

Globalisation in Contemporary Era: Addressing the Key Questions

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ABSTRACT

Globalisation is dominating the world politics after it has been seen taking over nationalism, being practised by the modern nation states. It has made a negative impact on the nationhood and the spirit of nationalism which has been the hallmark of motivation for any state has gone down. Yet, it is the most inevitable process of current political shift that undoubtedly take out the existing state system from traditional to a modern globalised mode. Now, while establishing their politico-economic and social relations states must take into account the international political actors. In this way the principal of their sovereignty and nationalism is faced with many challenges. In order to meet up them the modern states, especially the third world countries, need to take several measures. Therefore, being an interesting concept this paper discovers very valuable propositions of globalisation. Furthermore, the paper not only focuses on the theoretical aspects of the term but also analyse the challenges faced by globalization in contemporary world politics and addresses its key questions.

Key Words: Globalization, World Politics, Nationalism, Nation State.

Introduction

Before reviewing the concept of Globalization it is imperative to have its micro level understating. We need to analyse whether the concept of nation state has faded away or will be disappeared from the current international system. Globalization – seems to be an all-inclusive term which encompasses every political phenomenon on the globe. As it looks to be very complex and controversial concept in nature, so, the discussion might be difficult to absorb at times. Indeed, the term "globalisation" is used to describe the formation of a global society in which political, social, economic, and cultural developments in one region of the world swiftly affect citizens in other regions of the world

(<http://citizenship.yara.com/en/resources/glossary/index.html>). It is the result of the increasing integration of economies and societies around the world, transcending the boundaries of the nation states, particularly through international trade and the flow of capital, ideas, people, the transfer of culture and technology, and the development of trans-national regulations” (Higgot, 2000). Resultantly, transnational firms and multinational corporations, non-state actors and international socio-political institutions are playing a larger role in choices that have a great influence on trade, culture and politics. Moreover, it is gradually transforming the world into new era of complex interdependence where varying cultures and political ideologies are transforming into new forms of the world order. Therefore, it is important to understand this phenomenon which has dominated the globe and is shaping the world in an unprecedented fashion. (http://ecojusticeeducation.org/index.php?option=com_rd_glossary&Itemid=3). The effort to standardize consumer habits, values, and ways of thinking that contribute to the development of global markets, greater efficiencies and profits; politically, it is based on neo-liberal values and assumptions that justify this latest expression of Western colonization; undermines local economies, traditions of self-sufficiency, and the non-monetized aspects of local cultures; a source of poverty as it requires participating in a money economy even when automation makes work even more scarce, environmentally destructive and an overwhelming force in the process of enclosure of the commons.

Theoretical Evolution of the Term “Globalisation”

Globalisation is a western concept which followed the previous western theory of nationalism. Nationalism was the outcome of Westphalia and globalisation emerged from to the increasing phenomenon of interdependence. As such, if we critically try to locate the concept in history, there is no formal starting point or we can say that it didn't start formally as a result of some prevailing theories; rather it evolved with the passage of time which is still going on. In its literal sense it is the process of globalizing i.e. transformation of states from region based to a globalised entities. Although, the term was first used in the 1980's, but the idea predates by decades or perhaps centuries if you include the commercial empires like, Spain, Portugal, Britain, and Holland developing and evolving gradually into an interdependent globalised world. Although the precise historical beginnings of international relations are only up to conjecture, conceptually speaking, it was a period when people started to settle down on the land and build their own distinct, territory-based political communities. The world has essentially become a global village since the 1980s, which has had a wide range of far-reaching repercussions. The term "global village" was originally coined by Marshall McLuhan in the 1960's. Which, due to the fastest sources of communication has really made the world a borderless global village (Yann Echinard, 2008), for instance, the European Union is a modern day product of this wave.

Globalisation in Contemporary Era: Addressing The Key Questions

Many scholars observe it as primarily an economic phenomenon, involving the increasing interaction or integration of national economic systems through growth in international trade, investment and capital flows but there is a lot which is added to it. The word 'Globalisation' has captured all segments of varying societies across the globe, particularly pointing to a rapid increase in cross-border social, cultural and technological exchange. However, the definition of globalisation in simple terms means "the process of increasing the connectivity and interdependence of the world's markets and businesses" (<http://www.investorwords.com/2182/globalization.html>). Since the dawn of the twentieth century, this process has accelerated significantly as technology has made it simpler for individuals to communicate, travel and do business globally. The development of the internet and improvements in telecommunications infrastructure are two key recent driving elements in this regard.

