

THE PHENOMENON OF GLOBALIZATION

A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO MARGINALIZATION AND SOCIAL DISORDER

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Abstract: It is assumed that the sociological consequences of the globalization process are identical for all societies. Their intensity, however, varies from country to country. The study generally aims: to draw the attention of social scientists to the emerging social disorder in all societies; and to indicate the possible role of religion and social institutions in the maintenance of social order. The specific objectives of the study are: (1) to analyze the major dimensions of globalization and its certain consequences for social institutions, state, family and education (2) to study the nature of emerging social disorder and the response of socio-religious movements to it (3) to examine the challenges to the sociology of religion in a globalization age and, (4) to analyze the role of religion and social institutions, state, family, and education, in the maintenance of social order.

Keywords: Globalization, marginalization, modern society

I. INTRODUCTION

The term “globalization” generally signifies a phenomenon whereby economic, political, and socio-cultural exchanges take place freely across national boundaries. The process towards global interdependence, however, started centuries ago [14]. Held [14], [15] presented an academic survey of multidimensional aspects of globalization. He indicated the vastness of the phenomenon of globalization. The issues involved in globalization are very serious. The full extent of the theory and practice of globalization can hardly be covered in a single volume [16]. The end of the Cold War period in 1989 has ushered in a new era of global politics. The Americans ushered in a new era of ‘reordering the world’ [11]. A number of renowned scholars, based in the West, have explicated the theoretical dimensions of globalization. A very brief mention may be made of the key ideas of a few academics.

Their contribution to the globalization debate is notable.

II. FOUR APPROCHES TO GLOBALIZATION

A. Immanuel Wallerstein

He is famous for the world-system approach. Wallerstein analyzed extensively the origin and growth of the modern capitalist world system. His concept has roots in Marxist-derived dependency theory. He argued that European world-economy has created its own geographical divisions-core, periphery, and semi periphery [37]. In his book “after liberalism” [36], Wallerstein opined that the world economy is in a phase of recession and stagnation, increasingly reflected in social unrest. The hegemony of the United States has been on the wane since about 1970 [36], adding to the likelihood of struggle in the core countries. He wrote: “the true meaning of the collapse of the communism is the final collapse of liberalism as hegemonic ideology” [36]. In Utopisties [38], Wallerstein stated: “we have entered into the crisis of this system...an historic transition”.

With regard to the waning of US hegemony, Duong [12] discussed the nature of US power. He noted that the policy and objectives of the Bush administration show continuity with those of his predecessors. Duong stated: “Although the United States has unnecessarily antagonized both allies and others by invading Iraq, its power-foundation for global hegemony has, as yet, been unaffected” [12].

B. John Meyer

Meyer proposed the world polity approach for conceiving global order. He treated polity as “a system of creating value through the collective conferral of authority” [20]. Meyer stated, “The world political system is linked closely to the rise and expansion of the world commodity economy, but it also operates to restructure and alter this economy, and to transform

social life” [20]. He considered economy and polity as different system of social value creation. Meyer did not oppose Wallerstein’s world-system approach. Both approaches were seen as mutually helping methods of value creation. Meyer mentioned that elites, having wider cultural status, are in a position to cement world policy. He stated: “They (elites) are members both of their own societies and of a world elite and are protected both by their wider cultural status and by the legitimated internal organization networks in which they participate (i.e. their church and orders)” [20]. Thus, Meyer took religious and cultural approaches also as sources of collective authority. Meyer et al. [21] explained the way world society models help to shape nation-state identities, structures, and behaviors through global, cultural and associational means. They wrote: “As creatures of exogenous world culture, states are ritualized actors marked by intensive decoupling and a good deal more structuration than would occur if they were responsive only to local, cultural, functional, or power processes.”

It may be discerned that by mentioning the elites of church and orders, Meyer recognized religious process as a source of collective authority. However, he did not go far in considering it as an alternative to the state.

C. Roland Robertson

Robertson advocated an approach of ‘cultural perspective’ on globalization. His analysis, however, did not denote the dominance of a single global culture. He considered globalization to be a process that is active in actualizing a single social world. Robertson wrote: “In using the term ‘globalization’ I refer to the overall process by which the entire world becomes increasingly interdependent, so as to yield a ‘single place’. We could even go so far as to yield a latter a ‘world society’, as long as we do not suggest by that term that nationally constituted societies are disappearing” [29]. Robertson clearly included religion and recorded: “Life has become politicized. In the process that which, according to Durkheim, is most concerned with life—namely, religion... itself requires political significance. Meaning to Robertson [31], globalization involves dynamic relationships among societies (or nation-states), international system, individual selves, and humankind. These four, respectively, assume the form of processes of societalization, internationalization, individuation, and generalization of awareness about mankind. In the volume “Religion and Globalization” [30], fifteen scholars discussed the role of religion in global affairs from different perspectives. In that work, Robertson considered the ambiguous position of religion in the globalize world.” He stated: “At the same time,

however, religion appears to have become simply a lifestyle option in quite a few areas of the world. Therein lies the paradox of religion in the globalized, and partly post-modernized, world” [30].

