

# Globalization and the Nation-State: Sovereignty and State Welfare in Jeopardy

Agreement Lathi Jotia  
University of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana

This paper addresses the fact that although globalization cannot be resisted by the nation-state, it is often confronted by mixed reactions from both the GN (Global North) and the GS (Global South). The essay charges that globalization has political, economic and cultural impact on the nation-state, which ultimately impacts the issue of identity on “global citizens”. Finally, the paper argues that globalization also has an impact on the autonomy of the nation-state especially on the education system and policies.

*Keywords:* GS (Global-South), GN (Global-North), education, nation-state, global citizen and globalization

## Introduction

Economic, social, demographic and technological forces are dramatically altering relationships among nations as well as the nature of politics, public policy, administration, institutional relations within the nation-states (Jun & Wright, 1996, p. 1).

The wave of globalization is certainly not resistible although often confronted with a lot of mixed reactions, which to some degree reflects a lot of frustration and dissatisfaction, especially from the GS (Global South). One of the hair-splitting arguments pertaining to globalization is that it is seen as an economic monster whose objectives include, among others, the wiping away of the nation-state’s sovereignty especially with regard to socio-economic and political autonomy. As a matter of fact, the nation-state is seen as a toothless partner in the process and does not have the power or mandate to control or have a democratic voice pertaining to the principles and policies under which the globalization gospel is advanced.

Contrarily, some schools of thought maintain that globalization has significantly progressed as an economic, social, technological and politically integrative process, because of the sound involvement of the nation-state through the liberalization and rapid expansion of the markets as well as the harmonization of trade. However, at the turn of the millennium, realities proved that a lot of poor countries had and continued to have choking debts, despite being on board of the globalization ship. So the debt forgiveness was the latest panacea for relieving poverty of poor countries (Easterly, 2002, p. 124). It is, therefore, the crippling of the poor nation-states’ economies, among others, which triggers a lot of questions about the legitimacy of globalization as a socio-economic and political messiah to the global village. The reality of the situation, however, was more different than these myths and fantasies propagated in glowing terms by the very forces that were responsible for global domination, exploitation, and mass enslavement through wage labor of the great majority of the world’s population (Berberoglu, 2005, p. 1). Berberoglu further charged that globalization’s focus was to liberalize markets, so that they could be easy accumulation of wealth by the world corporations at the expense

of the rest of humanity which is sinking further into abject poverty and destitution. Now, the question is: What role does the nation-states play in this unbalanced globalization scale?

At the tip of the tongue though, one wonders if the nation-state has all it takes to put in place policies and modalities that would counter those that have been put in place by globalization for the sake of human development, as well as the betterment of the economies which are already flowing down the drain. Kamali (1998, p. 43) reflected that although the academy had been engaged in trying to understand and explain what globalization was and how everyone was adapting to it, the preponderance of the analysis was said to have missed focus on the effects that globalization may have on the well-being of the citizens in any given nation.

In view of this assertion, let it be noted, as per Kamali (1998, p. 43) that although discussions on globalization are often narrowed down to issues pertaining to the economy, globalization also embraces multifaceted factors, such as affective judgment, moral righteous, values, and a host of other socially and politically relevant variables. As such, within the process of globalization, the nation-state has multiple tributaries to deal with, beyond the economic repercussions that may emerge as a result of the dynamics of the process itself.

Burbules and Torres (2000, p. 14) asserted that globalization had some crucial characteristics which had major impact on the nation-state. They categorized the factors in economic terms (where there is rise in internationalized advertising and consumption patterns; a reduction in barriers to the free flow of goods, workers and investments across national borders; and, correspondingly, new pressures on the roles of worker and consumer in society), political terms (whereby, there is a certain loss of nation-state sovereignty, or at least an erosion of national autonomy and correspondingly and weakening of the notion of the “citizen” as unified and unifying concept, which can be characterized by the precise roles, rights, obligations and status), and finally, cultural terms (where tension grows because of the manner in which globalization brings forth more standardization and cultural homogeneity, while also bringing more fragmentation through the rise of locally oriented movements). Globalization of the nation-state challenges the traditional view of national boundaries, and also challenges governments to develop global strategies to deal with growing array of “intermistic” political, economic, and cultural issues (Jun & Wright, 1996, p. 15). These socio-economic and political challenges of globalization ought to be addressed with a critical view point if at all change for the better is to suffice.

