Globalization and the Position of Indigenous Cultures and National Sovereignty in the Third World

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Abstract

Globalization is defined as a complex process that leads to increased interconnectedness among societies and nations. Today, as a result of globalization, international relations have expanded, and the establishment of major organizations has challenged various aspects of nation-states. This research, conducted through an international descriptive-research method, shows that globalization has resulted in a reduction of domestic independence and internal governance of nation-states. The formulated question points out that, aided by new media, new concepts such as global culture and global human rights have been embraced in contrast to national culture and national (domestic) rights. The emergence of the globalization process, based on the information revolution and displacement resulting from globalization, has rendered national borders less significant and limited traditional absolute authority. Moreover, the implications of globalization have challenged various dimensions of state independence and sovereignty in favor of global culture, and non-governmental organizations and supranational entities have gained greater power compared to before. Consequently, we are witnessing a decline in national states and local cultures compared to the pre-globalization era. However, it should be noted that in the arena of international exchanges, political and economic power still predominantly belongs to the formal and primary role of governments, and the process of globalization is gradually replacing them with new entities and concepts.

Keywords: Globalization, Indigenous Cultures, National Sovereignty, Third World

Introduction

Today, it is increasingly challenging to find aspects of human life that are not influenced by the ongoing process of globalization. This process is expanding into all facets of human existence. The renowned scholar Anthony Giddens describes the breakdown of national and indigenous boundaries in the context of globalization: "I believe that globalization means the denationalizing of everything and that these developments are not confined to the economic domain but extend to communications. These changes have impacted not only states and nations but also our personal lives to a great extent" (Giddens, 2005). In reality, globalization has also transformed the roles of time and space in our lives. While distances have not simply disappeared, the communications revolution has altered the concept and role of distance. With the evident impact of globalization, national governments have also been affected. The emergence of new media and cultural exchanges among human societies through them has given rise to global common issues and problems, such as global warming, the fight against AIDS, etc. The emergence of new global actors and concepts such as environmental defenders and global human rights, supranational organizations like the World Trade Organization, the reduction of geographical distances through transportation technology advancements, and the emergence of new players and concepts have led to a weakening of the power and influence of national governments. In this research, an attempt has been made to begin by defining the main concepts, namely national governments and the globalization process. Since the process of globalization affects the nature and form of national governments in various ways and subjects them to different economic, political, military, cultural, etc., changes, this study aims to focus on three important dimensions of the globalization process: weakening the political power of national governments, the emergence of global culture, and the emergence of global citizenship (and global human rights) to analyze these impacts.

Globalization and Globalism

Globalization and globalism are often used as synonymous concepts, but they are not common in meaning and wording; they have entirely different meanings. In the process of globalization, movements occur naturally and do not impose their desires on the global community and nations. In these conditions, most theorists analyze future scenarios based on news and information and make predictions about the future. In the field of globalism, on the other hand, major powers plan and direct the global community towards predetermined goals. In other words, in the process of globalism, the will is directed towards power, attempting to impose its desires and interests on other nations and consolidate its leadership over them. Dominant powers sacrifice the interests of nations in favor of their own interests and utilize the acceleration processes of globalization to expand their control over global society's resources. (Mohammadi Asl, 2016).

The Necessity of Understanding Culture

If someone were to ask you to describe your culture, what would you say? Describing one's culture is not a straightforward task. We can only truly understand our culture when we step outside of it and expose ourselves to other cultures. As the renowned English writer Samuel Johnson from the 18th century once said, "Whenever I go out of my own country and come into another land, I better and more clearly understand my own country." An individual with a different culture, impartial and free from biases (national, cultural), can make judgments and express their opinions objectively.

Furthermore, we often consider our own culture as the benchmark and measure for evaluating other cultures. Assessing and appraising other cultures based on our own norms is a straightforward task. The first step in discovering the opportunities and threats facing a structure lies in recognizing and accepting cultural differences. To achieve a full awareness and understanding of these differences and engage in appropriate interactions, it's necessary to make these differences evident and subject them to discussion and examination. For this purpose, the well-known model called the "Johari Window" is proposed (Asadi & Asadi, 2013).

The Johari Window reveals what an individual knows or doesn't know about themselves and what others know or don't know about them. We know certain things about ourselves, and others display reactions to our behaviors. By using this method, we can become more aware of our blind spots and hidden aspects about ourselves, and better anticipate the reactions of others to our behavior. This approach can be valuable in achieving a better understanding of cultural differences.

Now, if we accept globalization as an inevitable phenomenon, we must also accept the crisis of identity along this path. Identities are constructed, even though they may appear natural and intrinsic. In this regard, we need to familiarize ourselves with the concepts of identity and identity resources.

