

# Speech by Rexhep Meidani

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Globalization itself, besides the important revolution in information and telecommunication technologies, is generally reflecting some fundamental changes in the spatial and temporal dimensions of human life or social existence. In fact, as the time necessary to connect distinct geographical locations is reduced, distance or space undergoes a real “annihilation”. In this way, the geographical or national boundaries and separated territories between domestic matters and global affairs, political or economic ones, are becoming increasingly fluid, sometimes even “transparent”.

As a first consequence, this new space-time conception of human activity is inevitably generating a gradual erosion of the old concept of state sovereignty in many aspects and directions. One of them is the international protection of Human Rights. The international standards of the Human Rights and their implementation, the fundamental idea that governments must act within certain prescribed limits are today quite important for many countries and political leaders. Because, in this new framework, even political and military leaders might be held accountable for their actions if they amount to crimes against humanity and severe patterns of human rights abuse. And this, of course, represents a revolutionary political and social development. Actually, for some of those people there are no longer any secure places to hide in the world, particularly now with the establishment of a permanent International Criminal Court in Hague, in accordance with the Rome Treaty of 1998... On the other side, we see also some misconceptions in Hague. Investigating and penalizing a collective crime, which is now considered as an international justice responsibility, doesn't mean, by applying the “principle of less action”, to obtain political and ethnic balances by penalizing individual crimes, which are and have to be countries judicial responsibilities. There are signs of this kind of “extrapolation” in the case of the Hague Tribunal...

However, the indictment of such hierarchy as Serb president Slobodan Milosevic, or other political and military leaders of Former Yugoslavia and their judgment in ICTY, for inflicting horror on citizens, applying a policy of ethnic cleansing and genocide to Bosnia and Kosovo Albanian population, is a clear demonstration of a great ethical and Human Rights achievement of the 20-th century. But all these comments, in the case of Cuba, are purely rhetoric. Till now, these international standards and achievements are not imposed to Cuba's regime. International mechanisms, as the former High Commissioner for Human Rights or actual Commission today, with their “theories” of internal and external balances and equilibrium, didn't play any important and useful role in the case of Cuba regime. Thus, they haven't been so helpful to Cuban people. Present reality in Cuba, regarding the respect of Freedom and Human Rights, being the same as before, is confirming better this conclusion...

But, there is no place for pessimism. The significance of human rights is also a consequence of pressures mounted by activists of civil society at local, national or international level. Particularly, the rise of international human rights NGOs is expressing new modes of transnational political action in this new space-time environment. Relying on networks, norms, information and media access as instruments of persuasion and public opinion elaboration, they are challenging very often the entrenched oppressive state power. This kind of “philosophy” is

adopted and developed, also, in the Cuba case. But, still today, besides the common efforts at different levels and structures, the political European sensibility regarding the Human Rights in Cuba is very low. Also, European media or, in general, international media, are not so often focused on the Cuba problems.

Why? Perhaps, a cause is that Cuba, being an isolated system regarding the transfer of ideas, peoples and information reactive to regime, is not closed to a favorable flow of capital, which includes also different interests, and to special people serving to make a kind of positive propaganda for the system. Another cause is the direct propaganda and political or economic support given to Castro regime from some Latin American Countries and Leaders, among them Chavez is the main one. Through this support the Cuban regime is ready to hold on to its power and probably will refuse, in a short period, to allow any changes leading towards respect for human rights and for free society. But this delay could be fatal to further development...

Considering our experiences of transition countries, the first interrogative point is how to open, how to transform this system to an open one, where any change is possible between system itself and surroundings? It means a deep political transformation. In this framework a concrete strategy is necessary, because at the same time are needed: a political transition or a political party reform, an economic transition, a legislative transition, a social-culture transition, and more important a mentality or psychological transition. We have been successful regarding the most part of these transitions, but still we have problems regarding the mentality transition. This is the first question, to which a spectrum of concrete responses is possible. Obtaining and elaborating them is becoming urgent.

Another question is if the model of transition in Eastern Europe is fruitful for Cuba. Considering the transition in Eastern Europe, which, in general, was successful, in my view, very helpful in this transition have been some important mechanisms like OSCE or CE. At the same time, a powerful attraction has been the process of accession to NATO and EU of all these countries in transition. The strict demands of both processes in fulfilling the political, democratic, military, economic and social standards, including those of Freedom and Human Rights, have been a very important push. However, we must not forget that, during this transition in Europe, we have had also some very negative developments, even bloodshed, ethnic cleansing and genocide, such as in Yugoslavia with Milosevic, strong authoritarian restrictions in Belorussia with Lukashenka, in Russia, in some way, with Putin...

Observing what is the real situation in Latin America with a new populist wave spread there, and especially the fact of the weakness (even absence) of some general or concrete regional mechanisms for democratization in the region, must push the European Policy to reconsider very seriously the near process in Cuba, in particular, and a closer cooperation with Latin America, in general. And more especially: what could be the future in Cuba after the Castro's death. Having different contacts and meetings, during the trip through some Latin America's countries, as a member of a Virtual Embassy, my perception is that without a strong presence, close cooperation and democratic contribution of EU and USA, of powerful international players and international media, for strengthening the voice and the authority of the democratic institutions and civil society in Latin America, the actual "romantic" or "pseudo-heroic" Latin American approach to Cuba regime and Castro himself will keep alive longer this kind of regime. And, at the same time, it will help the further broadening of populist regimes and autocratic leaders in the most part of the countries in region. In this way, the price to be paid later for a new process of democratization in Latin America will be higher.