### **Globalization and the Nation-State: The Economic Perspective**

Economically, globalization has built a monopoly whereby the class capitalist society which is dominated by the transnational corporations in the GN (Global North) is taking precedence over everything, thus swaying in the GS into dire economic misery. The Seattle protests against the WTO (World Trade Organization) in 1999 are a clear indication of the animosity that the world has against the policies of globalization, which perpetrate poor conditions of the working class through out the world. The working class does not own the means of production and as so their input on policy is very much limited. Berberoglu (2005) argued:

The term global corporation may be less misleading, but still makes one think of a corporation representing the interests of everyone on the globe, which is false. Some economists are now using the more precise term, transnational corporations. The one viewpoint uniting all these corporations is the notion that the whole world is their oyster; that vast profits may be made by the control of markets in as many countries as possible. (p. 18)

If then the transnational corporations which are solely based on the GN are the ones in charge of driving

the engine and turning the wheels of globalization, does not it, therefore, hold water that the nation-state, especially in the GS, has a little saying more, so they do not have any bargaining power in as far as formulating the rules of the game. The playing field is rather rough and the nation-state to some degree is compelled to be a sweet angel and adopt and implement global policies as they are or face the music by being sidelined by the corporate world giants.

The pro-globalists contend on the other hand that globalization has helped alleviate poverty and better the lives of people right around the globe. James (2001) as cited in Watson (2002, p. 12) posed that economically and liberal globalization had raised living standards throughout the world, because there were a fewer starving people today than during the 1960s. From another rational line, Pettifer (2001) as cited in Watson (2002) argued that the “trickle down” effect, which is the trickling down of wealth from the rich to the poor, is not working and has not produced any results to date.

Further arguments sell the idea that even though economic globalization produces employment opportunities, the pays for the jobs are too low and the working conditions are purely hazardous to the lives of the workers. At the crux of the matter therefore is the argument that the nation-state is put in a position of hopelessness, since it has no breathing mandate or space to push for the betterment of the working conditions for its people. As so the nation-state is just a passive passenger in the global malaise.

One awkward global economic scenario is that although globalization preaches the liberalization of the markets for the benefit of all players within the game, the sad reality is that free trade still comes with some protectionist tendencies. Burbach (1992) as cited in Watson (2002) contended that free trade agreements such as NAFTA:

Will enable US corporate capital to take advantage of the cheap labor resources to the south and better compete for the markets on a global level. The drive to NAFTA and the enterprise for the Americas is also a response to basic changes occurring within the Western hemisphere itself. Across the Americas, the boundaries of the nation state are being ruptured. (p. 19)

NAFTA has been and continues to be at the center of the globalization controversy in that it is seen to be pushing for a borderless trade zone, whereas its policies are democratically deficient in that the GN’s capitalist production takes away the people’s control and their liberty to pave a path for their economic destinies. Here lies a key paradox of neoliberal globalization, where an expansion of global capital accumulation and the interests of the globalization of capitalism, clash dialectically with the interests and the livelihoods of millions around the world, with many sparked into resistance because of the economic and social contradictions of capitalist accumulation (Beck, 1992, p. 22). A growing divide between the haves and have-nots has left increasing numbers in the Third World in dire poverty, living on less than a dollar a day. Despite repeated promises of poverty reduction made over the last decade of the twentieth century, the actual number of people living in poverty has actually increased by almost 100 million (Stiglitz, 2003, p. 5).

So if globalization is a force that is supposed to be breeding so much good, why then is it that the criticism labeled against it is so much alarming?

The nation-state, under the globalization breeze is compelled to organize the domestic agendas to fit the economic, social and political global scope. The issue here therefore, is that local matters that could be given more attention to uplift the standards of living, within the nation-state get overtaken by the prioritization of the global oriented activities. As so, the welfare of those within the nation-state becomes a secondary matter.

Global competitiveness compromises the provision of sound social services that under normal economic

circumstances would be provided to the civil society as a matter of priority. So what we see is a scenario, whereby the nation-states decide to dash to sweeping the streets whilst that their living rooms need some serious cleaning. It is this failure by the nation-state to realize the importance of the immediate home environment within the global context that has led to further impoverishment in the GS. Lack of independent global consciousness is indeed a cancerous intellectual and administrative deformity, whose repercussions have proved to be socio-economic and politically deadly. Globalization suffocates the nation-state's potential to formulate vibrant and viable domestic policies geared towards development.

