

GLOBALIZATION—INTEREST GROUP

Convener: Gemma Tulud Cruz, Australian Catholic University  
Moderator: Jan Jans, Tilburg University, The Netherlands  
Presenters: Margaret Pfeil, University of Notre Dame  
Lisa Sowle Cahill, Boston College  
Elochukwu Uzukwu, Duquesne University

The session primarily explored issues and themes that arise from or relate to the consideration of globalization from an ethical and political perspective.

Margaret Pfeil teased out the political dimensions and, in particular, the ethical questions posed by the global arms trade in her presentation titled “An Ethical Consideration of the Global Arms Trade.” Pfeil first painted in broad strokes the context for her theological reflection by providing a survey of the global arms trade and the military industrial complex. Pfeil argued that the global arms trade invites ethical exploration of the systemic dynamics at work. At the heart of the ethical challenge, according to Pfeil, are the costs in terms of human life and dignity, especially from the perspective of the world’s poorest and most vulnerable. Pfeil then went on to reflect on what meaningful participation might mean for the vulnerable and what systemic transformation might entail. Since the global arms trade privileges economic profit and sheer economic interest over people’s lives, Pfeil reflected on the need not only for restorative justice and priority for the common good but also a preferential option for the poor.

Elochukwu Uzukwu’s “Globalization, Politics, and Religion in Postcolonial Africa,” co-written with Gerald Boodoo, put the spotlight on globalization’s intersections with religion and, in particular, politics in the case of Africa. Uzukwu suggested that the violence and plunder that bedevil postcolonial Africa could, in great measure, be predicated on the Western modernity/globalization inscribed on the continent, especially by colonialism. Uzukwu pointed out that coloniality—the pervasive epistemological, economic, cultural, and political structures located within the logic of modernity, imperialism, and globalization—permeates nation-state politics just as it permeates religious and cultural practices in postcolonial Africa. Uzukwu argued, therefore, that discourse on globalization must not only be on economic and cultural concerns but also the political, for example the idea of “worlding” or the “worldness of Africa.” Uzukwu ended his presentation with illustrative stories of the African struggle for peace and justice, such as those by Burundi women.

Uzukwu’s concluding stories provided an eloquent backdrop to Lisa Cahill’s presentation titled “Peacebuilding and Hope.” Cahill reflected on the nature of hope as a theological virtue in the face of the ongoing global realities of war and conflict, which confront Christian social ethics with a huge obstacle, that is, the tenuous nature of hope for change. In particular, Cahill discussed what hope or giving hope really means when everything is failing or when the peace-building and justice-making process is marred by incompleteness. Cahill lifted up as an example people living in desperate situations who do not, in fact, give up hope for better futures, such as the women involved in peacemaking in Liberia and Colombia. This resilient peacebuilding, Cahill argued, teaches us that hope is about accompaniment or being

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with people even when we cannot change their circumstances. Cahill went on to describe how hope, therefore, is not gained so much through measurable “success” and is not an “infused” virtue but grows from practices of compassionate solidarity, risk-taking, and love-inspired actions that respect human dignity.

After the paper presentations the moderator first asked the presenters to engage each other with a comment or a question before opening the session for wider conversation with those who attended the session. There was a lively discussion on concrete examples of ethical practice in the face of Africa’s experience of globalization, the global arms trade, and the problems as well as possibilities for embracing and witnessing to hope in the face of immense challenges to peacebuilding, reconciliation, and justice.

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