

PREFATORY NOTE

1. INTRODUCTION

On November 13th, 2017, promoted by the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations on the occasion of the month of Italy's Presidency at the UN Security Council and by the Italian association *Globus et Locus*, the conference "Italics as a Global Commonwealth" took place at the headquarters of the United Nations in New York. Starting with some speeches given at this meeting, it seemed interesting to develop a general reflection by publishing some contributions on the relationship between globalization and new global identities including Italic identity.

Just as many notice the obvious effects that globalization produces in terms of the flow of ideas (communication), people (migration), things (business) and money (finance), what we call globalization seems to be clear to many of us. What we have witnessed historically at a circumscribed dimensional level (local, national, continental) is now emerging globally with analogous, albeit qualitatively different, problems and advantages.

This awareness can help to interpret – from a dynamic and comparative perspective – every problem and advantage generated by the process of globalization, with the goal of identifying the developments and preventing possible difficulties. As in the past, the history of human relations (at local, national and continental levels) has generated and modified the identity of numerous communities and it is now quite evident

that today – with the backdrop of new and wider flows of ideas, people, things and money – a global society articulated through new identities is being formed. It necessarily seeks its own order, its own organization, in other words its own juridical and political system (also defined by custom in certain non-codified actions), in keeping with the new social complexity, in order to constantly reorganize its inner dialectics.

That is the reason why the boundaries of nation-states have become increasingly more cramped. Springing from diverse social networks (with gradually more importance) are practices of supra-state cooperation which find their effectiveness in the creation of new institutional entities in the cultural, political and economic spheres.

2. ECONOMIC NETWORKS AND GLOBAL IDENTITIES

If, on the one hand, it is known that the process of globalization is perceived by most as, above all, the manifestation of expanding and intensifying economic flows across the world, on the other hand it may be interesting and it may also provide unexpected information about a reflection on the cultural dynamics which regulate, at least in part, these global economic fluxes.

The history of the enlargement and intensification of human relations has developed, in fact, according to an eminently cultural logic which has led to the creation of land routes and maritime sea lanes in order to meet commercial needs. Placed in this perspective are the geographical discoveries of every age and every place including those that, since the 15th century, have progressively generated mutually competitive global commercial empires.

For very different historical reasons, we may presently observe that some cultural identities have spread and affirmed themselves globally more than others. Certainly, with peculiar features, they seem to constitute well-defined identity net-

works – especially those of Jewish, Anglo-Saxon, Chinese, Hispanic, Indian, Italic, Japanese, Arabic and African cultures. In all of these cases, economic dynamics have been fueled both by the diaspora of their populations and by the capacity for cultural attraction generated by individuals belonging to other identity traditions. If it is not a true ‘civilization’, with crystallized and defined characteristics of social and spiritual life belonging to the population, it can certainly make sense to speak of the ‘civilization’ processes and dynamics that are to be the constitution of civilizations with ever better-defined cultural profiles.

3. AMONG GLOBAL COMMUNITIES

We find ourselves in a world, in a world-society, inhabited by a plurality of global communities that subsist (also thanks to the progress of technology) regardless of the political confines of nation-states and are fed through the continuous flows of ideas, persons, things and money, constantly expanding and contaminating themselves in an effort to better solve the problems that arise from associated living every day.

Of all the global communities mentioned, the one with particularly attractive cultural characteristics seems to be the group called as “Italic”. The adjective itself seems to highlight this peculiarity and therefore includes semantically within itself that which is “Italian”, which is more directly related to the territorial logic of the nation-state. Unlike other global communities, “Italics” do not necessarily identify themselves with the use of language (even though Italian, perhaps not by accident, is becoming one of the world’s most widely taught languages). One must go beyond the simple historical data of Italian emigration in the world, in order to grasp a global identity based on a mindset, a taste and a vision of life that expresses itself not only in a way of eating and dressing, but also in the manner of relating to others, conducting business and recog-

nizing them as a certain kind of art and culture. This is, in other words, a true Commonwealth of experiences and ideals, a search for communion with all those people who have Italian roots or those who know how to appreciate Italian history and culture. “Italicity” is an ongoing feature, constantly open to hybridization: a fluid negotiation process. Rather than feeling close to the ‘multiculturalist’ idea of identity, it is sensitive to the ‘culturalist’ idea of complexity and a reciprocal contamination of cultures. “Italicity” is an identity that goes beyond mere nationality: it is a system of values, a subjectivity that does not depend directly on Italy, even if it draws its inspiration from Italy. “Italicity” is an eminently cultural paradigm, which involves an inadvertent assumption of values, and which, in various ways and in the context of possible multiple affiliations, determines relational networks that produce significant and demonstrable effects in both economic and political terms.

