

The State of the 'State' in the Globalization Era

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Abstract: The state has come to dominate the political life for a long time. In International Relations the state has a central role to play. It is widely considered the central player or actor or agent in the conduct of international affairs. We can say all theories revolve around it. A bounded territorial entity with the sovereign power over the affairs of the people and the sole representative of them is the dominant conceptualization of state. However, the later part of the Twentieth century has brought yet another pervasive aspect to international life. Globalization is today an undeniable reality of international life, more so after the Soviet disintegration. Globalization is broadly understood as multi-dimensional enhanced exchanges across and beyond borders. So the central question today is how has this process of globalization affected the very essence of the state? Has the 'state' been able to cope with it and adapt or has it been overborne by the same. We argue in this paper that the state has coped with different international developments, with its essence intact. In this era of globalization too, the essence and meaning of the state is not only intact, but with little altercations, as legitimate and necessary as ever.

Keywords: Globalization, State, Legitimate, Multi-dimensional

INTRODUCTION

States have dominated the idea of political life for a long time now. Starting from the Contractarian philosopher Hobbes and his idea of a supreme 'Leviathan', the idea of political life has centred on an entity with the powers to represent and control people in a specific territorial area. For the past two centuries or so, the territorially consolidated, centralised, sovereign state has been the dominant paradigm in the western political thought and western main stream political science [1]. With different waves of globalization like the colonial expansion, such ideas about state spread through different parts of the world. When international relations came to existence as an independent academic discipline in the post- Second World War era, the state became its primary and central agency. The state has been that core entity around which IR theories have revolved around- whether the main stream realist and liberal theories embracing state as the central actor or the Marxist, Constructivist, Critical theories in justifying against the centrality of the state. The state as commonly understood is essentially a territorial entity, with the sovereign rights externally and internally acting as the sole representative and authority over a territorially bounded people.

However, the later half of the twentieth century has brought yet another undeniable and now all-pervasive phenomenon called Globalization. Some call

it 'master concept of our time' [2], some 'rise of supra-territoriality' [3], others 'interplay of globalist as well as localist forces' [4] and as 'a new historical conjuncture'[5]. Globalization is broadly understood as multi-dimensional and multiplicated exchanges beyond and across borders. Though it started as an essential economic process, globalization today denotes enhanced exchanges, communication inter-dependence in all spheres of social and political life. Every aspect of social life from identities to festivals, religion to culture, today is enmeshed in an inter-connected and inter-dependent global cobweb. In political life, the democratic liberal form of government today has been globally portrayed as the legitimate form of government, while delegitimizing the others. The sovereign power so far enjoyed by the state in almost an unchallenged manner today has come into question due to the declining state authority over spheres of economy and social life on the one hand and growing humanitarian interventions on the other.

Our central argument in this paper is precisely against this. Against the hardcore proponents of globalization and also a range of other scholars like those identity theorists, we argue that the current wave of globalization, unprecedented [3, 4] though it is, does not challenge the entity of state and its relevance, at least not in its core essence. The state still is the sole representative of a territorially bound people, having the

authority to make agreements and break them, to declare war and peace, to conduct the foreign affairs, to make decisions on national interest and bring them to effect. The territoriality inherent in the state still lies intact. The importance of territoriality is apparent in the desperate strive of the Jews for a piece of land as their own.

This paper is divided into three parts. The first part conceptualises the states and the second the globalization process. The third contains our arguments against a diminishing role and relevance of the state in the era of globalization.

