GLOBALIZATION, THE STATE SOVEREIGNTY DECLINE AND THE 2007/2008 ECONOMIC CRISIS: THE NEED TO CREATE A GLOBAL ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

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Abstract: This paper shows that there is a strong bond between the globalization phenomenon, state sovereignty decline and the conformation of the 2007/2008 economic crisis. In this sense, this paper underlines that state sovereignty weakening increased the global economic flow. Hence, the paper emphasizes the need to create a global economic governance system and therefore highlights the importance of setting up rules and approaches for market regulation and to let the control of the global economic flows more effective. Finally, this paper advocates that this global economic governance system shall be based on a multilateral schedule and represent the interests of states, populations and markets.

Keywords: State. Sovereignty. Globalization. Economic crisis. Global governance.

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1 Globalization: a great historical change

The configuration of the world as a global system is one of the most significant political, economical and social events in the last three or four decades. Thus, its consolidation is an important symbolic-referential landmark of humanity entry into a new century and also into a new and complex phase of its trajectory: the moment of life in common in the planet.

This new phase is marked by a process of great changes, in which there is the unification of the planet and the enlargement of the "world-system" for all the places and individuals, although with diverse intensity and degrees. The Earth becomes, in this new context, a "one and only 'world' and a reuniting of the 'earth-entirety' is seen" (Santos, 1997, p. 48). Life becomes interdependent and starts to be global-wide connected. Hence the perception that all events are interrelated and that they are relevant for mankind.

The planet acquires with that a new status and changes into everyone's territory (the only house for everyone). As a consequence, the distances shorten and the happenings from any part of the world become familiar and are followed by significant portions of the world population. In this sense,

everything deterritorializes and re-territorializes itself. It is not only removed from one place, it unsettles itself circling through the air, going through mountains and deserts, seas and oceans, languages and religions, cultures and civilizations (Ianni, 1996, p. 169).

Boundaries are abolished or become irrelevant or innocuous; they break to pieces and change

their shape, they look alike, but they are not. The means of communication, information, transportation and distribution, as well as production and consumption, move universally fast. The scientific discoveries, changed into material and spiritual production and reproduction technologies, are spread across the world. The print and electronic media, coupled to the cultural industry, change the world into a paradise of images, music videos, supermarkets, shopping malls, Disneylands (Ianni, 1996, p. 170).

It is, therefore, a global revolution "in the current life, whose consequences are to be felt all over the world, in all domains, from the workplace to politics" (Giddens, 2000, p. 23). Thus, globalization "is not only a new thing, it is also something revolutionary" (Giddens, 2000, p. 20). Besides, "the changes affecting us are not confined to any zone of the globe, they are felt a little everywhere" (Giddens, 2000, p. 13).

This happening transforms life in the diverse regions of the planet, generates new perceptions and opens ways for new possibilities. With that, preexisting equilibriums are modified and their commands are to be followed. For this reason, it is possible to state that globalization has a worldly reach and a wide conformation (which allows establishing a new sense for the human existence) and enough force to determine the ways of life in this new century.

Therefore, the emergence of the globalization phenomenon means the conformation of a new cycle in the human history: a period less and less national and more and more global. For this reason, globalization in the world is a great historical change and a planetary happening. Its chief characteristics are the increasing weakening of boundaries and national identities, the intensification of life integration in the diverse regions of the world, the great shortening of distances and the formation of a single worldwide economic system.

2 Decline of the sovereignty concept and redefinition of the state's role

Additionally, globalization is also characterized by the decline of the sovereignty concept and the redefinition of the State's role. In this sense, it is possible to realize that the State has acquired, in view of the complexity of global flows, a new statute (a political entity endowed with relative sovereignty and autonomy) and has started to perform new functions: foment the markets liberation, create regional integration blocks and instruct international economic organizations.

