

Does Globalization Diminish the Importance of Nationalism?

Written by Tammam O. Abdulsattar

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Globalization, nationalism, and the relations between them have been the subjects of debate among scholars in the international relations discipline. Both concepts have an important position in our contemporary world. Their importance lies in the creation of modern societies and nation-states, and their role in a world in which interdependence has increased. As a matter of fact, nationalism has had a great deal of difficulty surviving in this world, and some would argue that it has become less important. However, others would say that nationalism is benefiting from globalization and is becoming more important than ever. Therefore, to explore the effects of globalization on nationalism and to address their relationship, this essay is going to look at the concepts of globalization and nationalism, how both concepts come to interact with each other, and what the key aspects are of this interaction.

Globalization is defined as the elimination of barriers to trade, communication, and cultural exchange. The world today has become very different from what it was previously, because of globalization. With advances in technology and communications, the world becomes deterritorialized (Robertson, 1996), the constraints of geography shrink and the world becomes more singular and unified (Waters, 2011). Talking about the positive or negative effect of globalization, some see it as a power that destroys the heritage and culture of different ethnic groups around the world. For them, globalization is a nightmare that is happening in the present and will continue for generations. Some effects of globalization can be seen through, for example, wearing Adidas clothing, listening to iPods, watching Western television series, eating McDonalds, drinking Starbucks or Coca Cola, and even speaking a language that includes Americanized English slang (Godfrey, 2008). This illustrates the cultural dominance of the West over the rest of the world. Cultural imperialism is one of the dominant faces of the west. As technology and science developed in the west, other regions of the world started borrowing this technology and thus the ideas and values that originated in the west became the standards of the whole world. In the words of Peter Evans, "Products and ideas developed in rich countries shape the value and ideas of citizens of poor countries" (Evans, 1971, 638)

This dominance has caused some national groups to fight back against globalization and the evil they believe it introduces (Godfrey, 2008). Globalization as a concept refers to "the compression of the world and intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole... both concrete global interdependence and consciousness of the global whole in the 20th century" (Robertson, 1992. P.8). This quote shows how the world has become a single place that is connected in one way or another. According to Giddens, "globalization is identified as the intensification of worldwide social relations which links distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa." (Giddens, 1990). Therefore, everything is linked to each other in such a way that it is difficult to not be part of it.

While globalization is not a new phenomenon, recent globalization has involved some real changes in terms of scale, speed, and cognition. In terms of scale, the number of economic, political, and social linkages between societies is greater. In terms of speed, globalization involves a compression of time and space. In terms of cognition, there is an increased perception of the globe as a smaller place (Kinnvall: 2002 quoted in Kinnvall: 2004). Thus changes in the world have transformed social, economical, and political relations into faster and more intensive processes that generate transcontinental or inter-regional flows and networks of activity (Held and McGrew, 2003:16).

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The term 'nationalism' refers to the feelings of attachment to one another that members of a nation have, and to a sense of pride that a nation has in itself (Kacowicz, 1998). Nationalism is in itself an international ideology, which can be used to promote and defend a particular culture and way of life (Godfrey, 2008). An example of nationalism is when a person moves out of their home country, yet still cheers for their home country's sports teams and continues to stay up to date with the local news. Nationalism is the foundation of modern society and social solidarity; it is also used by politicians to promote national unity and patriotism. The Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 established the nation-state, membership of which became the identity that is the basis of modern society. Nationalism is proclaimed to be the goal of states that seek to further their interests in peace or war, in order to galvanize public opinion in support of their aims.

According to Riggs, "People become capable of exercising sovereignty only when they enjoy some sense of solidarity based on shared values and customs. This solidarity is reified into the concept of a nation." (Riggs, 2002). Nationalism contributed to the major wars of the 21st century, for example through border disputes that arise from the division of ethnic groups by territorial borders. Thus, nationalism has a long history, even before globalization, and it has always been something that people fight for.

One variant of nationalism, economic nationalism, in many ways harms the states that practice it. One of the main manifestations of economic nationalism is protectionism, which is costly for the global economy in general (Campe, 2008). As the world becomes interdependent, the fate of one state is linked and attached to the fate of another state. This is in many ways the basic feature of globalization; therefore, a state that wants to cut any ties with other states is going to fall behind.

