions and international development workers.”

According to ElCano’s analysis, despite the global economic recession of 2008-2009 the world did not see a process of deglobalisation, but rather a relative slowing of the globalisation trend. This translated into a slowing in the economic dimension and an increase in the dynamic of the soft dimension. In other words, the human factor, the movement of people and ideas, became the more predominant dimension of today’s globalisation framework.

Accordingly, the inevitability of an economic recession does not create a direct line to deglobalisation. A more realistic expectation is a reformulation of the international market, and a readaptation of the global project based on the lessons learned and the incorporation of new and upcoming trends.

It is important to note that while the pandemic itself took the world by surprise, scientists have [warned](#) of its potentiality for years. Equally surprising to many was the sudden rise in border control and shut down of flights and the movement of people. Yet, these radical measures attempting to contain the virus, while indeed unprecedented, were only so because the virus and the context it came out in are entirely new. In other words, there was no other point in history where people travelled as much as they currently do, while there was also a contemporaneous virus that spread as fast and was as lethal as Covid-19.

The spread of the virus is not a failure of globalisation but proof of the relative anarchy of global governance. It can be argued that had China informed the world about the situation in

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Wuhan as it was occurring and contained it, the world would have been heavily spared. It could also easily, and more importantly, be argued that had the scientists' calls of warning been heeded, research and vaccines could have prevented the spread.

Ultimately what this will translate to is a new system of localisation, regionalisation, and potentially less internationalisation in the economic sector (i.e., [NAFTA](#), [Belt and Road Initiative](#), and ongoing [European Union](#) trade deals). Specifically, the preexisting and increasingly exacerbated decoupling of the US-China economic relations already has corporations shifting their production elsewhere. This shift will evolve with the newly arising need for shorter supply chains and will allow for more regional cooperation while opening new markets and opportunities for developing countries.

However, the aforementioned [soft dimension](#) of globalisation is where all the development and true future of globalisation lies. This dimension, which includes everything from tourism and study, to technology and information, lies predominantly in the hands of the younger generation of global trotters. [Millennials and Generation Z](#), the world's future workforce, have grown up in a world where travelling across the globe, studying and working with people from all walks of life, and even building their life on the dream of having an international job, is not only normal, but a right. The youth that grew up with the United Nations and the European Union as essential parts of their lives would be hard pressed to let them go due to worries inflamed by realpolitik.

It is difficult and unwise to ignore the rise of the internet and the new credibility that the pandemic has given to the digital and mobilised world. The world of Startups and innovation are the future of the economy and the world's soft power at large relies exclusively on the exchange of ideas. This exchange occurs, in its most natural form, through international coordination and with the world's greatest minds working together, be it in the world of tech, science, or academia.

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If history has taught us anything, it is that the power of the young should not be underestimated, especially when it has been demonstrated on multiple accounts in the last decade alone. Even as I write this, America is facing one of its largest civil movements, with its people rising up against social injustice using the internet and social media as their main platforms for rallying support.

Terrorism, climate change, natural hazards, the forced displacement of people, and even the pandemic are only a few of the problems all nations have to face today. All of these are issues that cannot be dealt with solely on a national level. There is no denying that the structure of globalisation and global governance as it stands today is flawed. However, it is not by demolishing them or overly politicising them that they will be solved, but rather by the nations' restructuring of the current approach to international relations.

While the map of the world's hegemonies might be shifting, tourism, the exchange of goods, services, ideas, and information are all essential attributes that can also be redistributed and reoriented. Instead of rallying around tropes of 'the end of globalisation' and placidly accepting that world leaders are (sometimes literally) building walls around their nations, we should be putting our heads together in order to readapt this ever-changing system to our needs. In this fast-paced and evolving world, assuming the end of globalisation would be shortsighted and far more detrimental to the world's economy than its presence.