The relativization of the sovereignty concepts and the redefinition of the State's role are events of large proportions. Actually, the implications of this particular event are significant, and it is possible

to say that the common denominator of the profound political and economical disruptions of the last decades is precisely the emptying of the State's sovereignty. Hence, the State,

on one hand, should not want to regulate the national civil society by means of the traditional legal instruments any longer, given the increasing reduction of its intervention, control, direction and induction power. On the other hand, it is forced to share its sovereignty with other forces that transcend the national level. [By enacting laws, therefore,] the national States end up being forced to take into account the international financial-economic context, in order to know what they can regulate and which of their norms will effectively be respected (Faria, 1994, p. 11).

The weakening of the sovereignty concept has strengthened the transnational flows (that cross the national boundaries and express themselves worldwide from several power centers) and has submitted the States to a complex network of worldwide economic relations. This loss of State autonomy has made isolation impossible, political, economic or social, within their territorial boundaries, for the local happenings were thenceforth "determined or modeled by happenings occurring many miles away" (Giddens, 1991, p. 69).

Therefore, it can be seen that the State's sovereignty has been diluted into a set of networks of economic flows, communication networks, exchange of cultural experiences and mutual political influences. Consequently, the State's power has been then shared with other non-national and non-territorial institutions and supported upon global presuppositions.

The State's power has been, thus, diminished and its authority upon the global economic flows and upon the activities occurring on its territory has been weakening. This weakening of the State contributes to the feeling that the States have become "less and less effective as managers of their own affairs" (Matias, 2005, p. 172) and the world more and more complex and economically interdependent and more chaotic and turbulent. This new reality could be clearly verified in the 2007/2008 economic crisis, which has lasted for four years.

3 The 2007/2008 crisis

3.1 The crisis origin

The great economic crisis the world has been facing in the last years is not similar to the past ones. In this sense, the crises that occurred in Mexico in 1994, in Brazil in 1999 and in Argentina in 2001 were characterized as localized and produced partial effects upon the world economy. The 2007/2008 economic crisis is quite unique as it emerged from one of the largest world economies and it can be considered the first crisis of the global economic system¹, in so far as to be compared with the Great 1929 economic crisis.

The crisis began with the drop in the value of properties in the United States, resulting from the housing market crisis and was reflected in a generalized manner upon several parts of the world². So as to understand this crisis, it is important to point out that the American economy had been going through, since the early 2000s, a recession period. Therefore, firstly, there was the bursting of the Information Technology stock market – "Dot-com Bubble". This phenomenon occurred because several sectors related to these new technologies performed worse than expected. "In March 2000, the boom convention was reversed. From March to December of that year, the Nasdaq Composite³ dropped almost 50%" (Cagnin, 2009, p. 151). Secondly, there was the confidence crisis in the American economy (chiefly after September 11, 2001), a fact intensified by the dropping movement in the prices of shares.

In view of this scenario, the Federal Reserve (Fed) adopted, together with other expansive macroeconomic measures, a sequence

¹ In this sense, José Eduardo Faria (2011) calls attention to the fact that the crisis epicenter was the American financial collapse, but it was escalated by the financial institutions interconnection in a global scale existing nowadays.

² Thus, José Eduardo Faria (2011, p. 22) reminds that the crisis "hit all markets – from the money to the credit markets, the stock markets and from the commodities to the forward markets and swaps. The crisis did not surround only the banks of commerce, the investment banks, and the deposit banks. It also involved non-financial institutions, as in the case of insurance companies, of large civil construction companies and even industrial and commercial companies (...)".

³ American stock market index of technology companies.

of cuts in the base interest rate (reaching as low as 1%) as a means to combat the economic contraction. In this manner, the economist Paul Krugman (2009, p. 158) reminds that

(...) the Fed was deeply concerned with the market's weakness and with the generalized economy paralysis, which seemed quite similar to Japan's in the 1990s, [and that it saw that it was fundamental its warm-up].

The Fed's interest rates policy was established and allowed a new economic expansion cycle. This economic expansion was accomplished chiefly from the housing credit, which was extended to the low-income families and developed a huge segment of securitized mortgages. Until now, the securitization of residential mortgages (mortgage-backed securities or MBS) was anchored only on four institutions, in addition to mortgage banks and savings and loan (S&L): FHA, Ginnie Mae, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac⁴ (open government-owned agencies).