When it comes to the relationship between globalization and nationalism, it can be said that there have been three major arguments that address this relationship. The first argument says that globalization has diminished nationalism, through increased interdependence and weakening the national barriers between countries. In addition, the compression of time and space allows people to interact more rapidly, thus national differences have disappeared or at least have become less important and noticeable. The second argument maintains that globalization and nationalism have a mixed relationship in which one leads to the other and one promotes the other. This argument stresses that the system of nation-states was established before globalization, and each state has contributed to the emergence of a global system. However, under globalization, the nation-state is still functioning and promoting the global system. The third argument says that globalization has increased nationalist sentiments. This essay will examine all these three arguments, and based on the evidence, will conclude with a clear answer to the question in the title favoring one of the arguments mentioned above.

In the first argument, in which globalization seems to diminish nationalism, John Kusumi argues that, "Globalization is the anti-thesis of nationalism as it suggests that there are no boundaries just one globe" (Godfrey, 2008). The importance of nationalism diminishes, as "we live in a world that is simultaneously shrinking and expanding, growing closer and further apart, national borders are increasingly irrelevant." (Attale: 1991, quoted in Lerche: 1998). Thus, with globalization, nationalism has lost the power to keep the people of one nation together and draw a red line between different nationalities.

Furthermore, Hobsbawm argues that the peak of nationalism has passed, and that its strength, power, and relevance are not the same as they were in the 19th century. In the past, there were clear national borders, a strong traditional and national sense among the people of one nation, and fewer ways of contacting others. But in our current world, everything has become fast and integrated, to the degree that you cannot identify people and their nationality. Increased contact between people due to the integration of world societies is often associated with more stereotyping and hatred of others, and increased conflict (Butt, 2012). As more people of different nationalities come together and interact, more disputes will be generated. For example, in multi-cultural education programs, there is an ongoing struggle for the presentation of identity claims. According to Giddens 1991, "living with a calculative attitude to the open possibilities of action, positive and negative, with which, as individuals and globally, we are confronted in a continuous way in our contemporary social existence" (Robertson, 1996). Such interaction can be seen as an effect of globalization on nationalism in which one cannot live with others.

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On a cultural level, the world has shifted from national cultures to mixed cultures across the globe, resulting in a homogenized global culture rather than nationalism. The TNCs, which act globally, play a role in establishing the global market, which makes the fate of one state dependent on other states' economic fates. The development of a global community, through interdependence, new technologies, and even media productions, challenges the nationalist thinking. Globalization thus "Possesses many threats to nationalism from participation in international organizations, loss of parts of state's sovereignty, to advanced technologies, and easy mobility of people around the globe." (Campe, 2008)

Another issue is that immigration is janus-faced, in which one face supports the argument of diminishing nationalism, while the other face supports the increasing sense of nationality. The first face is that through growing immigration, globalization introduces risks and security challenges to nationalism (Natalie, 2010). From a cultural and traditional point of view, when more people immigrate to another country, they will affect the social structure and thus they will change the demography of that country, which results in decreasing the sense of nationality. The second face is described by Godfrey: "Migration of people from the 3rd World to the Western nations is a result of globalization which resulted in racial and cultural tensions in many parts of Europe and America (Godfrey, 2008). Therefore, such changes and challenges have affected

The protective framework of the small community and of tradition replacing these with many larger impersonal organizations. The individual feels bereft and alone in a world in which he or she lacks the psychological support and the sense of security provided by more traditional settings" (Giddens: 1991 quoted in Kinnvall: 2004).

The second argument is that globalization and nationalism have a mixed relationship in which one has led to the other and one promotes the other. Some see globalization as the result of nationalism, because each nation has participated and gives something to the globe in a successful collective action (unknown, Nationalism and Globalization, 2009). This suggests that each independent nation has in one way or another been involved in making up the globe as it is now. This could have happened through the interaction of trade in old days. Thus, without the existence of nationalism, globalization would not be happening.

