

# ***Democracy and Global Governance: Towards a New Network***

Series of debates about the Internacional Conjecture  
London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)

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Dear Tony, David, Mary, dear friends,

We live in difficult, challenging times.

Terrorism and unilateralism are framing the global agenda. For three years now, democracy and global governance have been sidelined. We must at all costs regain the initiative.

The worldviews that sustain American unilateralism and Islamic Fundamentalism are both grounded on rock-solid beliefs and certitudes. Ours is a different standpoint.

We favour openness, diversity, innovation. We put our trust on human agency. We seek to expand the field of possibilities through debate and negotiation, dialogue and inclusiveness.

We do share some basic assumptions:

- Governments, alone, cannot tackle contemporary problems;
- Global problems require global responses;
- Citizens directly affected by a given problem should have a say in its solution;
- Democracy, historically a national construction, must be extended to the global sphere;
- The emergent global politics is different and broader than the state-based international system;
- Governance is a different and broader concept than government. It is not a structure of authority but rather a pattern of regulation involving multiple agents, institutions and processes.

I think we also share a key common perception. That the main impetus for the democratisation of global politics today does not come from within the intergovernmental system. It comes from a plurality of actors and constituencies - civil society, transnational coalitions and networks, social movements, world public opinion.

New social forces and flexible forms of citizen engagement are filling the gap opened by the crisis of political institutions. Citizens growing distrust of political parties and dissatisfaction with representative democracy go hand in hand with their mobilisation around issues and causes that directly affect their lives and the future of the planet.

One of the landmark events of our time is the emergence of a global public space of discussion, deliberation and, whenever possible, collective action.

As Manuel Castells has been stressing, people make up their minds from the messages and debates that take place in a new public sphere, built around the media system and the information technologies.

Millions of citizens throughout the world watched the Security Council debate on Iraq. The issue was debated at home, at the workplace, with friends and colleagues.

In many countries, the strong anti-war consensus was the result of this extraordinary and unpredictable process of deliberation and decision-making.

In our complex, reflexive societies, citizens are increasingly becoming more active, intelligent, rebellious and creative.

They make choices and take decisions about their personal life and their civic engagement. These social dynamics energise civil society and explain the growing power of public opinion.

Our challenge, I believe, is to grasp, explore and strengthen the connection between these new forms of civic consciousness, the reinvention of democracy and the remaking of global political institutions.

The opening up of the United Nations to non-state actors was the cornerstone of the Report on UN and Civil Society Relations presented earlier this year to Kofi Annan by the Panel that I presided.

The same problématique was at the centre of the international workshop - Toward a Democratic Global Governance - that marked the inauguration of the Cardoso Institute last May in São Paulo.

It was there that we started to talk about a network enabling political and civic leaders, thinkers and communicators, to produce knowledge, ideas and policy initiatives.

Our goal is very concrete: we aim to 'make a difference', to influence the public agenda.

Research, knowledge production and public debate will be key components of the network strategies. But our project cannot be a purely academic exercise.

The ideas and policy initiatives should empower citizens in their civic engagement.

There is no possibility to democratise global governance without people's participation and there is no people's participation without communication.

That is why another essential component of the network will be a communication strategy consistent with the goal of facilitating the connection between people and global issues.

We may also take into consideration how change occurs in extremely complex and dynamic systems.

In open, unstable systems change does not come from a central point of command and control. Change is an on-going process with inputs coming from an immense variety of sources.

I would argue that we should look both at the stress points in the global order and at the breakthrough actions that are unfolding at the margins of the system.

In our network world, multiple alliances, symbolic gestures, innovative initiatives, new forms of mobilization tend to radiate with incredible speed.

These decentralized initiatives are generating a critical mass of new ideas, messages and proposals.

Our task is to take stock of this on-going dynamic of change and identify strategic points where to galvanize energies and exercise pressure.

The agenda for these two days is organised in such a way that two blocks of time will be available - at the end of today and tomorrow morning - to discuss our follow-up strategies.

We may consider different ways of working.

What is essential is that by the end of our meeting we do have a common agreement on how we are going to proceed, both in terms of substance and process.

Thank you and good work!