Given the expansion of the mortgage credit, the large liquidity in the secondary MBS market and the low interest rates, financial agents, such as the large private banks of commerce⁵, also started to be mortgage securitizers and sought to attract clients that did not comply with the GSE⁶ demands. This fact hugely expanded the volume of papers issued by non-traditional mortgages (low-insurance mortgages). These

⁴ Federal Housing Administration (FHA), Government National Mortgage Association (Ginnie Mae), Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae) and Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (Freddie Mac).

The large American banks had been enlarging their activities to beyond the traditional bank loans, starting to manage mutual funds and offer services of assets management by means of their several departments. They also sought to escape the prudent rules, promoting the credits securitization. Ultimately, in order to face the competition, "the banks vindicated and became financial supermarkets, starting a process that resulted in the separation of functions between banks of commerce and of investments imposed by the Glass-Steagle Act (1933). Since the 1970s, the large American banks have been ruling the international market of foreign currency. More recently, they have developed a highly risky market niche, but has shown itself profitable – given its relations with the last instance employer – by providing financial securities (hedges) as dealers of the derivatives market and opening credit lines in issuing commercial papers and other debt securities in the capital market" (Cintra; Cagnin, 2007, p. 306).

⁶ Corporate Sustainability Grid.

operations gave birth to what Paul Krugman (2009) called parallel bank system (unregulated institutions that were made equal to the traditional bank system).

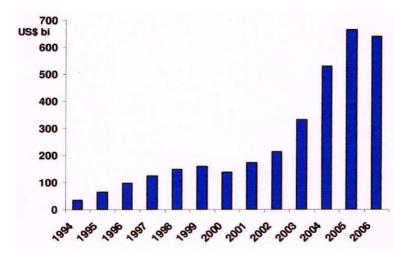
The convergence of these factors allowed a leap in the housing market. In this regard, Gontijo (2008, p.16) explains that "the average rate of increase in property prices was 6.4% per year in the 2000-2005 period, with the peak in 2005, year in which the properties prices escalated at the level of 14%". This expansion of the housing market led the mortgage companies to start to explore the subprime segment. Probing into this new segment sparked the economic crisis that burst in 2007.

3.2 The conformation of the crisis

Was probing into the subprime segment, indeed, the decisive element? Yes, undoubtedly. The fact is that the expansion of this new market allowed, in an accelerated manner, the expansion of the housing market. In this regard, an impressive number of mortgage contracts was created, but with a few securities of being paid off. These contracts, according to Cláudio Gontijo (2008), are those in which the borrower acquires a property by means of financing, but with no down payment and with no means to prove their payment capacity. This fact makes the difference between these mortgages (subprime) and those with solid securities and proved payment capacity (prime).

The growth of the subprime mortgages market was, indeed, impressive⁷. See the graph below:

⁷ And this revealed that banks and institutions started to work "with an increasing tolerance to risk, seeking higher and higher returns. With that, the short-term speculative operations multiplied, at the cost of medium- and long-term productive investments, resulting in a financial wealth progressively unconnected as from the real wealth and in an accumulation regime characterized by the absence of a strict and efficient regulation" (Faria, 2011, p. 23).



Graph 1 – Progress of subprime mortgages in the US (1994-2006) Source: Crédit Suisse.

This expansion was fundamental for the warm-up of the American economy. Additionally, the fact that several Wall Street banks spent millions of dollars with the release of significant advertising campaigns was also important, inducing the Americans to escalate their mortgage-related debts. In this regard, Peter Gowan (2009) reminded that Citigroup released a one-billion-dollar campaign with the motto "Live Richly", which aimed to induce the homeowners to contract a second mortgage and enlarge their debt. The same was performed by other banks. Thus, "the debts coming from second mortgages increased to more than US\$ 1 trillion" (Gowan, 2009, p. 59).