HISTORICAL AND THEORITICAL EVOLUTION OF THE STATE

The state has been, for a long time now, the repository of all political imaginations. Much has been written about the states in different aspects of social science. Gabriel Almond argues that a segment of the political science literature has always incorporated the states in its analysis. In support of his claims, he cites the work of such eminent political scientists as David Truman, E.E. Schattschneider, V. Key, and Pendleton Herring, among others [6]. The state has for long constructed and shaped ideas about life society and politics, and so have the ideas done to the state. That states are the primary actors on the international stage, sovereign units interacting under conditions of anarchy has long been the core assumption of the discipline of the International Relations. It is shared today among most main stream scholars in the field, whether neo-realist, neoliberal- or constructivists [7]. The state is not an unchangeable and unchanging, unalterable and unaltered, unquestionable and unquestioned, unmodifiable and unmodified, inadaptable and inadapted entity. Political philosophers have defined states at different times in different ways. The existence and the idea of the state have always reflected the need of the time and circumstance. A theory of states, we argue cannot be a doctrine unalterable or a dogma. In this section, we shall proceed in these very terms.

In perhaps one of the most classic definitions of the modern states, Max Weber specified that 'a compulsory political organization with continuous operations will be called a "state" in so far as its administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the monopoly of the legitimise use of physical force in the enforcement of its order'[8]. Following him, Anthony Giddens defines the modern nation state as a 'bordered power container' [9]. For Bobbitt, "the state is distinctive in that the violence it deploys on behalf of its subjects or its citizens must be legitimate- 'it must be accepted within as a matter of law, and accepted without as an appropriate act of state sovereignty'. Legitimacy must cloak the violence of the state, or the state ceases to be" [1]. Thus, an essence of the state runs commonly through all the prospective of state. The state

is territorially bounded, the monopoliser of legitimate violence within a bounded territory and the sovereign power within and without in its relations to others states.

Any account state would be incomplete without the mention, even in brief the accounts of the social contract. The Contractarian philosophers, most notably Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau, present the idea of the state as a product of a contract among the people. The state becomes the necessary evil which the people bring into existence out of their own will. The state is freed from the will of the God. The life without state is dubbed as the 'state of nature' [10], where as Hobbes says life is 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'. All through the Contractarian philosophers runs through the idea of a bad undesirable life without a state. 'It is as if a war of every man against every man' (Hobbes). Here individuals possess all the rights conceivable and without any restrictions. But that rarely pays. Therefore people come together, mutually decide to give a few rights so that the rest can be enjoyed, and the state is born. The state gets different forms in them; for Hobbes, it is the absolute supreme Leviathan and for Rousseau, his republic. However, what is important is the conceptualisation of the state as an artefact created by people themselves and baring its very essence with different imaginable forms.

More recently, accounts of state have rather been more historical. Tilly gives an impressive account of the role of violence in warfare in the making of the states. At a time in human civilization when there was no specific entity of state or any authoritative centre of power for that matter, violence played a big role in social life and different gangs or smaller seeds of force had their own rules of the game. The strongest of them could extract from the people their revenues. They gradually became the security providers too from the other gangs and hence a receiver of consistent revenues. After even more time, the force used by them became the law or the order of the day and the rest got delegitimized. That is when the state was born [11]. 'A variety of political units and organizations contended for power and control within the confines of medieval European society; these included feudal kingships, empires, the church, and free cities. State-makers who were ultimately successful at building centralised, differentiated organizations with a monopoly of coercion over defined territory were those who undid and then redid the structure of society according to their own agendas. In the process, the encountered resistance from the different sections of population they attempted to subjugate and tax as well as from the existing alternative organizations' [12]. States that fought wars, built standing armies and required resources for state building activities directly confronted societies that often were unwilling to help in this endeavour. The

resulting state formation often was the product of bargaining, co-operation, legitimation, and sheer coercion building state makers and social forces, with society as the losers in the struggle being forced to pay (Tilly) [12]. While both state and society are crucial actors states are dominant. States are either strong or getting stronger; they are autonomous vis-a-vis society; and they are capable of imposing their will on society. As a consequence of its activity, the modern state became the focal point for political mobilisation. Ever more social groups found themselves to strive to capture, or influence, the core institutions of the state in order to advance their own objectives. Thus, the state pulled society in which the political space, at the same time as it was trying to shape society according to its own objectives. In this process, state society relations were tightened and social relations were 'caged' [1].