Impacts of Globalisation on International Relations

Rapid technological advancement in the core states and their capacity to dominate the production of consumer products for the rest of the world are the main forces behind globalization http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/44677/nationalism_rising_tide_or_victim_of.html?cat=37. The national economies, financial markets, commerce, corporations, manufacturing, distribution, and consumer marketing are all becoming more interdependent. Globalization, by its very nature, attracts attention to changes at the level of culture or identity as well as the level of economic and technical elements of existence. While conducting this research, I have come across the different aspects of globalisation which significantly affect the contemporary international relations. These are covered in ensuing paragraphs.

We believe that relations between governments or international organisations can be just as important to which nation-states do as relations between them, but the term "international relations" seems to be too exclusive. Of course, it does represent a widening of our concern from simply the political relations between nation-states and perhaps that is what exactly globalisation is heading to (<http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/27c/432.html>). Moreover, we need to differentiate between "Globalisation" and "Internationalism". Internationalism refers to a process of intensifying connections between national domains. In simple terms we may say, internationalism is primarily the relations among nation states whereas globalisation is about networks of trans-border relations – it's not mere relationship among states but societies – human beings.

Globalisation and Contemporary World Politics

The basic problem faced by any analyst who is trying to understand contemporary world politics is the availability of huge reference material for exploration. It becomes so difficult to differentiate between the required and undesired material

i.e. which theories are stating facts and what are the facts and if all are facts then, what is the difference?. There are three main schools of thought which critically view the concept of globalisation in different perspectives i.e. Realists, Marxists and liberals. Realists contend that the geographic separation of the world into nation-states remains unaffected by globalisation. Although, economies and societies may become increasingly dependent on one another as a result of their greater interconnectedness, the states-system is not similarly affected. The state maintains its sovereignty, and the competition for political dominance among nations is not rendered obsolete by wave. (Smith, 2002)

Marxist theorists underline that although globalisation is the most recent phase in the growth of international capitalism, it is not in any way particularly novel. Neither does it signal a substantive revolution in world politics nor does it make all of our current ideas and notions obsolete. It is mostly a Western phenomenon that essentially just accelerates the growth of capitalism (<http://www.apmforum.com/columns/orientseas15.htm>). However, the Neo-liberals believe that globalisation should be viewed as a way to get rid of regional governments, deregulate financial markets, connect the world, give multinational corporations free rein, and trust the invisible hand of the free market. This viewpoint has resulted in the concentration of wealth and power in a smaller number of hands, increased international financial dominance, and worsening inequality. Having a critical view of the said scenario, it becomes clear that a kind of structural imperialism is developing which is severely undermining the sovereignty and authority of state actors. I leave it to the imagination of my readers whether it will work or be discarded and resisted by the world community. In my assessment, the world will not resist to the process of globalisation because interdependence has become so cumbersome and complex that even if a state desires to maintain its sovereign identity, it will not be able to do so.

Role of Non-state Actors in Paradox of Globalisation

International relations were primarily considered between the states or governments only but with technological advancement the world getting closer into the cobweb relations of increasing social and economic interdependence. The economic bodies and social groups, such as multinational corporations (MNCs), banks, industrial organisations, environmentalists, and women's organizations, known as non-state actors came upfront in the global relations and throwing state to state relations at secondary level. These non-state actors are largely the trans-national actors too. This had led to three major implications; first, an interaction between governments and societies, without assuming that one is more significant than the other. It is believed that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are involved in such a complex web of international relations, including participation in diplomacy, that governments have lost their political independence. This is in addition to the perception that governments are losing