Thus, the housing market reached an unimaginable volume and, as a consequence, became unbearable. This process started to be unviable as from 2005 and consolidated as a trend in 2006. The problem was that the prices of properties started to drop, chiefly as from the second half of 2006, starting a process of implosion of the system. In this regard, Paul Krugman (2009, p. 175) reminds that, though slow, "the first drops in the prices of properties were enough to undermine the foundations upon which the surge of subprime loans was supported".

In the early 2007, this process of drops in the prices of properties continued to occur and reached its dropping peak from the first half of that year to the first half of 2008; in that period, the properties'

devaluation "reached as high as 15%" (Krugman, 2009, p. 175). This drop of prices was motivated by two factors: by the increasing difficulties in paying off the mortgages and the excessive offer of properties (Gontijo, 2008). The convergence of these two factors paralyzed the market

With that, the properties were devaluated and the problem of foreclosure appeared. This was not only the homeowners' problem, but also the creditors' that had financed their enterprises. The most evident way out of this deadlock was the negotiation between homeowners and creditors for reducing their installments. But, this is not easy.

In this regard, Paul Krugman (2009, p. 175-176) reminds that, to begin with, this alternative is costly, as it demands expert personnel and many hours of negotiation. In addition,

subprime loans were not in general granted by the banks that were creditors, but by agents that quickly forwarded these loans to financial institutions, which, in turn, sliced and chopped pools of mortgages into collateralized debt obligations (CDOs), which were sold to investors. The effective management of the loans was managed by loan servicers that had neither resources nor, almost always, motivation to restructure the debts. And, still, the complexity of the financial engineering that supported the subprime loans, spreading the mortgages' properties among many investors, with different priority levels upon receipt, posed formidable legal obstacles to any type of negotiation.

It can be seen, thus, that a restructuring of debts was, in most cases, unviable (as it would involve high foreclosure costs). Furthermore, the subprime mortgages-backed securities have become, quickly, terrible investments and no one was willing to negotiate them. Therefore, the market had been paralyzing and even traditional businesses found it difficult to reach minimal security levels to be carried out. This paralysis has immediately reached the financial institutions involved.

Thus, the crisis was spreading and all the market was mistrusted. The result was the credit retraction and, consequently, the production of a liquidity crisis. Therefore, the subprime market housing crisis hit the US as well as the European countries' financial and capitals market that had banks linked to high-risk mortgage securitization.

The losses had been accumulating at the financial institutions,

chiefly at those originating MBSs.

The problem came up on February 2007, when HSBC released its annual report with losses in housing operations. In April, New Century Financial, a company specialized on the subprime market, bankrupted, dismissing half of its employees (...) (Gontijo, 2008, p. 25).

With the drop in the value of assets of large North-American and European financial institutions, the involved countries' central banks intervened and injected a significant volume of resources. Actually,

the prompt and massive intervention of Fed, which injected US\$ 64 billion on the financial system in a few days, the European Central Bank (ECB), which allocated US\$ 313.1 billion, and the Bank of Japan, which, initially, inserted US\$ 13.5 billion, somewhat eased the market in the second half of August, diminishing the panic that had been taking over (...) (Gontijo, 2008, p. 26).

This, however, did not solve the problem. Even with a strong State intervention and successive cuts in the base interest rate by the Fed (among other initiatives to get over this upheaval), new critic moments rose. This process culminated in the collapse of Bear Stearns, a large investment bank, on March 2008, and the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy, on September of that year. In this scenario, the government intervention was decisive.

In this regard, Rafael Fagundes Cagnin and Marco Antonio Cintra (2007, p. 36) remind that the uneasiness established

on global financial markets demanded the aggressive intervention of State monetary authorities so as to assure the liquidity in the interbank market. It is estimated that the Fed injected US\$ 430.25 billion and the European Central Bank, US\$ 2.9 trillion, adding up to US\$ 3.3 trillion on monetary markets from July 27 to September 12, in order to avoid a steep rise of the short-term interest rates and the reorganization of the investors' portfolios (...). The Bank of Japan, in its turn, injected US\$ 3.3 billion on August 16 and US\$ 6.95 billion on August 21. Other central banks, e.g. the Canadian, the Australian, the Norwegian and the Taiwanese, were also forced to inject liquidity in their financial markets.