It may be noticed that Robertson concentrates most on matters of culture, and on thematic dimensions of the global system. In essence, his view of the world system is not simply cultural, but also basically political.

D. Ali A. Mazrui

Mazrui’s approach on the interaction between religion and globalization, as compared to the three approaches mentioned earlier, is more explicit with regard to the phenomenon of globalization and its engines. Mazrui said: “The world globalization is itself quite new, but the actual processes toward global interdependence and exchange started centuries ago. Four forces have been major engines of globalization economy, and empire” [28]. He then elucidated the functioning of these forces across time. In the essay “the moving cultural frontier of world order” [22], Mazrui demonstrated that a hidden cultural agenda pervades in world order problems. The agenda is sacred and secular-to international stratification. He wrote: “The damages both in Middle East and Southern Africa lies in pursuing the weak too far. Cultural supremacy has its limits” [23]. Moreover, he stated: “The cultural frontier of our world order has indeed been moving, and monotheism, though now much weakened with the decline of religion generally, continues to cast its shadow over international relations and world affairs” [23]. He suggested: “A greater role for women is needed in the struggle to tame the sovereign state, civilize capitalism, and humanize communication” [23]. As regards the status of “Western Culture in a Globalizing Age”, Mazrui stated: “The West has become powerful over the last five to six centuries. Western culture and civilization become influential and attracted widespread imitation and emulation. Western hegemony predicated widespread homogenization of values, styles and intituturims. Much of the world becomes Westernized [24]. Mazrui’s views on “danger of pushing the weak too far” and “cultural supremacy has its limits” are realistic and noteworthy.

III. TWO FACETS OF GLOBALIZATION IN PROGRESS

The approaches to globalization outlined above, although backed by cogent logic, seem to stay behind the actual practice of globalization. The complexity of phenomenon of globalization defies a single approach explanation. Two broad issues of globalization are considered crucial to this study. These are: How globalization has been shaped? How is religion

placed in a modern society?

E. The shaping of globalization

John J. Sweeney, President of state of World Forum, stated: "We need to recognize that globalization has already been 'shaped' not by the force of nature, or by the pressures of technology, but by powerful governments, envisioned by conservative ideologues, and enforces by corporate muscle".

Later in the paper he gave details of the forces involved in the process. Mikhail Gorbachev, former President of the Soviet Union (1985-1991) expressed similar views about shaping of globalization, in a softer time. "We had, indeed, a truly big opportunity resulting from ending of the Cold War and stopping the confrontation between the military blocs. In my assessment, we opportunities in a proper war, and I am using a very mild wording here. And we let too much blow in the wind...we can see again some attempts to solve issues by way of domination, through dictate...All this has become possible because in this new environment the high and mighty of this world—that is, the G-7, the superpowers, the transnational corporations continued to act in old ways".

The shaping of globalization did not take place in a day. Professor Agnew in the paper *The United States and Americans Hegemony* briefly explained the events leading to the US supremacy in world politics. He mentioned the issues of globalization and fragmentation, and America's impasse: "The United States is itself caught between these two processes of globalization and fragmentation. The policy lesser available in the past, such as military spending and national macroeconomic and tariff measures, are no longer appropriate to the problems at hand" [1]. In another paper *Global Hegemony Versus National Economy: The United States in the New World Order*, The cold war is won, positive images of American and Western European market capitalism sweep Eastern Europe and the former soviet union, the world's largest McDonald's has opened in Beijing, and Mickey Mouse has a home in France. At this historical moment of cultural and economic self-doubt sweeps across the United States. Opinion polls suggest that two-thirds of Americans believe their country is 'on the wrong track'. For the first time in a generation, parents do not believe that their children will have a better life than they themselves have had.

William Paff [27] also described the American situation after the Cold War. Lacking a clear enemy, Americans themselves grew confused about whether expanding their costly global engagement was really necessary. New theories of external threat to the United States were thus developed Islamic assault on the West, global terrorism, resurgent Chinese or Russian

imperialism, international crime, the drug trade. Wretched 'rogue nations' were promoted to the front rank were promoted to the front rank of those threatening the United States. None of this possessed much cosigning intellectual or political warrant".

The shaping of globalization seems to have taken a definite turn after the declaration of American new world order. In an address before Congress on 11 September 1990, George Bush, former president of the United States, explained the features of new world order. The mission to reform the world by US might was turned into a possible good of American foreign policy. After the tragic event of 11 September 2001 in the United States, according to Salter [34], "The war on terror represents a rearticulation of an American 'cruising' mission".

The relentless pursuit of hegemonic policies by the United States has its deleterious sociological consequences for the entire world. The shaping of globalization by the powerful, however, has its opposition by those who are ignored, marginalized and silenced by the dominants.