The liberalization and homogenization of the free market economy have swiftly and gradually taken away the national government's powers, thus reducing them to a platform, whereby the nation-state becomes more of passive recipients of the already baked bread and are left with the only sole duty of consuming the bread, rather than contributing towards the mixing of the dough. Yes, the GS provides a good market for the computerization of goods from the GN. Global changes occurring today are creating new, complex and decentralized systems of networks that are radically different from the old centralized systems of governance, which controlled the processes of international activities and decision-making (Jun & Wright, 1996, p. 4). This form of free market fundamentalism injures the nation-state's style of governing, since in some instances, they have to opt for privatization so as to fit well in the global village at the expense of the masses.

According to Wedel (1998) as cited in Denmark and Tertreaul (2004, p. 17), privatization was another tenet of market fundamentalism. It refers to the conversion of state -owned and/or -managed producers of goods and services to private ownership and management which is based on the belief that the markets will spring out to meet the human needs. Panic (2003, p. 9) drew our attention to the fact that developing countries cannot raise their efficiency and income levels without imports of capital, technology and technical expertise from the most advanced economies since they heavily rely on the developed economies and their international organizations though they remained absorbed in debt. Today, even the IMF (International Monetary Fund) agrees that it has pushed the liberalization agenda too far and the pronounced liberalization of the capital and financial markets contributed largely to the financial crises that rocked the world in the early 1990s, causing a lot of harm to young and emerging economies (Stiglitz, 2003). The writing is on the wall that something is seriously wrong here if truly globalization is to close the socio-economic and political inequalities, why then is there so much noise, especially from the GS?

### **Political Impact of Globalization on the Nation-States**

Conditions are set in a straight-forward manner, in order for the nation-states to sit at the globalization table, firstly there is need to liberalize democracy (in a sense they have to subscribe to the capitalist philosophy of governance), which, in turn, would ascertain that the liberalization of the markets becomes a smooth transitional process. Simply put, global changes dictate terms under which the national government should function. As earlier hinted, the formulation of the local administrative policies should be so that they are in line with the prescriptions of globalization.

The nation-states have limited powers to challenge the hegemonic, unjust and plethoric economic injustices pursued by institutions such as the IMF, WB (World Bank) as well as the WTO. Under globalization, the nation-states' sovereignty remains in limbo as power steadily shifts to the most powerful financial and corporate institutions. Adams et al. (1999, p. 1) charged that globalization has subjected the national governments to an atmosphere where they have seen their sovereignty and control over domestic political and

economic affairs rapidly diminish, whatever sovereignty governments in the developing world managed to obtain with decolonization are now rapidly eroding.

Neoliberalism has smashed and snatched the nation-states' models of development and replaced them with models, which embrace the needs and demands of the supranational organizations. Although on paper some of this development models and theories were supposed to reduce dependency, reality has it that those in the GS have no economic spine to stand on their own, lest they crumble to the ground like an atomic bomb. Adams et. al (1999) observed that the international environment was imposing some compelling pressure on the GS to carry out free market reforms and this very reforms often produce social resistance and political turmoil within the nation-states' boundaries. The dilemma here is: How do the nation-states devise strategic economic reform policies at the same time maintaining political stability so that democracy and peace are not jeopardized?

Adams et. al (1999) made a case:

Developing countries have sometimes deployed military and police force to deactivate popular sectors and eliminate all forms of autonomous political activity. This generally means suspending the constitution and replacing the rule of law with arbitrary political authority. Authoritarian leaders also move to eliminate other bases of political power: the legislature is shut down, civilian courts disbanded and elections cancelled. Politically opponents are typically imprisoned, tortured, executed or forced into exile. To maintain high levels of economic growth and inflows of foreign capital, the state actively intervenes to break up demonstrations, strikes and land seizures. Repression is generally linked to the emergence of a coalition of governmental, industrial and military elites whose preeminent objectives are political stability and rapid economic growth. Popular movements are considered a serious threat to these twin objectives. (p. 7)

The above quote carries a lot of weight, especially if one looks at the socio-economic and political upheavals, which are prevalent in the African continent even in this era of globalization. Globalization is supposed to cushion the socio-economic and political environment and yet it is apparent that the ground for operation is uneven. The political havoc that comes to the fore within the nation-states end up compelling the monies elites to move their money out of the country—a condition that leads to the germination of appalling economic conditions, as the currency begins to loose value which ultimately leads to economic recession.

