

# Has globalization transformed international politics? assignment

[Sociology](#)



Has Globalization transformed International Politics? Introduction A wide debate on how globalization affects global governance has taken place during the last years. Globalists and sceptics have argued about the transformations going on, their nature and importance. As Chanda notes, throughout history, interconnections between states and people have been growing (Chanda, 2008). However, globalization seems to have pushed these changes to a point in which a new global order arises, threatening to transform the essence of international politics.

This essay will explore the ideas that have raised around the issue of globalization within international politics, trying to give a response on whether they have suffered a transformation or not. With this purpose, I will first try to give a proper and widely accepted definition of globalization. On a second section, I will look at the different perspectives defended by globalists and sceptics, as the theories proposed by both are quite relevant to understand the reach of the current circumstances.

In order to give a response to the question of the title, in a third section I will focus on different areas of global governance, analysing how globalization is supposed to have transformed politics. I will refer to issues of cooperation, sovereignty, welfare, economy and security, considering the arguments of both globalists and sceptics as means to find a conclusive answer. In every section, I will try to give a personal response to every enquiry previously raised. Finally, I will end with a conclusion in which I will try give a general answer to the question on whether globalization has transformed international politics or not.

Defining some concepts Defining globalization and its nature seems necessary in order to understand the issues that it has raised. Reaching a consensus on the definition of globalization is quite complicated. As Kiras, (in Baylis, 2005, p. 480) notes, it is a phenomena open to subjective interpretation and, consequently, definitions differ widely. However, it is possible to find some basic characteristics that most theorists have pointed about globalization. As a very simple explanation, Scholte (cited by Mingst, in Vayvr , p. 89) defines globalization as “ the emergence and spread of a supraterritorial dimension of social relations”. Meanwhile, Thomas (cited in Clark, 1998, p. 481) defined it as “ the process whereby power is located in global social formations and expressed through global networks rather than through territorially-based states”. These two general descriptions suggest that globalization is about a vast growth of interconnections between societies, governments and trade actors around the world.

Summing both definitions, it can be argued that globalization is as a process that involves a shift in the spatial scale of the human social organization of our world, linking distant communities and expanding the reach of power relations through all the continents. Held (1997, p. 253) that this shift that characterizes globalization involves that day-to-day activities become progressively influenced by events taking place in other places around the planet, even those on the other side.

In addition, globalization implies that actions and decisions adopted by local minority groups can have an important impact on the global issues. Thus, globalization is a multidimensional condition. It involves mostly every aspect

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of life. Social, technological, cultural, economic and political spheres are affected by and take part in the process of globalization. Increasing flows of power, capital, labour force, information and ideas is another of its basic characteristics. Globalization has been usually defined as a matter taking place out of the human control. However, Mingst (1999, p. 9) clarifies that this process is not inexorable and argues that “ what is critical in globalization theory is the recognition that people perceive that this process is actually taking place, although not all are similarly affected”. The reach of globalization Although some consensus can be reached when defining the basic characteristics of globalization and the transformations that it causes, the problem comes when trying to specify the reach of its consequences and its real importance. As Rosenberg points the globalization debate is not about the reality of the change.

It is about the significance and the nature of these changes that are taking place, and about the driving forces behind them (Rosenberg, 2005, p. 43). There has traditionally been a great division between globalists and sceptics. Globalists maintain that there are important transformations taking place in the world which are leading to a radically different new order. On the other hand, sceptics sustain that these changes are not that significant (Weis, 1999, p. 59). It can be argued that globalists see globalization as a threat for the current order.

They think that international politics, global economy and social relations around the world will suffer a huge transformation due to globalization.

Meanwhile, sceptics suggest that, although it is true that some changes are

taking place, none of them will modify the essence of power and economy relations. There are two basic points in which globalists and sceptics disagree. The first one refers to the dilemma of whether globalization has led to transcendence of territory, meaning that cross border and open-border relations have been substituted by trans-border relations.

Sceptics believe that transcendence of territorial space is not possible, as all transactions take place inside national defined borders and are subject to the laws of the state in which they operate (Weis, 2000, p. 61). The second divergence refers to the weight of these new transnational networks within the national and international panorama. Globalists see that there is an increasing influence in all fields, while sceptics state that globalization is mainly a financial phenomenon that affects some capital markets. When referring to international politics, the divergence between globalist and sceptic authors is also notable.