Moreover, globalization has promoted nationalism, as in the case of Western social science, where it becomes a cultural resource in different global regions. For example, the work of Durkheim on the theme of civil religion was influential in the establishment of the new Turkish Republic in 1920 (Robertson, 1996). This shows that what has happened or been generated in a specific region or country has influenced other regions or countries in a positive way. which deepened the sense of nationalism. Let's not forget the fact that nationalism was first established in Europe in the Westphalia Treaty of 1648 (Vensatd, 2012). Therefore, both globalization and nationalism can live together in harmony and benefit from each other. According to Natalie, "Their coexistence is not a battle in which only one is destined to emerge as the winner and the other as losers; it is rather a mutually beneficial coexistence of two compatible tendencies" (Natalie, 2010). Some examples of this relationship can be detected in Georgia, where nationalist forces have been seeking greater globalization through integration in the Euro-Atlantic structure and attracting Foreign Direct Investment. In addition, elites of East European nations also framed their accession campaigns to Euro-Atlantic structure in terms of fulfilling national aspirations, including gaining acceptance, recognition and security guarantees. This implies that nationalism has been acting as "a doctrine that lays down the basic rules of the game for any movement seeking to gain or hold political power" (Benner, 2001). In this respect, culture politics serves power politics and therefore nationalism and globalization can and do coexist together. (Natalie, 2010)

The third argument says that globalization has increased the sense of nationalism in such a way that national extremism has emerged. According to Douglas Kellner,

Indeed from the late 1980s to the present, there has been a resurgence of nationalism, traditionalism, and religious fundamentalism alongside trends toward growing globalization. the explosion of regional, cultural, and religious differences in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia as well as explosive tribal conflicts in Africa and elsewhere suggest that globalization and homogenization were not as deep as it proponent hoped and criticized feared. Culture has thus become a new source of conflict and an important dimension of struggle between the global and the local.

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(Godfrey, 2008)

From the quotation, we see that nationalism in the age of globalization is a response to economic and political problems. As globalization is an external force that is pushing on the localities resulting in a diminishing national sense, localities have responded very strongly to this pressure by adopting a stronger national sense. According to Giddens, "The revival of local nationalism and an accentuating of local identities are directly bound up with globalizing influences to which they stand in opposition" (Giddens: 1994 quoted in Natalie: 2010).

More communication and interactions lead to a greater awareness of your identity and cultural differences, leading to an increased projection of ethnic, cultural, and national differences, leading to more conflict. As an example, some national gangs and groups are formed by students in some European universities (Bloom: 1993 quoted in Butt: 2012). The printing press also has a massive effect, as it allows people to express their culture and nationality to others, which allows others to see far beyond their communities and borders. Moreover, increased migration has led to a rise in right-wing parties as in Europe and Britain (Butt, 2012). All of this is showing one important fact, which is the rise of nationalism as a response to globalization. Usually radical right nationalism is driven by party organization rather than mass movements, and it involves more than racism and neo-fascist ideology: it is a political ideology and cultural authoritarianism (Delanty and O'Mahony, 2002, P.148).

In our global world, being proud of your heritage, culture, and nationality has already become a taboo in many respects (Godfrey, 2008). Globalization increases awareness of social heterogeneity because democracy allows people to participate and freedom of speech is guaranteed, so groups whose identity is based on race, ethnicity, religion, language have become increasingly vocal and have used the global media to make their discontent known. After the Cold War, when the state was weakened by globalization, minorities were able to more effectively assert their identity in reaction to hegemonic cultural forces. To that, most scholars believe that nationalism would only intensify as state faces the growing challenge of globalization. This is to say that when the state is weak, national sense becomes stronger (Hobsbawm, 1992).

