

Globalisation through Multiple Lenses

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Abstract: *“What is globalisation?” is a question that has no definite answer but just a few perspectives. It may be a reality, ideology, structure, new way of thinking, monopoly, a ray of hope, etc. What I think of globalisation might be entirely different from what you think of it. This article will, therefore, focus on my idea of globalisation and some alternate perspectives clubbed under three major perspectives of hyperglobalists, sceptics, and post-sceptics.*

Keywords: Globalisation, Hyperglobalists, Sceptics, Post-Sceptics

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Globalisation as a Reality

Globalisation is nothing but the sheer reality of our, at least my, day-to-day life. While Shelly vociferated the plaintive inability of the mighty Ozymandias to brave the ravages of time, the magic wand of globalisation is now taming both space and time. To say the least, globalisation is behind my journey from Thiruvananthapuram to Delhi, just within a matter of three hours. With me waking up to a hubbub of K-Pop and my friend, on his lap, watching Hollywood every day, globalisation is not just limited to a bunch of theories and the words of an army of scholars, but the veritable reality that we are going through. With the outlets of McDonald's, Starbucks, Tim Hortons, Subway, Dominos, KFC, Levi's, Fastrack, Adidas, Dunkin's, and many others of its kind in my small *Kamla Nagar*, the forces of globalisation are on the horizon. To say the least, me coming to college in T-shirt and jeans, talking to my British friend over WhatsApp, and the availability of *chow mein* and *idli* in the college canteen is no longer a big game, but part of a bigger reality. In other words, globalisation is a “reality”.

1.2 Globalisation as an Ideology

Now, globalisation is also an ideology- an ideology of globalism that sings the panegyrics on the pleasures of globalisation. The increased “transplanetary and super territorial connections between people” (Scholte, 2005) and the “multidirectional flow of people, objects, places, and information” (Ritzer, 2007) is a stellar phenomenon, which will shower the world with the candies of peace, progress, and prosperity, according to this ideology.

1.3 Globalisation as a Structure

More than reality and beyond the hagiographies of globalism, globalisation can be seen as a catalyst for global governance. Emerging global issues like international terrorism, climate change, global warming, and pandemic, which know no borders, clubbed with the emergence of structures of international governance- intergovernmental organisations, multinational corporations, transnational corporations, global social movements, and even a global civil society- makes globalisation a structure- a structure of multi-player global governance. Whether “nation-states” might be undermined by “transnational actors” (Beck, 2000), or involved in the reconstruction of sovereignty, will be dealt with in the next section on perspectives.

1.4 Globalisation as a New Way of Thinking

Globalisation is a “new way of thinking about the social space and time” (Carnoy, 1999), facilitated by the “extensity, intensity, and velocity” (Held, 1999) of the transfer of ideas and information through sophisticated information and communication technologies- the face of present-day globalisation. Globalisation is also a force involved in the “compression of the world” (Robertson, 1992), by creating, multiplying, stretching, and intensifying “worldwide social interdependency and exchanges” (Steger, 2010) to an extent that events occurring “miles away” shape “local happenings” (Giddens, 1990). Furthermore, it is the “integration of national economies into the international economy”, often through

the internationalisation of “trade and production, financial markets, and a commodity culture” (Bhagawati, 2002) propagated by “the global telecommunication system” (Scholte, 2005).

1.5 Globalisation as Monopoly and a Ray of Hope

For me, globalisation is also monopoly. Years ago, states and their military-controlled satellites, information, and communication technology, and now have passed the baton to the tech giants- Apple, Microsoft, and Google- the alpha, beta, and gamma of the present-day globalised world order. With the coming Metaverse, things will get worse as it will lead to *metapoly*- the monopoly of Meta over Metaverse- the future of the internet. Also, for me, it is a ray of hope- towards decentralised, individualised globalisation- with emerging blockchain technology, where an individual computer is a system in itself and doesn't require colossal data banks, information pools, and a centralised authority to maintain, secure, manage and transfer data.

1.6 Concluding Observations

Finally, in the light of the above discussion, I'm tempted to conclude that globalisation is not a simple “integration into a single economic space”, but it's something more. Globalisation is, therefore, a reality, an ideology, structure, way of thought, force, monopoly, and a ray of hope. Now, one thing is clear- my views on globalisation may be different from yours and yours might be different from others. Being a multidimensional, essentially contested topic, attributing a single definition to this complex phenomenon is a gross oversimplification of reality. Now, I'll try to explain the different views on globalisation, by clubbing them under three prominent perspectives- hyperglobalist, sceptic, and post-sceptic or transformationalist.