Once in place, the roles and powers of states have changed in varying degrees according to varying circumstances. Michael Mann writes about the changing role of states in Europe. First from the end of Middle Ages they increasingly plausibly claimed a monopoly of juridical regulation and military force. Then in the Eighteenth and especially Nineteenth centuries they sponsored integrating communications infrastructures and the basic control of the poor. The twentieth century saw welfare states, macro-economic planning and the mobilization of the mass citizen nationalism [13].

Just as states have not been nation states, so their transformations in recent times have produced state forms which go far beyond the nation state as classically understood. From the earliest phases of globalization, the fifteenth century onwards, the growth of European influence involved the global projection of European military and political as well as economic and cultural power. Only with the demise of the imperial European state, over the course of the twentieth century, has the nation state become a more or less universal political form, spreading first to the rest of Europe, then to what became known as the third world and finally to the remains of the soviet union [14]. In 1975 Tilly observed that changes in the world situation have made it 'quite unlikely that the exact sequences of events we have lovingly reconstructed from the European record will ever occur again', and both post-colonial history and scholarly research on non-western states confirm the truth of this statement. For one thing, the international context within which states develop has been dramatically transformed. First, the essence of a major aspect of the state –formation hypothesis was the importance of warfare in the development of the state's administrative and extractive machinery, but the present international non-intervention makes this avenue less likely. Second, in the competition between states in early modern Europe, those states machineries not strong enough to survive collapsed, whereas the new international system has a tendency to nurture and

provide legitimacy to weak states. Finally, in Western Europe there was a strong relationship between state-makers and capitalist development, with capitalism helping to make states and state-makers helping to make capitalism. Just as Karl Marx criticized the liberal assumption that capitalism is natural, so Weberian historical sociologists have demonstrated how the modern state is not a natural product of an alleged liberal social contract, but was forged to a certain extent in the heat of battle and warfare. Because power forces and actors are multiple, and constantly interact and shape each other in complex ways, it becomes problematic to talk of power actors such as states as wholly autonomous and self-constituting. They cannot be treated as wholly rational, pure phenomena with single interest. They are rather determined by the interaction of the multiple sources of power [15].

GLOBALIZATION: WHAT IS IT?

Globalization today is part of almost every social science literature. Politics, society, economics, law, to name a few have today been impacted upon and in turn impacted the process of globalization. Globalization as a phenomenon though not new in international history, the present degree and scale can safely be argued as unprecedented. Globalization has been developing for some centuries, in the sense that what Mann calls the 'multi-power actor civilization' of the west, originating in Europe, has come to dominate more or less the entire world. Globalization in this sense includes the development of regional and transnational well as explicitly global forms [4]. In this paper, we specifically limit to the late twentieth century globalization process, and though except the importance and relevance of other waves of globalization exclude them from this account in lieu of space and scope. In this section we are explicitly presenting the idea of globalization in a broad sense and in the manner we are dealing with it in this paper.

Globalization, due to its complexities and volume, has rarely been systematically or uniformly conceptualized in any school of thought or any branch of social science. Manuel Castells understands globalization as a structural process, an objective process of structuring economics, institutions, cultures etc., but by no means an undifferentiated one [16]. Say, the core of the economy is global, but the rest is not. MNCs still employ a small section of world population, nevertheless the important one. Science and technology network operate globally but are based on local nodes of varying size. Communication strategies are global in business terms but are tailored to specific cultures and identities for marketing reasons. Today's globalization is very selective; it is both inclusive and exclusive. It includes everything that has monetary value and excludes everything else. Beck defines 'globalization' as a reflexive rather than a linear process, taking the global and the local (or the universal or the particular)

not as opposites but as combined and mutually implicit principles. These processes are historically variable (tied to their context) and multidimensional [17]. In the least trivial sense, globalization is quintessentially an economic process, whose causes and consequences may be political and social [2]. The notion of globalization thus conveys a widening and deepening of international ties to a degree that creates a qualitatively new network of social interaction. British sociologist Anthony McGrew defines globalization as ‘the multiplicity of linkages and interconnections between the states and society which make up the modern world system’ [5]. Globalization is operating simultaneously and inter-relatedly in the economic, technological-communicational, political and cultural spheres of human life; ‘a more particular dissemination of the entire range of institutional features of cultural modernity’ [4].