All these interventions were important. But the successive statements of the US and European banks' losses of equity deepened the markets' uncertainties and the crisis established in Europe. This continent was more strongly infected by the crisis due to the expressive financial connections, once many European banks had large quantities of US subprime mortgages-backed securities.

This enlargement of the crisis caused a steep drop in the chief world Stock Exchanges. As a whole, the losses with the devaluation of the global shareholder wealth and the credit retraction were huge and many companies ended up bankrupted⁸

. The outcome of this process was economic losses, recession, unemployment and the States indebtedness. With that, the crisis has become systemic and has unfolded until now⁹.

3.3 The new stage of the crisis

The new expansions are connected with the increasing States' indebtedness. The fact is that many States had already been in a scenario of large indebtedness and, by injecting voluminous resources in their financial systems, they have created a default situation. This has generated, in practice, a new stage of the crisis. This is because the medicine applied has caused as a side effect the worsening of the public debt and the depreciation of the States' payment capacity.

This sign showed up in the world in the early 2010s, when some European Union countries indicated that they were facing difficulties and that, consequently, they could not have enough resources to pay off their debts. From among them, these were found Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece and Spain (in the beginning, known as PIIGS). More important countries, e.g. the United States, arose on this horizon in the early 2011s.

⁸ The fact is that many companies, "in the search for a valorization of financial gains from increasingly complex operations, signed currency derivatives contracts selling dollars in a value equivalent to years of exports – with the currency devaluation between 2007 and 2008, however, the losses were so voluminous that they were bankrupted, lost most of their equity and had to be sold, merged or absorbed" (Faria, 2011, p. 22).

⁹ October 2011.

Therefore, the new stage of the crisis was then represented by the increase in the world public debt (at terrifying levels) and the States' helplessness in their capacity to recover the world economy; and this States' fiscal crisis, which has as epicenter the public debt, is still worsening nowadays and should keep on in the next years. A large number of countries, among them the ones considered rich, by spending more than they collect, generate an increasing indebtedness. On September 2011, despite a "bailout" higher than US\$ 100 billion, Greece continued to call for help of the IMF and the European Union, causing fear that other countries could follow the same path.

In the American continent, the US, the locomotive of the world economy, had also faced huge difficulties in this regard. After all, this country's public debt had reached 99.5% of the GDP, having finished 2010 at US\$ 13.4 trillion. The situation is so alarming that the US depend, for financing this debt, not only upon the emission of money (a fact that weakens the dollar in the world economy), but also the selling of government securities worldwide. In this regard, the United States finance their debts with the other countries' reserves, not having a long-term strategy for reducing their deficits or a clear plan for recovering the economy.

It is in this scenario that the credit rating agency S&P published the increase of the US probability of default in the perspective of the long-term public debt progress in that country. This means that its ability to honor the debt's payments is threatened. Therefore, a course correction is imperative, starting with the reduction of the budget deficit (today it is around 11% of the GDP). How can one do that? Probably, with deep cuts into the State's expenses, starting with the removal of the American troops from Iraq and Afghanistan and reaching as far as the social programs (this is what the Republicans defend).

Thus, it is possible to state that the US economy may continue to face huge difficulties for some years, and the same may happen with many of the European economies. This means a strong permanence of some aspects of the 2007/2008 crisis.

4 The need to create a global economic governance system

The first big challenge of the present days is to get over this scenario of global economic crisis. The second is to create mechanisms that may avoid that situations like these return. For that, it is fundamental the creation of a global economic governance system ¹⁰. This claim has been presented by several global political leaders (concerned with the current uncontrolled and obscure financial system) and clearly aims to the strengthening of the multilateral economic organizations, for collaborating between central banks and for adopting common macroprudential measures.