Evidence shows that in the former Soviet Union republics, new nationalism was born from insecurity and the search for ethnic purity. Because of globalization, minorities in many countries are mobilizing to demand justice and respect, and established communities often resist these demands (Riggs, 2012). The USSR has collapsed, and many nationalities and minorities were under USSR protection or repression; these minorities breathe freedom after the collapse and thus they demand their right of ruling themselves based on their identity and nationality. According to Delanty and O'Mahony, "Nationalist identity claims as a basis for mobilization. National mobilization thrives on insecurity and uncertainty as categories of group belonging become sharpened in the heat of contestation." (Delanty and O'Mahony, 2002, P.144) This has led to more conflict as new nationalities were born, "National cultures have produced confrontations between Serbs, Muslims, and Croats, Armenians and Azerbaijanis." (Godfrey, 2008). So as a response to a weak state that is no longer a promoter and protector of domestic interests but rather a collaborator with outside forces, minorities have raised their national voice (Scholte: 1997 quoted in Lerche: 1998).

In globalization, the powerful countries are those who can have a massive effect on the rest of the globe. Therefore, "The effort of the West to promote its values of democracy and liberalism as universal values to maintain its military predominance and to advance its economic interests would only engender countering responses from other civilizations" (Huntington: 1993 quoted in Lerche: 1998). Again, here we see a response from other nationalities and other civilization that feel inferior or less powerful in the age of globalization due to the social, economic, and political status toward the West.

According to Fuller (1995),

Systems of international marketing and communications create freeways for the mass import of foreign cultural materials, food, drugs, clothing, music, film, books, TV programs, with the concomitant loss of control over societies. Such cultural anxieties are welcome fuel to more radical political groups that call for cultural authenticity, preservations of traditional and religious values and rejection of the alien cultural antigens (Fuller: 1995 quoted in Lerche: 1998).

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The author here is clear in pointing out how the global system is designed in a way that makes it possible for others to respond. So, instead of expanding of Western cultural dominance, “We are witnessing a contested and decided encounter between global cultural flows and inherited local identities” (Waters: 1995 quoted in Lerche: 1998). On the other hand, Giddens has also stated that, “The process of globalization has a transformative and uneven effect on all parts of the global system. This suggests that globalization is not simply a one-way process, transmitting Western civilization to the rest of the world. Indeed, experience has shown the quite reverse.” (Giddens, 1992) Thus, rather than destroying local cultures, globalization tends to encourage responses through the rise of localities and nationalist movements around the world.

In light of this argument, someone like Smith 1998 would argue that nationalism is stronger than globalization and therefore it cannot be diminished or made less important. He stated that, “Nations have deep roots and they are based on pre-political, cultural, and ethnic identities and their social and moral significance sustain their power and explain their resistance.” (Smith: 1991 quoted in Natalie: 2010). He added that globalization does not mean the end of nationalism. A cosmopolitan culture that exists today does not have the ability to drive people like nationalism; however, the world is witnessing a rise of extreme nationalism (Smith, A. 1998)

In this view, nationalism emerges as a cultural doctrine, which seeks to preserve and promote the identity, culture, and autonomy of a nation. Smith (1991) supports this view as well as Tamer (1993) when she says that, “National movements are motivated by a desire to assure the existence and flourishing of a particular community to preserve its culture, tradition, language.” (Natalie, 2010, P.170) the point here is that nationalism as a response to globalization has emerged as a cultural protector that wants to bring societies back to their traditions and values. According to Beyer,

In response to the modern developments, religious and nationalist leaders may talk about moral or ethical decline by pointing to modern society lack of morality, loss of ethical values, and increased corruption. Therefore, the solution is to return back to traditional values and religious norms (Beyer: 1994 quoted in Kinnvall: 2004).

Now, having addressed the last argument that argues the rise of nationalism is a response to globalization, within this argument lies the rise of fundamentalism. Fundamentalism as a concept refers to those groups who resist not only globalization but also the structure of the globe as a whole. According to Robertson, “Resistance to contemporary globalization, for example the radical side of the general Islamic movement would be regarded as opposition not only to the homogenized system but to the conception of the world as a series of culturally equal.” (Robertson, 1996) Thus, fundamentalism opposes the idea of a homogeneity of cultures and nationalities and provokes extreme nationalism.