F. The place of religion in a modern society

In a modern society the emphasis has shifted away from religion. Zbigniew Brezezinski, former National Security Achiever to the President of the United States, recorded that, in the past, organized religion played a definite role in social institutions. But in modern society, both politics and economics conspire to create a culture inimical to the preservation of an important social domain reserved for the religious. An increasingly permissive culture, exploiting the principle of the separation of church and state, squeezes out the religious factor but without substituting for it any secular "categorical imperatives," thereby transforming the inner moral code into a vacuum" [8]. Benneth, Secretary of Education under President Reagan, discussed "The Battle Over Separation of Church and State." He wrote: "In too many places in American Public education, religion has been ignored, banned, or shunned in ways that serve neither knowledge, the constitutional, nor sound public policy" [5].

Karen Armstrong, one of the leading scholars on religious affairs in both British and the United States, noted that it has been hard for some Westerns to appreciate the resurgence of faith correctly. Armstrong wrote "But fury reminds us that our modern culture imposes extremely difficult demands on human beings... It has dented our self-esteem... Copernicus unseated us from the center of the universe, and relegated us to a peripheral role. Kant declared that we could never be certain that our ideas corresponded to any reality outside our own heads.

Darwin suggested that we were simply animals, and Freud showed that far from being wholly rational creatures, human beings were at the mercy of the powerful irrational forces of unconscious, which could be assessed only with great difficulty" [2].

In an unkind deviate against religion, the resurgence of religion needs to be studied carefully. The analysis of the social role of religion in fortifying social intuitions calls for serious research. Literature on globalization is in abundance, and continues to increase.

G. *The emerging social disorder and religion*

The recent spread of books on globalization adds to the difficulty in grasping the reality of the phenomenon on globalization. Some works applaud globalization. Also, there are some titles, which present a relatively balanced discussion of globalization [9], [18]. In the article *Globalization and Its Discontents*, Herman E. Daly, wrote: "In globalization, power is drained away from national communities and local enterprises, and aggregates in transnational corporation" [10]. He then listed some of the consequences of globalization. Daly opposed globalization and favoured the alternative of internationalization. In his view globalization erased national boundaries while internationalization did not.

The study *Gods in the Global Village: The World's Religions in Sociological perspective* by L. Kurtz (1995) explained how the global village of today is well connected. But culturally and religiously it is more diverse. Kurtz expressed the view that the existing major religious traditions are multicultural in many aspects. He staked that religion, traditions premise both a "unity and diversity in social life that could result in a shared ethos in the global village that does not destroy the rich fabric of human religions life or force anyone to participate in religious practice who does not wish to do so" [17]. Religion ultimately is presented as a positive force in resolving conflict. The study offered an overview of the state of sociology of religion today.

In the final chapter of the volume, John H. Simpson argued that presently a decline of modernity is being experienced. Also, the mass media has become powerful in human affairs. The volume is useful in addition to the literature on religion and globalization.

The study *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of civilizations* by Jonathan Sacks (2002), shed fresh light on the discontents of globalization. Citing sources, Sacks wrote, "But globalization has immensely differential and destabilizing effects. Its benefits are not spread evenly. There are winners and losers, within and between countries. The digital

desired has heightened inequalities... There are 1.3 billion people- 22 per cent of the world's population living below the poverty line, 841 million are malnourished, 880 million are without access to medical care. One billion lack adequate shelter, 1.3 billion have no access to safe drinking water; 2.6 billion go without situation. Among the children of the world, 113 million, two thirds of them girls, go without schooling; 150 million are malnourished; 30,000 die each day from preventable diseases" [33]. With regard to the role of religion in a globalization age Sacks considered religions as the humanity that global phenomenon. He mentioned that "for centuries the West proceeded on the assumption that sciences, politics and economics world, take the place once held by the Church. The problem of religion would be solved by depriving it of power. What happens, though, when religion returns in all its power—precisely because it answers questions to which science, politics and economics offer no reply" [33].

H. *The emerging global sociological chaos and basic social institutions*

Presently, social norms are under immense stress, and social systems world over are in a condition of chaos. Social conflicts prevail within and across nations. Research studies suggest that basic social institutions religion and family are under visible assault.

The sexual revolution, the women's liberation and feminist movements, and the movements in favor of gay and lesbian rights have exploded throughout the Western world. "No Limits" was the slogan of these movements. He wrote: The same society that wants 'no limits' to its technological innovation also sees 'no limits' to many forms of personal behavior, and the consequent growth of crime., broken families, parents failing to fulfill obligations to children, neighbors not looking for each other, and citizens opting out of public life.

The role of religion in stabilizing the social system, however, cannot be accepted outright in a society where the battle over separation of church and state continues [5]. The culture of capitalism strives to marginalize religion. The attempts to marginalize religions reduce the chances of sociological role of religion in strengthening social order and social systems.

IV. CONCLUSION

The foregoing description highlights that the process of globalization is, by its very nature, irreversible. However, its control by the Western hegemony and the consumer culture of capitalism pose serious dangers to the social systems worldwide. It is, therefore, time to search ways to strengthen social systems. In-

stitutions of religion and family are under threat. Religious approach can possibly assist in stemming the disruption of family and other social institutions in the world.

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