Globalists believe that globalization implies a drastic power shift that restricts the capacities of national organisms, institutions and policies and favours the emergence of non-national actors. Even some sceptics have agreed with this theory, suggesting that globalization within international politics is about actors winning or losing power. Furthermore, there is a popular belief which suggests that if global networks exist, national ones are in danger, and thus globalization would cause the erosion of the power of the state (Weis, 2000, p. 4). However, it is not clear whether this theory overemphasises the changes in power without indentifying its sources. Thus, when discussing if globalization has affected International Politics, the main

objective is trying to define if states have been more or less affected by the issues that globalization has raised. Of course there is always the trouble of the difficulty that it implies trying to give substance to the notions of 'more' or 'less'. However, what we can do is looking at different issues within international politics and analyzed the way in which globalization has transformed them ??? consequently changing the way in which states and international actors address these problems. That will be the task for the next section. How has globalization affected international politics? In a wide context, globalization has increased the demand for new policies aiming to address global problems that have appeared, showing certain limitations of current international organizations and states. Globalization has raised the problem of transborder networks becoming more relevant than local, regional and international ones.

Together with it, theories on how the authority of states has been eroded have flourished. Governments acting within the power network of international relations seem to have overshadowed their own policy preferences in order to support others and avoid incurring high costs. Thus, economic integration and political interdependence appear to be keys of understanding the changes that globalization is pushing within international politics. Now, I will focus on the main areas in which globalization is sought to have exerted an important influence on the issues of governance.

International cooperation Krahmman (2003, p. 29) remarked that many authors emphasize the fact that, through the years, global governance has been concentrated in specific regions, mainly in the developed countries, due to the concentration on power and trade networks in this areas.

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However, he points that this situation has been gradually shifting into a new panorama. Especially since the end of the Cold War, globalization has been seen as force of change. As Weis also notes, “ an unprecedented widening and deepening of international cooperation has led some to maintain that the nature of the state and of world politics are being fundamentally transformed” (Weis, 1999, p. 6). Globalization is one of the causes of states cooperating over more areas and not monopolizing the control over internal issues when they could have international consequences. International institutions and treaties have multiplied in the last years. Their expanding web has come to regulate all the problems of interstate activities. States have recognized the limitations of their capacities when addressing global problems and, as Krahnman states, globalization has contributed to the creation of new networks among governments, implying international organizations, NGOs and even smaller community groups.

States have continued to play a central role on international politics.

However, there is little doubt that this kind of organizations, together with multinational corporations, are increasingly participating in the regulation and formulation of international policies, promoting cooperation between international actors. The absence of a global authority within international governance is also one of the reasons for the rise in cooperation (Vayrynen, 1999). However, some doubts arise contrary to these evidences.

There is not real prove that globalization has been the main cause for this expansion of international organizations. Moreover, it is not clear proliferation of these new entities is really pushing forward a relevant

transformation on international politics. In fact, Rosenberg (2005, p. 43) points that rather than states decision-making being undermined by the rise of international organizations, a “vigorous re-assertion of great power national interests” has taken place.

Nevertheless, if globalists were true and globalization is actually transforming cooperation within International Politics, I would argue that this transformation is positive, rather than negative. If that is true, it could be argued that globalization of technologies and information has revealed to the whole world certain issues that were hushed up. It has made governments and people more conscious of problems taking place in countries that they have never thought about. The fast international mobilization after 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean is a good example of how cooperation has improved.

Sovereignty Mingst (in Vayrynen, 1999, p. 90) defends that globalization of information and economy has challenged the state, as it sees “its sovereignty undermined and constrained and its structures unable to provide the necessary public goods”. Focusing the issues of sovereignty, Mingst and others have noted that the ability of states to initiate actions has been reduced and its sovereignty has been circumscribed. Krahan (2003, p. 333) pointed that this loss of sovereignty leads to a fragmentation of authority which benefits three entities that become increasingly powerful: subnational groups, upranational organizations and private or voluntary actors ??? such as NGOs or Transnational Corporations (TNCs). Thus, decision-making capacities which were traditionally taken by national states are increasingly



being devolved to specific actors. Globalists have described a picture in which globalized system and people are divided, as citizens are still determined by the structure of the state even when their confidence in national sovereignty has been eroded. That would lead to the renaissance of national links and the reaffirmation of cultural, religious or ethnic identities (Castells, 1997, p. 74). Globalists continue to affirm that this situation would lead to the end of the current state-centric world defined by both realists and liberalists (Mingst, in Vayrynen, 1999, p. 90). From a more sceptic position, the threat on sovereignty does not seem so disturbing. “ The danger is not that states will end up as marginal institutions, but that meaner, more repressive ways of organizing the state’s role will be accepted as the only way of avoiding the collapse of public institutions”, says Evans (1997, p. 64).