The point we want to stress in this section is that globalization is a multi-dimensional process which though evolved from an economic orientation, now is an all pervasive phenomena in all spheres of life- social, political, economic, and cultural. Globalization is differentiated from the international and trans-national processes by the absence and presence of the borders and territoriality, the very essence of the state. The global is proposed to be beyond the borders challenging the very idea of territoriality. Also it is a differentiated process. It is not as if all corners of the world are today equally linked to the ‘global’. Third, though the process of globalization involves universalizing of few essentially western- originated norms like the liberal democracy, privatization of economy, nuclearisation of families and so on, globalization has adapted itself in different areas and arenas according to the local need. Hence the argument is made that globalization co-exists with localization. The local has not been overwhelmed by globalization but rather adapted to it. ‘What adds up to the global is a very complex mix of the local, the national, the international, and the transnational’ [13]. Next, the extent of revolution in information technology and mass communication has given this era of globalization a unique form. Lastly, globalization is all but a negation of the state. The state authority and the process of globalization, which we shall assert later, are far then ‘zero-sum’ [18]. The global economy still contains statist bindings.

THE ‘STATE’ AMIDST GLOBALIZATION

The entity or agency that has come to be questioned the most amidst the current wave of globalization is the state. Recent debate in the field about ‘globalization’ have largely revolved around the question of whether the state is fading away or merely retrenching [19]. Because of the rise of new powerful actors in the international arena like the Multinational corporations (Hindustan Lever, P & G, etc.) and non-governmental organizations (Amnesty International,

Oxfam etc.), and the very nature of borderlessness inherent in globalization have come to challenge two essential attributes of the state: Sovereign authority and territoriality. On the one hand, markets are increasingly becoming disembedded (capitalism becoming ‘ungoverned’) and on the other state power over territory is withering [2]. Scholte argues that globalization has disturbed the nation-state based identities. Present day globalization essentially means surpassing territorial borders. It has decreased the power states have enjoyed over their territories and people [3]. Axtmann argues that cultural heterogeneity which is emerging as a result of globalization will disturb the relevance of the state [1]. Kjell Godmann talks about ‘internationalization of problems’, ‘internationalization of society’, and ‘internationality’ of political decision making as arguments as to the diminishing role of the state in the globalized era [20]. Among the developments that he identifies as fundamentally undermining the legitimizing premise of the nation-state, namely, to better the wellbeing of the people, Phillip Bobbitt highlights five as of particular importance: first, as the recognition of human rights as the norms that require adherence within all states regardless of their internal law; second, the development of weapons of mass destruction that render the defense of state borders ineffectual; third, the proliferation of global and transnational threats (such as those that damage the environment or threatens state through migration, disease or famine) that no nation-state alone cannot control or evade; fourth, the growth of global capitalism which curtails the capacity of states for economy management; and, fifth, the creation of a global communication network that penetrates borders and threatens national languages, customs and cultures [1]. Globalization, understood as pluralization of borders, produces a legitimation crisis of the national morality of exclusion. This emerges under two conditions: Firstly, insofar as the national social and political problems contest become transnational (and are recognized as such), demanding transnational solutions in turn. Secondly, insofar as national and ethnic ties are pluralized, overlapped and are de-essentialized within one and the same lived context [17].

Contrary to all these arguments, we propose that there have been no diminishing in the role and relevance of the state amidst the globalization. We would rather call such claims in Philpott’s words overrated [21]. Globalization and the state don’t operate in a mutually exclusive and ‘Zero-sum’. They are rather mutually constitutive. Through a proper and broad understanding of globalization, the sovereignty and territoriality of the state can be shown to be still relevant, and just minutely altered.