According to Barber 1996, he describes the fundamentalist movement as, “Parochial rather than cosmopolitan, angry rather than loving, zealous rather than rationalist, ethnocentric rather than universalizing, fractious and pulverizing, never integrating” (Barber, 1996). Thus, this quote suggests that globalization seems to be pulling all identity groups on the planet out of their various degrees of isolation, pushing them into the current of the global structure and thereby obliging them to redefine themes in regard to global trends (Lerche, 1998). Here we see how globalization has been a direct cause of the rise of fundamentalism through forcing different nationalities and cultures to integrate together and adapt themselves to the new structure. As a consequence to that, fundamentalism rose up against the force of globalization.

Furthermore, the relationship between globalization and the rise of fundamentalism is shaped by the necessity for societies, regions, civilizations, and sub-national entities to declare their identities for both internal and external purposes because of space-time compression. Therefore, fundamentalism is a reaction to globalization (Robertson, 1996). As I have explained early in this essay, that nationalism is deeply rooted in pre-historical and pre-political processes, fundamentalism as a concept might be similarly misinterpreted by different sides. Some see it as a destructive movement to nations and to the globe as a whole, while some others see it as a just a mode of thought and practice which has become globally institutionalized in which norms of national and cultural self-determination are felt. Eventually fundamentalism makes globalization work. (Robertson, 1996)

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The Bulgarian national alliance state that they are in favour of establishing a united nationalist front against globalization, NATO, and the EU in its current form, as well as corrupt Bulgarian politics (Godfrey, 2008). This is an example of the extreme nationalism that strongly supports the argument favoring the rise of nationalism under globalization. Another example is the New Right activists and national anarchists who chose the phrase "globalization is genocide" on their banner at the APEC protest back in September 2007. This again shows how those groups feel about the global system and also shows how strong these movements are becoming. Thus, nationalistic groups who want to preserve their identity fight back against the destructive agenda of globalization. In the end, globalization, as it seeks a global community with no national barriers, actually feeds a growing national sense (Godfrey, 2008).

In conclusion, this paper has argued that globalization is a double-edged sword, and that there has been a marked rise of nationalism under globalization. With growing globalization and the changes it has brought to the world, minorities, nationalities, and localities have awakened and become more aware of the threat of globalization. This threat exists in the homogenizing nature of globalization, which makes people and nationalities melt down into one. This has led to an increased national sense as a response to the force of globalization in order to protect cultures, traditions, and nationalities from melting or adopting the new structure of the world that is caused by globalization. However, nationalism has created xenophobia in which people fear that their nationality and traditions will disappear in the face of globalization. Therefore, they create or invent traditions or reestablish old traditions in which they maintain their identity. As Deutsch stated, "Xenophobia is written into the heart of nationalism" (Delanty and O'Mahony, 2002, P.167). Thus, fearing the force of globalization has led to an increased sense of nationalism and more defensive means to protect or even invent traditions just to resist globalization.

On the other hand, globalization can be seen as a challenge to nationalism in the way that it increases immigration and the movement of peoples, which might create new sources of tensions and pose new difficulties to the management of cultural and ethnic diversity (Natalie, 2010). Some other threats include participation in international organizations and the loss of parts of a state's sovereignty over its own territory, as well as regional integration eroding nationalist ideology. This argument might seem convincing and well argued, but evidence shows the opposite. For example, the EU is an international organization and at the same time it strengthens Europe.

In a globalized world, many features of nationalism seem to have been revived. Increasing migration movements fosters xenophobia among people. Mixing cultures and newly emerging hybrid cultures make it hard for people to find their identity and let them turn towards their own culture (Campe, 2008). This means that the force of globalization has pushed nationalism to be raised again and be more important than ever as people realize they are lost without their identity and nationality. Finding an identity is very essential for security reasons in the modern world of insecurities. The tendency toward a strong sense of nationality has been fueled by "fears of diminishing economic resources for the socially insecure." (Delanty and O'Mahony, 2002, P.156)

It is true that globalization has the potential to contain aggressive nationalism that thrives on isolation and insecurity. It also creates incentives for the resolution and prevention of conflict because of the integration. However, at the same time, it generates nationalistic responses in the form of right wing radicalism or religious fundamentalism that reacts to certain aspects of globalization such as immigration and the restructuring of traditional economies (Sassen, 1998).

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