Globalisation in Contemporary Era: Addressing The Key Questions

sovereignty when confronted with the violent threat posed by criminals and guerrillas as well as the economic activities of transnational corporations. This leads to the conclusion that events in any field of international policy-making must be understood in terms of complex systems, taking everything into account, including governments, businesses, and NGOs engaged in a range of international organisations. For instance, governments and non-state entities engage in regular and more dominant interactions in world politics. (Higgot, 2000) Guerrilla organisations and criminal gangs have also been formed with a destabilising influence in some nations, despite the fact that they are not recognised as genuine actors in the system. In addition, a lot more businesses and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) only work in one nation but have the capability of spreading to other nations much like Al- Qaeda affiliates. The culture started emerging more relevant in changing patterns of global and local politics after the end of the Cold War particularly due to technological revolution. Fashions in dress became the first thing to be copied worldwide. Hence the Globalization started fostering multicultural landscapes across the world. Global culture drove the aspiration to work for money and to consume which had enormous social impact. Multiculturalism and globalization are the most significant social phenomena of today. However, the spread of globalisation has undoubtedly bridged the gap between various cultures, yet due to the physical distances involved between the different territorial entities, differences still exist between the existing cultures of the world.

Is Globalisation Challenging the Sovereignty of the States?

The Westphalia System is the basic organising principle for international politics. It is a system of government, based on the concepts of statehood and sovereignty. When a country became a state, the entire world was split up into territorial regions, each of which had its own government. The Westphalian nations had complete, supreme, and unrestricted territorial control, making them sovereign. Before the 17th century, politics functioned without this guiding concept, and there is no reason why global history cannot function without a system of sovereign nations in the future. In fact, one may argue that the Westphalian System is already gone, in most part of the world because of globalisation. The fundamental principle of sovereignty is no longer valid and cannot be restored in the present globalizing world.

State sovereignty has been dissolved in the illusion of increased borderless social relations through fast communication and strong electronic net works. On the other hand, a number of substantial advances have weakened state dominance. The contemporary state fails to control phenomena like global companies, satellite remote sensing, global ecological problems, and global stock trading. Alongside these material changes, globalisation has also lost some important cultural and psychological underpinnings of sovereignty. For example, adoption of other cultures, fashions and values, change of loyalties, human rights movements, and

women rights movements and emergence of strong ethno-religious movements and other impacts of MNCs on citizens. Although, globalization has brought an end to sovereignty to larger extent, it has not so far argued the demise of the state structure in totality e.g. Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan have proved to be robust in recent times. Globalisation is not dissolving the state, but it has not left it untouched either. However, two possible general shifts can be observed: firstly, at present, the states are often advancing global agendas. For instance, Pakistan's role in War on Terror is one such case. Secondly, the chances of major inter-state wars may be reduced but at the same time it is transforming into internal insurrection against a national government.

Is Globalisation in Contrast to Nationalism?

Having critically analysed the future dimensions of Globalisation Theory, the emerging trend which has literally eroded the identity of a nation state, has changed. The erosion of the identity may not be in physical terms but it has seriously bounded the economic, cultural, political and social initiatives of the contemporary modern states. The idea of Nationalism has lost its impact and is seen negatively in contemporary politics. Globalization is the antithesis of nationalism. The complex interdependence has increasingly made the nation states depend on each other and hence can't afford to have policy formulation in isolation. The sovereignty of the states has been labelled with a big question mark. It has been intensively debated that whether globalisation has marginalised the sovereignty initiatives of the states or it has been a contributing factor towards the collective advantages in terms of security and economics. As a way of thinking as an ideology, and as a political movement, nationalism has played a crucial role in shaping the modern world and is still essential to the process of globalisation. In my view, the argument on nationalism and globalization can be best explained if co-related as it is nationalism which has given birth to globalization (http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/44677/nationalism_rising_tide_or_victim_of.html?cat=37). The further explanation of this argument would explain that nationalism has given the primary identity to the states through which the inter-state relations developed and ultimately led to the international relations. Globalization is a refined form of international relations with larger interdependence than mere inter-state relations.