Identity

Identity means the quality of being the same in essence, composition, and nature, as well as being the same at all times and under all circumstances. Having an identity implies being unique but from two different aspects: "being like others in one's own category and being like oneself over time." Identity is a concept that combines one's inner or personal world with the shared space of cultural forms and social relationships. The notion of constructing identity implies that identity is not something natural, intrinsic, or pre-existing; rather, it must always be constructed.

According to Hekman, identity is about "being like others in one's own category and being like oneself over time." Unlike structuralisms who strive to present identity as something natural and fixed, it should be noted that identity is a historical and probable matter. Its historical nature is the reason for the changeability of identity and meaning, and there is no natural constraint. As Gordon says, "Where there is difference, there is the power, and someone who has the power can decide about the meaning of difference" (Najafabadi, 2017).

So, the boundary between difference and identity is always a site of conflict for hegemonies and rival powers. Identity is usually examined in three layers: personal identity, social identity, and national identity. Personal identity implies self-recognition based on one's relationships with family and gender. Social identity is associated with religious, ethnic, tribal, urban, local, or specific group identities, and an individual may have several social identities alongside a personal identity. National identity stems from an individual's connection to a particular land and nation, or in other words, to a specific country. Individuals typically do not have multiple national identities (Smith & Asadpour, 2019).

Important components of national and social identity include lineage, language, territory, worldview, religion and faith, culture, civilization, and common history, which are interconnected and interrelated. Although the need for identity arises from the innate and natural human need to be recognized, identity itself is not intrinsic and unchangeable; rather, it can be planned. Every individual needs to look within themselves and, in the first place, determine their personal and character-related positions and subsequently their social and cultural dimensions. This task can only be accomplished if one defines who they are and where they intend to go. Achieving this will not be possible unless one properly shapes their responsive perspective toward globalization or globalizing and defines their identity and meaning based on the perceived global values.

What Is Global Culture?

The process of globalization amplifies cultural diversity and richness because it paves the way for the dissemination of different cultures, including minority ones. Although the phenomenon of multiculturalism in globalization signifies diversity and plurality, it also necessitates unity. This is because multiculturalism invites us to recognize and even embrace others, all people, everywhere, and calls for tolerance, exchange, coexistence, and more. Therefore, within the context of globalization, a universal and global culture emerges, which is dedicated to principles, values, and standards that are not contingent on individuals' local, national, linguistic, racial, or religious interests but only on humanity itself.

However, various segments of societies that are committed to traditional culture and identity resist against the currents of globalization. Societies that seek cultural hegemony and, as a result, perpetuate inequalities and discrimination clandestinely oppose the formation of a unified global and human culture.

Positive Effects of Cultural Globalization

Some thinkers believe that culture is a driving force for the development of societies and nations. They argue that cultures evolve through interaction, and, therefore, globalization can be seen as providing an opportunity for national and local cultures to learn from each other, foster cross-cultural understanding, and increase mutual dependence. It is defined as a process that can pave the way for more formal cooperation and greater convergence among nations in the international system, which can facilitate dialogue, peacemaking, and reconciliation.

Intercultural relations, especially in times of political tension, can help build trust and enhance countries' positive image on the international stage.

Recognizing and respecting the diversity of cultures can create conditions for mutual understanding, dialogue, and peace. Cultural interaction mechanisms designed to promote intercultural understanding and dialogue include friendship societies, which are non-governmental organizations that have been formed since 1965 in collaboration with UNESCO. According to their charter, they aim to facilitate cultural relations between countries and use cultural resources to build trust. In this framework, recognizing and respecting the diversity of cultures is not about confining and eliminating them in a conservative way, but rather investing in and using local resources, knowledge, and skills to enhance creativity and sustainable development.

Negative Dimensions of Cultural Globalization

In contrast to the positive view of how local cultures are influenced by globalization, some argue that within the framework of globalization, dominant global cultures are in the process of constructing new meanings and identities. This, while speeding up the integration of nations into the global system, can be perceived as a threat to local and minor cultures, creating grounds for conflicts and disputes among cultures and communities that compete to control this process according to their interests. As a result, local cultures might become restricted, weakened, and less attractive to individuals. Global cultures might overshadow and create a crisis of identity and legitimacy for these local cultures.

Furthermore, globalization leads to changes in cultural patterns. The favoring and dominance of certain cultural aspects in various fields like art, literature, fashion, etc., could cause neglect and indifference toward these aspects in minor cultures. This shift in perspective and worldview has contributed to the weakening of local cultures. Evidence confirms this issue, as studies show that many indigenous languages and cultures are on the brink of extinction due to the globalization process. For instance, over a thousand of the seven thousand known languages are currently spoken by very few people (often less than a thousand) who have little interest in preserving these languages. Some scholars believe that in the next hundred years, ninety percent of languages will disappear. In many countries, several social customs and practices are also at risk of extinction (Shafi Nejad, 2008).

