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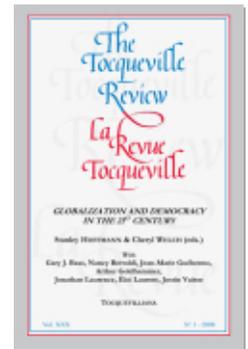
## Introduction

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The Tocqueville Review/La revue Tocqueville, Volume 30, Number 1, 2009,  
pp. 11-14 (Article)

Published by University of Toronto Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/toc.0.0003>



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## INTRODUCTION

Stanley HOFFMANN

I was happy to accept Cheryl Welch's invitation to commission a collection of papers on the subject of globalization and democracy in the twenty-first century. She and I had no illusions about how exhaustive a single issue of the *Tocqueville Review* could be. Nor did we know, when we began, what the recession of 2008-<sup>2</sup> would bring.

Globalization is a phenomenon that has been going on for centuries—with interruptions such as the two World Wars of the twentieth century. There are different kinds of globalization: economic, of course, but also political and cultural. The last is not examined here. Political globalization is the one Tocqueville had announced—the irresistible rise of democracy, which he conceived as a form of society that fosters the legal equality of conditions—the abolition of castes—but assuredly not material equality, and which entails the triumph of universal suffrage but no specific form of government: a definition that was more sociological than purely political. Almost two centuries later we are still far from that dream.

One of the main sources of discord about the blessings of democracy is economic globalization: the spread, which has become far more irresistible than democracy's, of capitalism across borders. There have been and there remain two schools of thought. Many have, with great energy, denounced the evils of economic globalization, the undermining of formal equality, the prevalence of material inequality, the replacement of bygone castes by highly

differentiated classes, the obstacles to human happiness erected by the incessant dislocations and crises capitalism entails. With the quasi-collapse of Marxism, it is the other school that has become hegemonic, the one that has attributed scientific validity to economic liberalism and celebrated the universal drive of material self-interest and its blessings, the rise of prosperity, the shrinking of distances, the development of communications—we all know the litany. I had the pleasure, a few years ago, of teaching at Harvard a course on globalization with a colleague and friend I greatly admire, Michael Sandel, and his old friend Thomas Friedman. The latter was an eloquent champion of globalization (not always clearly distinguished from Americanization); Sandel was Savonarola denouncing the moral and social scandals of globalization; I tried (in vain) to remain impeccably neutral. (I was soon replaced by none other than the new and brief Harvard President, Larry Summers, who was an apostle of the free market and its benefits).

The unforeseen has its blessings, at least intellectually. The current recession has obliged many economists to reexamine their premises (and illusions), to ask themselves whether the celebration of the virtues of the individual quest for self-interest did not often, sooner or later, lead to hideous moral consequences (say, Mr. Madoff) and to the abdication of political and social controls (say, deregulation, grotesquely high salaries on top, and the rise of a financial universe so complex and entangled that it became both opaque and disastrously fragile). In this issue, Eloi Laurent examines the links between, and the effects of social inequalities in the United States and the current American financial crises. Nancy Bertoldi, in her ambitious, normative and original essay, suggests an approach to global justice derived from but partly critical of the writings of John Rawls, and aimed at the reduction of international inequalities of wealth, seen as a global moral problem.

Much of the issue deals with three main problems that confront democracy in this globalized world (a fourth is the problem which the U.S. is trying to face currently: that of the effective regulation of a capitalist economy). One problem is that of democracy's capacity to produce a satisfactory foreign policy. Tocqueville is the point of departure for the reflections of Justin Vaisse, France's young and best student of America as a world power, and of Arthur Goldhammer, the polymath who knows France particularly well, for having

translated not only Tocqueville but, I would say, almost everything worth translating in the social sciences and even in parts of the literature of contemporary France. These two subtle essays constitute both a partial critique of Tocqueville's thoughts on democratic performance in diplomacy and war, and a worried discussion on the effects of American global hegemony on American democracy: where many of America's champions of a missionary export of democracy (a subject Vaisse has tackled in the forthcoming American translation of his book on the neo-conservatives) see only the benefits of this export for the world, Goldhammer and Vaisse worry, rightly, about the effects on democracy at home.

A second problem is a direct corollary of the development of communications, the fall of barriers to the movements—legal and illegal—of people across borders, the encounters, often bruising, between the natives and the immigrants. The prejudices the latter often encounter, especially in periods of economic slowdown or downturn, the many residues of colonialism, the clash, not of civilizations but of cultural and religious traditions, have deeply marked European societies in the last half-century—this is one area in which the differences between Europe and the U.S. (as well as the existence of many kinds of racism in both) are striking. Jonathan Laurence, an acute student of the situation of Moslems in France and of Sarkozy's sometimes innovative, sometimes obtuse, efforts in this domain, sheds much light on a problem that affects much of Europe.

The third problem is, in the long run, perhaps the most important. A globalized world, in which the bursting of financial and housing bubbles in the U.S. can bankrupt Iceland and produce deep recessions in Ireland or in Eastern Europe, is one in which there are no adequate global, or even regional, institutions capable of coping effectively with the drama. Democracies may not fight one another (I hope this "law" will not have to be tested), but they are not necessarily willing to entrust their fates to supranational institutions (such as the European Union's). In international ones such as the UN, they have either to seek compromise with, or be stymied by, non-democratic states attached—for obvious reasons—to the good old principle of state sovereignty. World governance is radically inadequate, and the UN charter is a relic of an order that predates particular challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: the spread of weapons of mass destruction; the rise of private actors, many of whom are

sources of terror, crime and trouble; and the reappearance of a phenomenon—recession—that all the international and regional institutions set up since 1945 are powerless to handle preventively or to cure after prevention has failed.

Two of the essays in this issue are bluntly eloquent on this subject. The two recent books of Gary Bass have proven once more that, in order to understand the present, one needs to know history and the thoughts or machinations of leaders more than excessively abstract models and all the marks of economics envy that have afflicted political science in recent years. In his piece on humanitarian intervention in the twenty-first century, he shows both that such interventions can “make a positive difference,” and that, alas, “the most desperate people in the world are likely to find that their survival is a priority issue only for themselves.” Jean-Marie Guéhenno, the great French diplomat, who spent years fighting for peace and security as Assistant Secretary General of the UN for Peacekeeping Operations, has given us a candid and quite devastating account of the Security Council’s limitations and inadequacy to the world of the twenty-first century. His conclusion, which puts in doubt the dream of international institutions renovated by “a democratic push by the world’s peoples,” is unfortunately irrefutable.

To quote Beckett (approximately), we can’t go on, we must go on. We need, as usual, to discard illusions that easily turn into ideologies, and to preserve and promote ideals that blend ethics and politics so as to avoid the traps that Tocqueville had warned us against—what he called democratic individualism, *i.e.*, civic indifference, as well as the pressures of conformity (especially in wartime)—and the trap of what Vaisse calls the tyranny of minorities. As General de Gaulle would have said, “vaste programme!”