The fact that economic or other kind of gains can be pursued without help of sovereignty does not imply that the sovereignty of the state is compromised. Thus, it seems more likely to think of globalization as a tool to reconstitute the capacity of the state, rather than eroding it. Nor even civil society does not seem a likely substitute ??? as some globalists have pointed (Falk, 2005, p. 222)??? for public institutions of government. In fact, the growth of these kinds of new actors requires solid state powers in order to develop properly.

Both international and local actors need vigorous capable organizational counterparts in the state. As Evans pointed, “ a move toward less capable and involved states will make it more difficult for civic associations to achieve their goals” (Evans, 1997, p. 82). Rather than globalization challenging the power and the integrity of the state, certain authors see a

picture in which both engage in everlasting reciprocal regulation that ends up redefining the state itself (Clark, 1998). Clark remarks that one of the main issues within globalization is its challenge to the realization of democracy.

Globalization requires a new way of behaving in the international sphere that cannot consist on merely extending domestic practices to international activities. As he argues, it is not possible to maintain that “ aggregation of democratic states produces democratic multilateralism”. In this context, the theory of the ideological pendulum proposed by Evans (Evans, 1997, p. 83) looks like the better explanation for all this changes. We are witnessing the end of an era in which the states tried to handle with more issues than what they really could.

Now the new tendency is the contrary, as there is an excessive pessimism on the capacities of states (Rodrik, 1997a, p. 413). The excessive optimism on the states capabilities is turning into a situation in which it sees necessary ceding part of its sovereignty to other entities. However, this does not mean that sovereignty is in danger, nor even that states will lose their central role. As Chanda suggests, throughout history states have been able to give response to wide or global problems without surrendering or compromising its sovereignty (Chanda, 1998).

The dismantling of the welfare state? Taking again in consideration Mingst definition of the challenges of globalization for the state, we see that the second one referred to the guarantees of social welfare that governments can provide. He asserted that in an era of globalization states structures are

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“ unable to provide the necessary public goods” (Mingst, in Vayrynen, 1999, p. 90). Many globalists blame globalization for the dismantling of the welfare state and the expansion of the division between rich and poor in more developed states.

In the global era, national economies are exposed to fluctuations that they cannot control and that affect their capacities to provide traditional welfare conditions (Hirst and Thompson, 1999, p. 164). Rieger (in Held and McGrew, 2000) states that there is a real globalization pressure which seeks to minimize welfare state ??? mainly from private enterprises, especially TNCs. The power of trade unions has been apparently eroded and democracies seem to become more restrictive.

Firms that operate in globalized and integrated markets suffer major cost differentials in social benefits and, thus, globalization seems to threaten the welfare state. In addition, in a period of globalization, the number of citizens depending on the welfare states increases ??? as a consequence of migration and movement of labour force??? and governments become unable to afford welfare. Moreover, the integration of markets on global levels leaves no space for welfare states in which the rates of labour productivity and production quality are similar.

Thus, globalist authors suggest that the only way for avoiding that globalization ends up with the welfare state is by signing new international social contracts (Castells, 1997, p. 253). If we take in consideration this theory, it would be quite clear that globalization has transformed the way in which governments have to deal with welfare states issues. Moreover, it

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would mean that the global order is pushing for a renewal of the international policies within this field. However, sceptics have a totally different vision of the problem.

Rieger, for instance, admits that although it is possible to see a pressure of globalization on welfare state, this pressure is not unsustainable (in Held and McGrew, 2000). Sceptics argue that globalization has not brought any drastic dismantling of the welfare state. In fact, it seems even more difficult to change the status quo of the welfare state as the pressure of globalization becomes stronger. In fact, studies have demonstrated that globalization does not affect wages, employment or income inequality; especially in countries where the welfare state is strong (Slaughter and Swagel 1997).

Consequently, it would be possible to conclude that globalization is not transforming international policies related to the welfare state in a crucial way. Governments are, in fact, renewing their policies constantly, but there is no real evidence that the new global order has reduced states' capability to provide welfare to its citizens. Political economy Globalization of economy and trade has traditionally been seen as the main responsible for the loss of authority of the states within international politics.