In the midst of these developments, advances in communication technology and mass media, including satellites, the internet, and more, have accelerated this process. The increase in human interactions facilitated by technology has compressed time and space, shaping a global culture, global thoughts, and global values and behaviors. This cultural dominance, referred to as the concept of "geoculture" by Emmanuel Wallerstein, has become a tool to dominate local and national cultures. It has transformed all means of mass communication into tools for shaping a culture that corresponds to the requirements of globalization, which is seen as a threat to minor cultures. However, it is essential to clarify that these statements do not mean that local cultures entirely disappear or are disregarded. Instead, this trend has led traditional and weaker cultures, which have less potential for integration into global

culture, to face various challenges, including identity and legitimacy crises (Waller Stein, the Modern World System, 1400).

Cultural Life Forms in the Process of Globalization

The process of globalization gives rise to various forms of cultural encounters and life. In some cases, cultures avoid fusion, confrontation, and blending at all costs. They try to close their borders to foreign cultures and their symbols. In other instances, cultures coexist peacefully and engage in constructive exchanges. At times, one culture exerts a significant and noticeable influence. Occasionally, a culture seeks to dominate the global community under its own cultural banner. Therefore, three major life forms for cultures in the process of globalization can be considered: independence, exchange, and dominance.

In the phenomenon of globalization, due to the compression of space and time (which are cultural dimensions), cultural stability and purity disappear. Cultural independence, in the sense of resistance and border closure, is no longer possible. Faced with this reality, cultures, in a rational response, use global opportunities and tools to replace cultural tension and rivalry with cultural mixing and exchange. To achieve cultural dominance, a culture that is broadly appealing and consumerist, often American, saturates the world culturally, economically, and even spiritually, weakening other cultures.

Cultural Fusion and Transformation

Cultural fusion is the third type of response to globalization. The response of the contemporary world to globalization is not just submission and resistance; in other words, the forces of difference-erasing and difference-making in the realm of global culture are part of the reality. The cultural game on the global stage is not an all-or-nothing game, but a form of coexistence, mixing, and cultural excellence can also be possible. The compression of space and time in the process of globalization, by reducing distances and facilitating communication, brings people closer to each other in a global context. Culturally, while globalizing cultures, it also brings together existing cultures and identities, resulting in a form of relativism, coexistence, and competition. In such conditions, different cultures and identities undergo a process of deterritorialization and delocalization and come together on the global stage. In such an environment, cultures have three options: passivity and submission to cultural globalization and competing cultures, resistance to the process of globalization and cultural relativism, a form of coexistence, healthy competition, and even fusion and transformation (Waller Stein, The End of the World as We Know It, 1400).

Based on these considerations, the cultures of different countries, in the face of globalization, should not resort to their roots or merge and disappear but can continue their existence by adapting and merging with other cultures and identities. In this approach, the emphasis is on cultural exchanges and fusion to create hybrid cultural forms.

In other words, in such circumstances, "meanings and meaningful forms derived from different historical sources that were originally spatially separate from each other widely blend together." (Walter Stein, the Decline of American Power, 2020).

Cultural Universalism

Cultural universalism primarily pertains to principles, values, and standards that are considered valid for all people and everywhere. The credibility of these principles, values, and standards is not dependent on an individual's local, national, linguistic, racial, or religious affiliations, and it regards humans as humans, regardless of their background.

In essence, the core of cultural universalism is the effort to understand others and find common principles and issues. Unlike cultural particularism, cultural universalism emphasizes flexibility, adaptation, integration, moderation, and cooperation as the most suitable and practical approach when confronted with new information, values, and perspectives, resorting to dialogue, mutual acceptance, and at least coexistence. (Mandel, 1981)

Culture in Mainstream International Relations Theories

The topic of culture has remained largely overlooked in mainstream international relations theories (realism and liberalism). The priority of military issues and the importance of matters like power, interests, and force in the realist theory have practically deterred scholars from paying attention to the cultural aspect. Prominent thinkers in this field, such as Hans J. Morgenthau, explicitly denied the role of culture in foreign policy decisions and confined its role to the domestic and national sphere.

In the liberal theory, while liberals have given more attention to the concept of culture compared to realists, culture does not play a central role. Instead, it has been relegated to the periphery of issues like peace, individual freedom, international regimes, and cooperation, ultimately serving the ultimate goal of peace. From the liberal perspective, cultural exchanges and interactions lead to creating mutual understanding among people of different nations and avoiding war, ultimately leading to peace. (Morgenthau & Thompson, 2005).

