

□ The end of globalization

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In the mid-80s, the governments of Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom and Ronald Reagan in the United States launched a global project to internationalize the economy and open new market opportunities for large multinational corporations. To do this, they developed a series of strategies aimed at eliminating obstacles to the renewed economic and trade expansion, while dedicating themselves during their administrations to removing all obstacles to the achievement of those objectives in virtually in all areas – employment, legal, political, diplomatic, educational – in a way that had never been seen before.

Thus many programmes of bilateral or multilateral economic cooperation were born, and they formed the basis for breaking down trade barriers and expanding production to technological and marketing levels that had never before been attainable, and penetrating places and regions hitherto unthinkable. As part of this process we saw the creation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, the United States and Mexico, and the Agreement to Unify the Economic Community of Europe.

Almost 22 years later we can see that although NAFTA increased the volume of trade between the three countries, the principal beneficiaries were those companies that had more technology or financial and administrative resources, to the cost of the abandonment of many sectors of economic activity, above all primary sectors such as agriculture, livestock and fisheries, as well as some other manufacture or processing industries which were not in a position to compete.

The result of 22 years of NAFTA has been higher unemployment, rising inequality, deteriorating working conditions and abuses by multinational companies, by many Mexican companies and by maquiladoras (assembly plants), which have dedicated themselves to exploiting not only natural resources but also the workforce in truly inhumane conditions. In other words, the fact that trade growth carries with it a great social burden was never calculated, much less corrected. Nor did this concern politicians and those in power because they all act in perfect indifference, never explaining the cost of promoting industrial and commercial activity in less-developed countries such as Mexico.

At the moment the second stage of the trade agreement is being developed in a different project called the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), through which 12 countries, representing just over 40 percent of world trade, are seeking to attain greater integration and also curb the trade expansion of Asian countries, whose main players are China, Japan and Korea. The ultimate goal is to maintain globalization and the international division of markets and products between first world countries and underdeveloped or developing nations.

La Jornada

Until a few days ago all was on track to consolidate TPP and renew economic strategies, when suddenly, and to the world's great surprise, a referendum called by the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, to resolve an internal dispute between members of the Conservative Party, ended with a vote in favour of separating England from the European Economic Community, which triggered the resulting financial crisis we are beginning to experience and which will surely have unexpected consequences.

Conservative Party strategists seemingly undervalued the consequences that globalization has had, increasing unemployment, inequality and poverty in many countries, as well as the fact that those most affected also vote and feel that the openness to migration has, through increased competition for jobs, aggravated the loss of employment opportunities and the ability to earn a decent income.

Some analysts and politicians think that Brexit, the departure from the United Kingdom from the European Union, is a blow to the system or a kind of fury and anger at the elites who have benefited from this globalized world. As a result, attitudes of nationalism are now growing stronger to replace globalization in extreme and radical positions.

In many European countries, including Germany, France, Holland, Sweden, Scotland and Northern Ireland, among others, the extreme right has expanded greatly in terms of rejecting any attempt to maintain integration. The screams and postures in the United Kingdom or any other country that say “my country and my people first” are growing and becoming a threat to what neoliberals consider is the stability and security of Europe and perhaps of other countries in the world, including the United States, with a presidential candidate like Donald Trump who has said: “I warned you and now we have to take better care of our borders.”

Der Spiegel, Germany's famous magazine, has called Brexit “the death of Europe.” There is no denying that the crisis is the product of the coupling of austerity and unemployment and the effect of large-scale migration on the old continent. Moreover, the absence of a common identity among countries and their people during conflicts and troubled times has further aggravated the general situation in Europe. It follows, then, that the global adjustment to de-globalization will surely be long and painful, as we are seeing in the international community.