The responsibilities of the nation-states at the birth of globalization have proved to be oozing into a world of complexity as divided attention on whether to address the liberties and the welfare of the citizens or satisfy the demands of the global village persistently creates an evolving dilemma. According to Panic (2003), globalization deprived the nation-states' power and sovereignty in that constitutional where changes are made in lieu of the fear of breaking ranks with the powerful economies. This state of affairs created gigantic problems is that the nation-states cannot find convincing reasons to wow the citizens to the reasoning that they can survive independently without reliance on the supranational and political union. The painful truth though is that under capitalism, the business of the day is focused on amassing wealth through private initiatives, rather than attaching value to accumulation for the aspirations of all the citizens within the nation-states. Globalization leads to the evolution of weak states which consequently cripples democracy and in the absence of a strong democracy, we can rest assured that the civil society will remain in shambles and doomed.

### **Globalization and the Demise of Culture**

The dialectical relationships that exist between the globalization parameters do not only affect the global economies, but also have immense impact on the ethnic, national and religious identities of the various diverse world cultures. To argue that globalization has not had profound impact on the nation-states' cultures will

definitely be grossly inaccurate, because the world is persistently witnessing the demise of the nation-states' socio-economic and political fiber. Thus, it becomes absolutely rational to contend that in the era of globalization, we are witnessing a clash of cultures. Mazaar (1999, p. 175) warned that looking at globalization in social and political terms; it is a time of renewed search for identity in the ethnic, national and cultural affinities that magnify the differences among people and groups rather than, as in the case of globalism, emphasizing their similarities. The proliferation of groups with which people identify has an effect on their social organization, education, technology and religious beliefs.

Although globalization is supposed to promote the emergence of pluralistic societies, the contrary is the reality on the ground where there is more of cultural assimilation than cultural pluralism. To some degree, one should not be taken aback by these phase of cultural development in that skewed as it is, and it is apparent that the most powerful societies and or cultures set a pace under which other cultures will have to operate. The less powerful become absorbed by the most powerful, thus resulting in advanced cultural homogeneity based on power. The result is a dizzying array of "competing and dying" cultures, which breeds complex problems regarding whose culture should shape the global socialization map.

Cultural fragmentation under the auspices of social transformation perpetuates the problem of lost identities and complex issues of eroding moral codes. The "paradox of globalization" is that rather than creating one big economy or one big polity, it also divides fragments and polarizes. Convergence and divergence are two sides of a coin (Mazaar, 1999, p. 187). Finding harmony within this clash of cultures is on its own a giant challenge which ultimately results in sparking explosive socio-economic and political adventures.

### **Education and the Birth of a Global Citizen**

Logic triggers the question, "How then can we end up with one global citizen so that we avoid this havoc which is cooked by the intermingling of cultures?". Of course, this is a tough question with no easy answers, because we still experience xenophobic tendencies amongst various cultures despite the fact that globalization is supposed to quickly erase the national boundaries and also narrow down "time and space", so that world societies can cohabitate and prosper by rubbing shoulders with one another as close and loving families. What a nightmare truly is this? How possible is it for us to produce a universal global citizen whereas some of the world citizens within their respective diverse cultures are by virtue of their geographical location and beliefs deemed terrorists? The Christians have their view of the world, the Muslims also do things in their way, the Buddhists also do it in their own style, and of course, the Atheists have their own dimension of looking at the world. Hence, the creation of the global citizen is easier said than done because of the complexity of existing and emerging cultures.

Offiong (2001) subscribed to the literature on globalization and culture by indicating that as of now, information, goods, capital, people, knowledge, pollutants, drugs, fashions, entertainment and beliefs, among many others, all speedily moved across territorial boundaries. Offiong continued charging that in the era of globalization, we were probably witnessing more of "global pillage than global village", because it appeared as though there was a pillage of the planet and its people which produced winners and sad losers. Burbules and Torres (2000) observed that global changes in culture deeply affected educational policies within the nation-states, especially with reference to matters pertaining to multicultural education under the guise of liberal-pluralism, whereby supposedly people were to live within a compact of mutual tolerance and respect. Unfortunately, within the cultural context, it appears as though there are some cultures which are more

important than others—therefore, they tend to enjoy more respect than others, especially those deemed barbaric. Those same superior cultures are the ones which dominant the world education systems.