International Relations Theory and Culture

Among the critical theories that emphasize the cultural dimension, the English School of International Relations Theory stands out. The scholars of the English School view the international system as a society composed of states and place great importance on its shared goals, rules, institutions, values, and norms; therefore, a common culture is a prominent characteristic of international society and a reinforcing element. The English School emphasizes non-material, normative, and discursive dimensions of international relations and avoids value judgments in the study of international relations. According to English School theorists, this common culture can serve as a foundation for peace. (Saifzadeh, Different Theories in International Relations, 1995)

Constructivism and Culture

In constructivist theory, it is believed that culture plays a significant role in international relations and the global system. Analyzing international issues without taking culture into account is not feasible, even though culture should be considered alongside other political, economic, and social dimensions. In constructivism, identity, norms, and culture play a crucial role in global politics. The identity and interests of states are formed through norms,

interactions, and cultures. This process defines the subject of international interaction. Therefore, beyond material structures, meaningful structures are considered significant, and politics cannot be reduced to a rational chain of state interactions based on interests. From the constructivist perspective, the chaos prevailing in international relations arises from the diversity and multiplicity of norms, values, and beliefs. (Saifzadeh, Different Theories in International Relations, 1995).

The State of Asian Cultures in the Onslaught of Global Dominant Culture

When a culture seeks to assert itself in a different cultural environment, it can lead to confrontation and violence. In fact, the struggle for one's culture in another cultural realm can make people realize that they may risk losing their own culture from within. Rapid transportation, technology, and information can both bridge cultural differences and, at the same time, raise awareness of cultural differences on a personal level. Cultural resilience can also establish a cultural military structure in which ethnic cultures may be gradually destroyed in the long-term process of cultural transformation. The identity of a culture is continuously in relation to other cultural selves. No culture has been left as an island. If there is to be a culture in the future, many other cultures must also be alive and vibrant.

Today, Asian societies all have their own social groups, cultural forms, or cultural attachments, almost all of which have emerged throughout history. These numerous cultural gaps will create potential fault lines that will move based on local foundations, in religious, tribal, linguistic divisions, or among South Asian sects. From another perspective, with reference to the concept of cultural resilience (in this perspective, no culture is complete in and of itself and can adopt its own pattern from environmental processes and feedback systems), ethnic cultures will gradually disappear over time. In this way of thinking, no culture will remain intact in the future, and in some way, all cultures will impact each other.

Some believe that Western cultures will dominate in terms of knowledge, technology, industry, and information, and Asia will have absolute power. Others believe that indigenous cultures will coexist with Western cultures, not be destroyed, and preserve the cultural core (Torkzadeh & Manouchehr, 2014).

Conclusion

In general, culture in the contemporary era serves the goals of globalization and has thus become a global issue. Consequently, the analysis of international affairs requires taking a holistic view and focusing on both material and meaningful structures simultaneously. New theories of international relations have also attempted to look at international developments through this lens, providing a foundation for a more comprehensive analysis of international processes.

One of the globalizing aspects of culture, as mentioned earlier, is its impact on local cultures. Balancing the benefits of integration in the global world against preserving the uniqueness of local cultures requires a precise approach. It is self-evident that in today's interdependent world, achieving peace, friendship, and justice is only possible through interaction and communication. As Martin Luther King said, "Injustice in one place threatens justice everywhere. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny." Therefore, globalization not only increases the potential for interaction but also provides a platform for cultures to become familiar with each other, understand intercultural relations, and promote tolerance and acceptance of diversity, It seems that, considering the importance of culture in analyzing the foreign policies of countries on one hand and the globalizing impact on smaller cultures on the other, it is essential to strengthen cultural elements to enhance cultural attractiveness domestically and lay the groundwork for the formation of a cohesive cultural identity. Even in the case of cultural interactions, a preserved identity will be less vulnerable. A cohesive cultural identity can also be viewed as a tool for enhancing soft power.

Unlike the past, any attempt to establish absolute cultural dominance is futile. Today, one cannot live devoid of contradictions in a single country; today, the enemy is not beyond borders but part of one's own being. Cultural separatist struggles, whether based on ethnicity or class, ultimately lead to only minor cultural victories that make no significant difference and are ultimately expensive. However, the guiding role of tradition in the core of knowledge and technology can stand as a way for local culture to withstand the onslaught of globalization processes. With such a model, Eastern culture theoretically can serve as a core guiding Western cultural systems, allowing us to think globally under these conditions and live locally and nationally.

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