If empirical analysis has led to discovering a truly Italic business community which is not reducible to the network composed of Italians abroad, it is still the political aspect that is the least developed in terms of awareness. It seems necessary to nurture precisely this awareness in order to improve both the communicative flows generated by Italic culture and the economic flows that inevitably accompany the first.

In a context such as the present one, dominated by the dynamics of globalization, the political moment must be understood, however, as something different than the product of institutions set up on a territory and capable of producing coercive regulations. Achieving political awareness at the global level means nurturing (through the many possibilities that technology now offers) a stable network of political communication that can fulfill the role of benchmarking the identification of solutions (clearly political) of which the Italic community or meta-nation requires to improve its relational network and its own business activities.

In this possible process, the Italian state is destined to be transformed and some way overcome, but it can certainly par-

ticipate dialectically in concrete terms in the creation of the conditions for a new political coordination of the Italic global community. In this context, it may be important to raise the attention of the United Nations to the overall relevance of all existing global economic and cultural networks in order to foster their capacity to produce effective peacekeeping in the world and to generate new forms of global citizenship beyond the increasingly problematic internal legitimacy of nation-states.

First of all, however, it is necessary to have a clearer understanding of the Italic civilization and how it places itself within an international context of civilizations. This is the reason for this book, giving space to the reflection of three internationally renowned scholars such as Saskia Sassen, Akeel Bilgrami and Seyla Benhabib, who wrote about the economic, cultural and political networks within the globalization process, pointing out how they are in close relationship to each other. Then three points of view given by the directors of cultural institutes in New York can help us understand how these cultural and identity dynamics are expressed in concrete terms and, finally, a focus on Italics realized by Fabio Finotti, dedicated specifically on the linguistic and cultural network, and a postface by Piero Bassetti and Andrea Illy will illustrate the present reality and suggest the possibilities it offers in terms of intercultural dialogue and global policy action.

The hope is, therefore, that this book – introduced by the remarks of Sergio Mattarella, President of the Italian Republic, Sebastiano Cardi, Piero Bassetti and Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser – could better clarify the role played so far by the Italic civilization (without self-awareness of its own existence) and establish a new starting point for fully understanding the significant political function that it will be able to play, together with other civilizations, in building a widespread peaceful culture of dialogue and engagement with the younger generations as actors of innovation today and in the future.

MESSAGGIO

L'incontro "Italics as a Global Commonwealth", in un contesto così prestigioso come le Nazioni Unite, è ricco di suggestioni e individua correttamente una vocazione e una realtà che caratterizzano la percezione del nostro paese, della sua storia, della sua cultura e del suo ingegno nel mondo.

La vocazione è, anzitutto, quella dell'apertura e del dialogo, che assume la duplice forma della intrapresa di pace e di scambio – commerciale, culturale, esperienziale – e di accoglienza.

La realtà è quella di un paese e del suo popolo apprezzato ed ammirato in tutto il mondo, con il suo illustre passato e il suo presente, con le straordinarie testimonianze nei campi della scienza, dell'arte, della letteratura e del diritto, dell'imprenditoria, della ricerca scientifica, sino a delineare una piattaforma che fa emergere l'aspirazione di tanti di "voler vivere all'italiana".

Appare, dunque, particolarmente centrato e moderno il richiamo al "Commonwealth", che, nell'accezione riferita all'Italia e agli italiani, si stinge di ogni patina o pretesa egemonica, per assumere il senso di una offerta globale dell'italianità intesa come stile, come ingegno, come canone di buona vita, come valore umanistico.

Alla buona reputazione hanno concorso i tanti operosi connazionali che primeggiano nelle loro attività e vengono apprezzati nel mondo come riferimenti, la vita vissuta di tanti lavoratori italiani e di tanti giovani talenti che risiedono nei luoghi più lontani del globo, impegnando sé stessi in

una quotidianità che non cessa mai di declinarsi con quella speciale concezione del mondo espressa dalla nostra civiltà.

Il mio saluto e l'augurio di buon lavoro va, pertanto, a tutti i relatori, insieme alla considerazione per la stesura del "Manifesto for a Glocal Future", che rappresenterà certamente un'occasione di dibattito stimolante e propizia.

Sergio Mattarella
Presidente della Repubblica italiana