Globalists state that prosperity and power are increasingly a consequence of private business between private actors across the boundaries of countries. Transactions taking place inside national borders have lost weight, and thus globalists assert that, within global economy, "it has become harder to sustain the image of states as the preeminent actors at the global level" (Nettl, cited in Evans, 1997, p. 65). Globalists believe that nowadays private

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actors make the decisions on which territory is included in the global markets or excluded from the global production networks.

Thus, states are seen merely as mediators, which just can try to make their nations attractive for investors, but they cannot run the global economy system. In fact, it has been mentioned that states engaging in policies contraries to the interests of financial actors would be punished with measures such as a decline of their currencies or its access to capital (Evans, 1997, p. 67). Furthermore, globalists state that even the own market can react against hostile decisions of states. "Capital has long demonstrated willingness and ability to react to what it perceives as unfavourable policies" says Weis (1999, p. 8). Taking these arguments in consideration, it could be argued that globalization has undermined the power of states within political economy, thus radically transforming this aspect of international politics. However, some sceptic authors, such as Rodrik (in Nye, 2000, p. 349) state that economic globalization is far away from being extended as it seems. He thinks that "international economic integration remains remarkably limited". In fact, some arguments support this theory. There are still great obstacles for the global market, such as tariff barriers or linguistic and cultural differences.

National borders have not disappeared, contrary to what most globalist theorists argue, and their restrictions and rules are still relevant in most international transactions. Moreover, the levels of investments in national assets are still higher than internationals. There are still strict restrictions for the mobility of labour around the world. Thus, Rodrik suggests that "while

formal barriers to trade and capital flows have been substantially reduced over the past three decades, international markets for goods, services, and capital are not nearly as thick as they would be under complete integration”.

It is possible to argue, as Evans does, that the role of states within international political economy is not undermined by the fact of its becoming increasingly dependent on private actors and global trade. In fact, it has been proved that the bigger is the reliance on trade, the more important is the role of the state (Evans, 1997, p. 68). Thus, powerful and involved states are more likely to participate actively within global markets. Then, the role of the state is not really undermined, and even “ high stateness” can be a competitive advantage.

It can be argued that globalization is not responsible for the growth of the multilateral economic order; neither is it a cause of undermining the power of states as international actors. Then, if some crucial transformations have taken place during the last years within international political economy, it would be unfair to blame globalization. Globalization of crime As a final point, I will briefly refer to one of the issues that has been more present within international politics in the last years. National security is one of the main problems pointed to have emerged as a big challenge of globalization.

As Kiras (in Baylis, 2005, p. 482) pointed, globalization of technologies and information has improved the capabilities of terrorists. Communication and mobility of people across the borders is increasing, and this gives more facilities for criminals to act. Apart from terrorism, a new global organized crime seems to have emerged, conditioning certain economic and political

aspects of international politics and, moreover, destabilizing national governments (Castells, 1997). In fact, there is a growing importance of economic flows with criminal origin ??? such as those coming from the illegal weapons or drugs markets.

Whether globalization can be blamed for these circumstances or not is a difficult question to be answered. However, it is clear that this is one of the issues that have transformed international politics in a more crucial way. Governments are not able to fight with this new global crime by themselves, so they are moving towards multilateralism in foreign policy and defence (Castells, 1997). Whether this multilateralism is something that erodes the autonomy of the states or just a positive cooperative measure is a question that still needs to be answered. Conclusion

The debate between globalists and sceptics is still continuing nowadays. However, recent events have come to support the theories of the latter ones. As Rosenberg points, globalization has not transformed the essence of international politics. The new global and radically distinct order that globalists had announced is not a reality. Little essential changes have taken place (Rosenberg, 2005, p. 3). While examining the issues of sovereignty, welfare or trade that globalization has raised, it is possible to perceive that it has pushed some transformations.

However, most of them are not significant. Moreover, it is not quite clear in what grade globalization is responsible for them. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the global order is not undermining the power of the state.

Instead, states that are strong and participative seem to be more powerful

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and play a more important role within the issues of globalization. As Clark stated, instead of globalization eroding the capacities of states, it is more appropriate to sustain that globalization in a process parallel to an apparent reconstruction of the state (Clark, 1998, p. 491).

International politics are suffering a shift on the policies that they need to apply in fields like welfare and finance. Although this shift does not affect the nature of international politics, it seems necessary to preserve the predominant position of traditional states. New private and public powers are arising, and governments need to learn to deal with them in order to keep their status. There are also new threats that states cannot fight for themselves. Thus a growing cooperation is necessary to resolve the problems of the world. Bibliography Aas, K. F. (2007), *Globalization and Crime*, SAGE Publications, London Baylis, J.

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