The current challenge is, therefore, establishing a set of common rules and procedures that may discipline and make the global operations more transparent. It can be increasingly perceived that the

traditional dichotomy between an ordered domestic and peaceful sphere, i.e., regulated, and an anarchic interstate and bellicose sphere does not fit in today's world reality any longer [nor assures the necessary assumptions for the sustainable development of the diverse regions of the planet] (Camargo, 1999, p. 4).

In this regard, it is evident that the 2007/2008 economic crisis demonstrated the information deficit that the national authorities have about the eventual implications of the current economic global flows and the disastrous consequences that may arise from a worldwide unregulated market¹¹. It is imperative to change this reality. This does not imply the naive claim of a larger presence of the State and the strengthening of its intervention mechanisms; contrariwise, it means the acknowledgment of the fact that the 2007/2008 economic crisis revealed that the global market has great imperfections and that it is necessary to establish a strong economic governance system and may it be multilateral. The solution would may be the creation of a global

¹⁰ On the issue of global governance, see Czempiel and Rosenau (2000), Commission on Global Governance, (1996), Demos (1998) and Konrad-Adenauer Foundation (1999).

¹¹ This also involves the absence of secure information about the "the situation of global liquidity of banks" (Faria, 2011, p. 22).

economic agency capable of overseeing the market functioning and playing the role of an effective global market maker.

Important is to recognize that the 2007/2008 economic crisis showed that the adoption of "multilateral coordinated actions, which go beyond the traditional intergovernmental cooperation agreements, and new institutional structures and transnational-scale regulations (...)" is necessary (Faria, 2011, p. 31)¹². Thence the search for a new world conception that leaves behind the old intra- and interstate dichotomy and that may presuppose that the current economy is already working interdependently and that its unbalances can only be corrected globally.

This means that one must recognize that the current economic system is characterized by dynamics and processes that obey their own logic, and they are not controllable based upon the "normative categories and procedures and spatial and time patterns built under the inspiration of the classical legal-political theory, [centered on the concept of State and sovereignty]" (Faria, 2011, p. 34). This fact reveals, more precisely, that the integration of the global markets has made them more powerful in the decision-making process and, with that, subjected the national economies to the consequences of acts and agreements made outside their territories.

Starting from this fact, the current text recognizes that the global markets have played a central role in today's world and that it is necessary to establish a global governance system. This system must represent the States', the markets' and the diverse world regions' interests. For that, it must, necessarily, be multilateral and built democratically. This initiative may be the only way to assure that the globalization benefits are minimally socialized among the diverse regions of the planet and, also, that economic crises, such as the one conformed in 2007/2008, be avoided and their costs prevented.

¹² This means that the concept of global governance established by the Club of Rome may not be sufficient any longer: "A set of management mechanisms of a social system and of actions defined so as to assure the safety, prosperity, coherence, order and the continuity of the very world system" (apud Milani, 1999, p. 105).

5 Final considerations

In face of the above-mentioned, it can be stated, even inconclusively, on the end of this great crisis' impact (which is still evidently progressing in the case of PIIGS), that it is not a mere conjuncture crisis such as the ones occurring in the last decades, nor is it a mere financial crisis, but a crisis that significantly undermined the economic foundations of the global economy; a crisis leaving as a task the rethinking of some dogmas that have been on the spotlight in the last decades, chiefly the presupposition of the global market self-regulation.

This resumption will help to break the current existing dissociation among economy, politics and society and to recover "factors such as social justice, prosperity for all, social cohesion, equality, cultural identities" (Kazancigil, 2002, p. 59). This is fundamental for normalizing the world that today may be characterized as an uncontrolled world (Giddens, 2000) and for establishing a new development model, which is democratically built, ecologically sustained and minimally just in distributing the wealth.

What remains open, however, is how to build this system, as the States have shown to be hostages of the current global financial structure and it has taken a contrary stand as to the adoption of discipline measurements and stimulated speculative gains at the cost of productive gains. This is, therefore, the big challenge of today's world and of everyone that believes in the virtues of institutionalized mediations and the future of humanity.

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Conexão Política, Teresina, Vol.1, No. 1: 31-46, jul.-dec. 2012