

BIOPOLITICS AS A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE SOLIDARITY

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I should like to begin by thanking Dr. Vlavianos-Arvanitis, president and founder of the Biopolitics International Organisation, for her incessant efforts which have embedded the concept of Biopolitics in the terminology of the social sciences, within less than a decade.

The emergence of the idea of Biopolitics, not only contributed to the progress of thought concerning the bio-environment, but also paved the way for a sincere and friendly milieu in which the most distinguished personalities of the world gather from time to time to strengthen the ties linking them together. Such a state of affairs has undoubtedly the potential for providing one of the most efficient diplomatic tools, as distinct from the conventional means based on legal norms. In this context, Biopolitics has a great role to play as one of the most constructive tools for sustainable solidarity among nations in the future.

Most of the environmental problems that will be created in the coming decades, for example the long-term effects of human technology and civilisation such as the ozone hole, the greenhouse effect, forest fires, erosion, radioactive fallout, etc., will certainly have a much stronger international dimension than before. International co-operation in the area of preserving bio-environmental values has taken two forms up to now: first, the creation of an international law specialising in environmental matters and conflicts, and second, the adoption of bilateral and multilateral formal agreements.

It is obvious that these are necessary but inadequate instruments for creating sustainable solidarity among nations. The principle of solidarity that was advanced by the ideologists of the French Revolution in their fight against European feudal reaction has come to be understood in several ways. Distinct from national or class solidarity, international solidarity provides an opportunity, perhaps for the first time, to rally humankind in the struggle against the mortal dangers which threaten it. The opportunities also exist, on the basis of the positive goals of the interdependent world, to work for its integration. As solidarity becomes increasingly universal, the role of the moral element, in its content, will grow larger.

Biopolitics, which has emerged as a unifying concept during the last decade, seems to give the opening for providing a missing link among the peoples of the world, through expanding education, consciousness and mutual understanding.

For, as stated on many occasions by the Biopolitics International Organisation, bio-diplomacy is aimed at pursuing bio-political goals through diplomatic channels. The fact that present threats to bios are international in nature and the required solutions relate to the development of educational efforts for peace and international understanding, makes the role of Biopolitics in international relations even greater.

Although bios recognises no political boundaries, most nations in the world today guard their national sovereignty jealously. As a result, attempts to evolve common approaches for the maintenance and enhancement of the bio-environment are perceived with a certain suspicion or scepticism. Therefore, it is clear that the protection and development of the bio-environment requires a state of readiness, both mental and developmental, before a meaningful and fruitful collaboration can be forthcoming. Here is the pressing need to complement the legal and institutional instruments with moral or ethical ones.

Sustainable development, as an alternative to unmanaged (mismanaged) and uncontrolled economic progress and population growth, has to be consistent with the needs of future, as well as present, generations. It must be emphasised that this concept has to be absolutely related to greater equity, not only between affluent and less affluent nations, but also within societies and between generations.

The diminishing of superpower competition in the early 1990's provided a great opportunity since it redirected world attention away from strictly military issues toward global, environmental, problems. But no country is yet ready and willing to relinquish, completely, its freedom of decision-making in order to obtain security from universal threats. In other words, the principle of national sovereignty is still alive. To challenge the authority of the State, and to redirect legitimacy-sentiments toward supranational or sub-national collectives, is to begin to deny that the State has the ultimate decision making power.

The erosion of the "State-centric" world is being gradually but slowly replaced by universalism and multi-centralism. The sovereignty-free actors of the multi-centric world include multinational corporations, ethnic minorities, sub-national governments and bureaucracies, professional organisations, NGO's, political parties, and the like. Individually, and sometimes jointly, they compete, conflict, co-operate, or otherwise interact with the sovereignty-bound actors of the State-centric world. Within the framework of such a complex, the bonds of relationships and bio-environmental groups have wider opportunities to be active on the world scene, to mobilise support for, and exert

pressure on behalf of, their goals.

It is no mere coincidence that the environmental movement gained momentum during the very decades when the decentralising dynamics at work in world politics were weakening the very concept of the state. It strengthened sub-national groups and other actors whose claims to legitimacy derived from grassroots forces closest to the people (conspicuous performance, not encumbered by the responsibilities of formal authority). The recent reorganisational efforts made by the Council of Europe to increase the role of local and regional authorities, and further elaboration of the principle of subsidiarity, put forward in the Maastricht Treaty, forming the European Union, seem to increase the hopes for a more decentralised Europe, based on the initiatives of local and regional forces which act as the final, ultimate safeguards of the bio-environment.

Under these circumstances, the question of how we are to prevent selfish, or ignorant nations are to be prevented from taking actions which destroy the environment, can be more satisfactorily answered. As pointed out repeatedly by the distinguished President of the Biopolitics International Organisation: Since the human body originates from one cell, with the same genetic material, and since the human body forms a whole, with all its different parts being interdependent, humanity has no right to destroy the parts of this body. If a tree is cut in the Amazon, the "lungs" of the body are injured, and the entire body suffers.^{1,2,3} Peace, progress, human rights and bios are inseparably linked, therefore, free minds have to react against global violence. As a result, human knowledge should be used to face the challenges of interdependence and harmonious existence.

With these thoughts in mind, I congratulate, once again, Dr. Vlavianos-Arvanitis, who also has the honour of being given the Abdi Ipekçi Peace and Friendship Prize, for organising the Sakharov Festival, and providing a great opportunity to contribute to the enhancement of peace and friendship among the nations of the world.

References

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