However, the immigration programs like 'Highly Skilled Migrant Programs' offered by the most modern and developed countries like Canada, may fade out the loyalties to some extent but can never destroy the basic identities of an individual e.g. a Pakistani becoming an American national would continue to be recognized as Pakistani - American or Asian or a Brown man. No matter since how long he has been to that state. He would be certainly absorbed into that society (Breton, 2003) but in no way can his natural identification fade out. Yet, nationalism has not been powerful in contemporary times. It is believed

Globalisation in Contemporary Era: Addressing The Key Questions

in the era of globalisation that multiple identities lead to conflicts. Hence to avoid conflict and ensure peace, globalized world is the best option. Anyway, some also believe that nationalism is a cynical phenomenon and shall never fade away. A healthy debate can be organised on the subject and perhaps, the proponents and the opponent of nationalism will end in a draw.

Is Globalisation Affecting the Contemporary World Order?

Globalisation and the New World Order was the most popular debate of the 1990's. The Post-Cold War era can be taken as landmark to analyse the above quoted query (Edoho, 1997), as the era is contemporary in nature besides it bears the most brunt of globalisation due to increased interdependence in the world politics. (nationalism, 2011) So the basic question arises how the post-cold war World Order is different from what has been happening before? Whether globalisation is the defining feature for the patterns of new or existing relations in World Order? It is accepted that globalization contributed both to the demise of the Cold War and is a feature of the contemporary order. However, in order to know the objective change, we need to examine the apparent change of mode from bipolar to unipolar World. Globalisation and the power of the US pose a more serious threat to the world than war and terrorism. However besides the poll opinion, presently, it seems that we are in the state of transformation to a New World Order of globalisation or may be something newer and richer in its contents. It is difficult to make out the characteristics of the contemporary world for the reason that perhaps we are yet in the phase of transition, though few believe that globalization has reached its peak. However it is debatable as the nation states are still following independent policies.

On the other hand Globalization has also generated significant international opposition over concerns that it has increased inequality and environmental humiliation. The Globalization is often blamed for the widening gap between rich and poor. In fact, all these things lead to the emergence of multiple separate orders or modernity rather than a single overarching one. Hence, I can perceive that globalisation is in the transformation processes of shaping the future World Order in multiple modes.

Conclusion

The sovereignty as a concept is not yet over. Not necessarily it means to be related with territorial boundaries only as in case of Westphalia. But it would be largely absorbed in the realm of complexities of interdependence for co-existence. The International Order by no means would become redundant but it would certainly be re-designed to take new division of multi-dimensional forms.

Presently, we are in the state of transformation from Uni-polar to Multi-polar World and face a hybrid situation in which states share a host of responsibilities with both inter-governmental organisations and a multiplicity of non-governmental and trans-national actors.

On the contrary, the concept of globalisation is also viewed in negative terms, wherein the critiques have pointed out that in the garb of globalisation (http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/44677/nationalism_rising_tide_or_victim_of.html?cat=37), the stronger or Core countries have gone further strong at the cost of developing or periphery countries. The developed countries are internationally criticised for exploiting the resources of developing countries. The evidential incidents are the strong protest against the meets of forums like G-7 or P-5 etc.

Globalisation is a process which has evolved gradually through all phases of human history in one way or the other but it became effective, practical and truly functional in recent contemporary era i.e. 1980's onward. Since then it has absorbed the World into a global community. In the process, any difference in the form of political community as it still revolves around the fundamental concept of power and an endless struggle for power - mainly professed by the realist school of thought. Hence, the concept of Nationalism would continue to survive in one way or the other.

Non State Actors are likely to play an important role in overall affects of the globalisation. As the states may not remain potent in exercising their sovereign initiatives due to complex interdependence and hence may try to meet their interests by patronising the Non State Actors, for instance, Indians' increased covert activities in former FATA region of Pakistan are an open secret. Indians have very successfully exploited the oppressed people of former FATA and pitched them against the state machinery. The resultant turmoil in Pakistan has been the long desire of India which they could not meet over the years. Now, by the collaboration of Indian state machinery and the Non State Actors operating in Afghanistan, the entire messy situation has been materialised. In nutshell, the role of state as a single unit may not be effective in the global politics like in a

Globalisation in Contemporary Era: Addressing The Key Questions

traditional way due to emergence of strong interest groups. However, its significance would depend upon how quickly it keeps re-adjusting to the trends of the times while maintaining its value in the system.

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