Globalization spews a dilemma regarding the role that education should play in an attempt to shape and mould attitudes and values of global citizens, who can fit well in the evolving and complex multicultural village. The existence and meaning of education with the new global imperatives poses a lot of questions as Burbules and Torres (2000) observed:

Does the national education system have a future at all? Postmodernism would suggest that it does not... Indeed the whole logic of postmodern and globalization theory is that the national educational system per se is now defunct, at once irrelevant, anachronistic and impossible. Governments no longer have the power to determine their national systems. They increasingly cede control to regional and international organizations on the other hand and consumers on the other. With growing social diversity and cultural fragmentation, they become increasingly privatized and individualistic, shorn of their public and collective associations. As the national state becomes a marginal force in the new world order, so education becomes an individualized consumer good delivered in a global market and accessed through satellite and cable links. National education ceases to exist. (p. 36)

In a sense, the nation-state is significantly compelled to alter the educational policies to accommodate the inter-social relationships prescribed by the global diversity and interconnectedness, thus fuelling, the loss of nation-states' autonomy on relevant citizenship education. In more precise terms, the nation-states sovereignty and power are sadly undermined by globalization to the degree that the products of the national education system tend to be more of puppets of the dictates of liberal capitalist education than being critical decision makers whose social orientation is concerned about the needs and the welfare of the state. The poor in the GS get subjected to a devastating state of powerlessness which evidently ends up stimulating radical revolutionary actions, such as violence against those in positions of power, so that they can provide for their sinking impoverished families. This however, creates opportunities for democratic engagement, as the civil society strives to open a platform for a dialogue between the civil society and the nation-states, which might bring solutions to social injustice issues. The results of this engagement may lead to the metamorphosis of globalization with more of a human face than the current monstrous figure of a brutal economic scavenger, which does not take into account the welfare of the hopeless starving people of the world.

In the midst of all this discontents, it could be argued that the ugly face of globalization could be remodeled through the production of global citizenship whereby the individual as well as the collective effort of a society will look beyond the horizon and address the socio-economic and political challenges from an angle of humanity where peace, justice and economic prosperity can be for all. Brecher, Childs and Cutler (1993) reflected that now the focus should be on "global citizenship" which was going to address the dynamics of economic, cultural and ecological integration that would carry the human experience beyond its modernist phase of state/social relations. They further admitted that the reality of global citizenship was unavoidable, but its form remained contested. It is not clear whether it is largely a globalized identity of elite, arising from the integration of capital, or whether it represents a growth of human solidarity arising from an extension of democratic principles, as a result of the exertions of peoples and their voluntary associations (Brecher et al., 1993, p. 40).

In this regard, the global citizen is elevated to a level where he/she is seen as a global reformer of the global injustices and can propose some innovative measures that could better the economic, social/cultural and political climates of both the GN and the GS, whose disparities have caused more mourning and hatred than jubilation. The nation-states education system is therefore facing another dilemma given the hodgepodge of

ideas, as to whose educational philosophy is to be implemented in pursuit of the production of global graduates who can address the transnational socio-economic and political conditions of the world. Globalization is enormously challenging and remodeling the scope of traditional citizenship given the cultural and political emancipations at hand, which are fuelled by the transnational conditions. The identity of the global citizen is therefore chameleon-like and uneven in that it has to evolve in order to address and catch up with the global dynamics. The present trends of globalization called for a recovery of a dynamic and positive sense of citizenship, responsive to the varieties of human situation and diversity of cultural values and the political culture of the nation-states (Brecher et al., 1993).

### Conclusions

In a nutshell, education is at the center of the existing globalization dialectics, which have significant impact on the nation-state's educational policies geared towards global citizenship. The new hybrid of culture is a complex contested terrain, which needs vibrant and extensive educational ventures, and could radically address the vivid inequalities in the world.

The world economies should be aligned with the educational systems of the nation-states, in order to help close the class and competitive discrepancies between the GN and the GS, which are manufactured by the neoliberal ideology. If educational systems are not reconfigured for the amelioration of the chronic and deadly injustices that exist between the GN and GS under the globalization umbrella, then the elites and the economically marooned will continue to dominate the staggering and unfortunate poor. In view of the above, what is at issue is, in this irresistible era of globalization, how can we tailor education so that it becomes globally humanistic and produce global citizens who will take into cognizance the diversity of various world cultures. Obviously humanity has to coexist, but it remains controversial as to how the GS and GN can forge forward under more rational, equitable and just socio-economic and political global platform.

The changing political climate of the globalized world calls for the reform of socio-economic policies; if at all the creation of one global village is to become a reality. Education has a fundamental role to play in the reform process and at the center of the reform policies should be the welfare of all people under the planet earth. Globalization as an idea is not bad, what makes it face so much criticism is the skewed way of implementation of its socio-economic and political policies which appear to be benefitting the GN than the GS.

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