Rather than ‘escaping’ the territorial cage, much new transnational activity appears to be sustained

by it. The state and the international system have come provide not merely the stimulus for global competition and global co-operation, but also the structure that both enables and encourages it. Capitalism- as a global system- also remains highly embedded in national networks of interaction [2]. Thus the very existence of the globalizing forces needs the support of the state structure. Also, arguments for globalization, diminishing the state role ignore one important and essential aspect: the adaptability of states, their differential capacity and the enhanced importance of state power in the new international environment. Like state, sovereignty too is not an unalterable and unaltered doctrine. As Stephen Krasnar argues, sovereignty too is an outcome of performativity [22]. Multi-National Corporations (hereafter MNC), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) and International organizations (hereafter IO) might seek much autonomy of the state; but the ultimate authority to decide their legitimacy, to make them or break them off, still lies with the state. The United Nations, the most powerful IO today is still functioning with the states as its members. Huge MNCs like the Hindustan Unilever still lie its roots in its parent states, Britain and Denmark. A big time optimist regarding European Union, Philpott too concludes that 'states remained the key actors in the European Union (EU)'[21] According to Peter Evans, any state that engages in policies deemed 'unwise' by private financial traders will be punished as the value of its currency declines and its access to capital shrinks [23]. These processes of globalization certainly contribute to the perceived evaporation of state authority, but the connection is not as straight forward as it might appear first, East Asia demonstrates the possibility of positive connection between high stateness and success in a globalizing economy. Whether active state involvement can increase the benefit of the country's citizen garner from the global economy becomes a moot point in an ideological climate that proscribes using territorial sovereignty to limit the discretion of private economic actors. The recent phase of globalization has certainly involved a decline in the autonomy of the nation-state, as simplistic theories of globalization imply. But this autonomy has been undermined chiefly by the outcomes of nation-states' own projection of military power, rather than by economic or even cultural and social globalization. It was war not globalization which overcame the classic nation-state.

In territoriality too, the state sustains its relevance. The nation state that emerged in 1648 with Westphalia, was never the nation-state in real sense. The important elements emerging there from were territoriality sovereignty and non-intervention. The decolonization movement of the 1960s made it apparent that a state based on a common nationality with common language or culture was rather Euro-centric than universal. In most of the world the states have been multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-national. India is

a glaring example. Well, most of the states outside the Western Europe are so for that matter. Multi-nationality, multi-ethnicity has not undermined the territoriality and sovereignty of these states, like India. India's consistent claims over Kashmir, Russia's over Chechnya, China's over Tibet, and Jews' over Israel are very much contemporary debates and show the relevance of territoriality for state. Why so much feud over land, if territories don't matter. Globalization doesn't undermine the state but includes the transformation of state forms. It is but predicated on and produces such transformations. The reason for the false counter position of the state and globalization is that the debates rest on inadequate theorization of the state [14].

CONCLUSION

This paper has been a humble attempt to put forward a broad conceptualisation and understanding of the state as well as the process of globalization. Only through a broad and unprejudiced understanding can it be rightly argued that the state as an entity, a political actor and agent is not losing out in the race with globalization. State has always adapted itself to different international developments. The Westphalia snatched from it the authority over religion. But state remained, albeit with newer powers and roles. Globalization is taking away some of its authority in some areas. But that does not in the least mean a withering away of the society. As Philpott argues sovereignty need not be absolute in quality but in a sense that it is the sovereign all through at all times [21]. This is what the state today is. Any attempt to theorise the demise of state in the present wave of globalization must deal with both the concepts in proper depth and with adequate flexibility. Any further studies must keep this in regard. The implication of our study lies in the very essence, any student of the state would hence repose in the terms and the concepts and their mutual impacts.

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