

PRESENT WORLD PROBLEM & CHALLENGES : A PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction: Globalization itself—the increasing integration of economics and societies—is providing an ever-larger number of focal points around which transnational networks can coalesce. The development of the modern state can be understood to have occurred in two historical phases. In caricature, the first or liberal phase covers the nineteenth century while the second or organized phase covers the twentieth. The transformation of feudal monarchies originally took two directions. In the first, found in Russia and continental Europe, the powers of the feudal nobility were progressively centralized in the hands of absolute monarchs. By contrast with this maximal concentration of political power, a more important development was the emergence of a minimal or liberal state in England, Holland and the U.S.A. Here political power could be shared democratically because the state enjoyed little sovereignty. Its role was principally external, using military force and diplomacy to secure raw materials, foreign trade and immigrant labour. Its internal role was restricted to effecting dispute resolution by instituting a regime of law, protecting private property and maintaining order in the industrial labour force. The twentieth-century organized state represents a combination of the centralization of absolutism with the administrative efficiency of the liberal state. Its development is associated with the world wars, the great depression, and the communist and fascist revolutions that accompanied them. The liberal state was inadequate to deal with these globalized fractures and stresses, particularly insofar as it was unable to mobilize the commitments of diverse interest groups in the solution of national problems. It was therefore reorganized on a corporatist basis to deal with threats not only to national security but to national economic welfare. The state became focused on an executive core that now engaged in two principal practices. First, it became much more interventionary in providing central planning and economic and fiscal management in particular. Second, it acted as an intermediary between societal interest groups, especially between employers and employees. Its main strategies were to support investment and industrial development with a view to expanding domestic economic activity.

Present World Problem & Challenges : The world is argued to be globalizing at the level of economics and culture but states remain the primary location for sovereignty and decision-making. The best and most explicit outline of the general argument is given by Held (1991:207-9). He begins at the level of non-political, inter-societal connections and then takes the argument through a series of steps which see the undermining of the nation-state and its eventual displacement by a world government. The steps in Held's argument are as follow. Increasing economic and cultural connections reduce the power and effectiveness of governments at the nation-state level—they can no longer control the flow of ideas and the economic items at their borders and thus their internal policy instruments become ineffective. The implications of the crisis of the state and consequent disintegration for globalization have both obvious and less obvious aspects. Clearly any breakdown in the nation-state system leaves an opening for political globalization. So long as the state persists, a sovereign world polity is impossible.

The less obvious aspects might be more important, however. The crisis of the state contributes to the reflexivity of globalization. This is because the excuses of politicians for their failures have taken on a global hue: our economy is failing because of the recession in the USA or Europe or Japan or somewhere else; our currency is declining because of the activities of unidentified international speculators; our air is dirty because someone else has had a nuclear meltdown; we cannot solve the problem of urban crime because it is fed by international drugs syndicates; or, we cannot feed our people because the level of adopting an expansive and aggressive international posture but in the second half of the century most organized states signed up for military bloc alliance systems with a view to safeguarding their own socio-political systems.

A critical and striking feature of political globalization is that it does not in any area exhibit the extreme level of globalization found, for example, in financial markets. Political globalization is most

advanced in the areas of international relations and political culture. However, the state remains highly resistant, largely sovereign and a critical arena for problem solving. A possible explanation is that politics is a highly territorial activity and that the organized nation-state is the most effective means for establishing sovereignty over territory that human beings have yet devised.

Conclusion

The undermining of the state, and indeed such disintegration as has already occurred, must, on the arguments offered in this chapter, be counted as a cultural development. The theorem that material exchange localizes, power exchanges internationalize, and symbolic exchanges globalize can thus receive a good measure of confirmation.

The expansion of the nation-state/international relations system organized the territorial surface of the planet with political entities of a single type. That process contributed to globalization but it was not truly globalizing because it also maintained borders and barriers to social intercourse between its inhabitants. These borders are now being subverted by transcendent cultural items that will not respect them because they can be transmitted by symbolic media.

The spread of liberal democracy and of post-materialist values is not a sui generis development in each society where they occur but are transmitted from one society to another. Those who doubt the effectivity of culture might wish to compare the bloody and violent revolutions that established nation-state from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century with the almost bloodless coups and 'velvet revolutions' that have occurred in the last third of the twentieth. These suggest that the prospect of complete political globalization is a genuine possibility.

The question now arises as to why this value shift should be regarded as a globalizing trend. The answer is that it contributes to many of the developments discussed above. In materialist value-conflicts the key issue is the role of the state and the way in which it represents the interests of one class or another. Here the state is the focus of political attention and its structures will be extended insofar as political parties can enhance their support by so doing. In post-materialist politics the state is problematic: the new right regards it as a transgressor on individual freedoms and a distorter of markets; the new left views it as an agency of rampant materialism and a means for the juridification of control of populations and their minorities. More importantly post-materialism focuses political attention on trans-societal issues, the planetary problems discussed above. It indicates such phenomenologically globalizing items as 'the individual', 'life', 'humanity', and 'the earth' that indicate the universality of the condition of the inhabitants of the planet rather than the specific conditions of their struggle with an opposing class about the ownership of property or the distribution of rewards.

It is possible that the political base of intergovernmental organizations and international regimes will be too weak to sustain high levels of governance: that the need for international regimes will exceed the supply. Deadlock and frustration could result. But the results of such deadlock are not clear. They could lead to a move away from such institutions for governance, back to the state, limiting globalism, as occurred. But that is not likely. They could lead in other directions—toward the development of quasi-judicial processes internationally, "soft legislation," and effective governance of specific issue areas by transnational and trans-governmental networks.

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