II. ALTERNATE PERSPECTIVES ON GLOBALISATION

2.1 Hyperglobalists

Hyperglobalists, or the cute little ponies of the globalisation discourse, maintain that the phenomenon is a rather modern one- the result of “discrete and identifiable changes” (Giddens, 2000) over the past sixty to seventy years. Being hard-core globalophilics, they argue that globalisation is an inevitable result, the end-story of the linear spectrum of the evolution of humanity, resulting from unprecedented advancements in information and communication technology. Moreover, being liberals/neoliberals, they celebrate the triumph of the market over nation-states, while some like Ohmae have written the obituary for nation-states, and others rang the death knell of the welfare state. National economies are becoming much less significant, owing to increasing capital mobility¹, the role of Transnational Corporations, and rising economic interdependency². It's simple- money does not respect national boundaries. Furthermore, with the profit of TNCs exceeding the GDP of several countries, their dominant role in the global economic system is not surprising.³ Moreover, with new forms of money transfer through cryptocurrencies like Bitcoins, a decentralised network of currency trade, financial transactions are made across countries without the intervention of any central authority, including the central banks of various countries. Exchanges worth \$112 billion are done through cryptocurrencies every day. Such reduced state control over the movement of financial capital is celebrated by hyperglobalists. Hyperglobalists further claim that the nation-states have to adjust their policies to the global economic system.⁴ In addition to that, they emphasise the existence of a “global culture”, fostered by the spread of global communication networks, the internet, migration, and tourism, among others. This is leading to a decline in national culture- obviously, I prefer English medicines over sour Ayurvedic tonics prepared in a witch's cauldron and prefer jeans over *dhoti*. They also highlight cultural homogenisation- visit the Select City Walk or DLF Promenade and you will feel like Vegas. Furthermore, they believe that the nation-states are superseded by international institutions like the UN, IMF and World Bank, global social movements and the

¹ For instance, I, witnessing a -2.8% decline in the stock value of SandRidge Energy, Inc., a US-based company, shifted to Vedanta Ltd., an Indian company, within seconds. Moreover, platforms like Upstox allow one to invest in stocks in over 60 stock exchanges spread over 25 countries.

² The EU and the US, though imposed a multitude of sanctions on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine, couldn't do so with the lucrative Russian oil.

³ For instance, in 2017, Amazon's revenue exceeded that of Kuwait, Apple's exceeded Portugal's and Volkswagen's exceeded Chile's.

⁴ Take, for example, the Indian government is planning to launch its virtual currency. Also, though the budget 2022 explicitly did not comment on the recognition/ legalisation of financial transactions made through crypto, it introduced a 30% tax on such transactions, which can be seen as a first bold step towards acclimatisation of the Indian nation-state to the global economic trends.

global civil society. Neoliberal policies are imposed on the nation-states as part of the Washington consensus.⁵ To sum up, hyper globalists believe that the nation-states are passing their baton to transnational forces as the major economic, cultural, and even political entities in the international world order.

2.2 Sceptics

Sceptics claim that the evidence of internationalism is used by scholars to justify globalisation. They never acknowledged the concept of globalisation and discarded it as mere fallacies and fairy tales. Moreover, they believe that internationalism is not a new concept, as it existed centuries ago, and the current developments are just an addition to it, characterised by capital influx and trade⁶. Sceptics believe that nation-states are still playing a significant role as agents of international (not global) processes. National identity cannot be replaced by a global identity, according to them.⁷ Similarly, subnational identities and the resurgence of nationalism in different parts of the world are on the rise. Furthermore, being globalophobic, sceptics believe that the so-called “global economy” is not inclusive, and is, *ipso facto*, an international economy, dominated by the G3- the US, Japan, and the EU. Such an exclusive system cannot claim a global status. Moreover, the international economy is still made of the individual economies of nation-states, and therefore, giving it a global status will be unreasonable. The concentration of FDI is high in powerful nations, with LDCs experiencing marginal trade. In such cases, MNCs and TNCs are operating in an international marketplace, and not a globalised one. While the integration into the international economic system has helped some countries, including India and China develop substantially, others in Sub-Saharan Africa are left in the dark to putrefy. Citing Marxist/ Neo-Marxist theories of Andre Gunder Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein, sceptics argue that what we know today as globalisation is just an international capitalist system, characterised by exploitation of the periphery by the core, leading to global inequality.⁸ In addition to that, they claim that the international institutions are just puppets in the hands of powerful nations, trying to get themselves exempted and circumvent resolutions against their national interests, and support those in their favour, but against the interests of the developing and the least developed countries. Moreover, for them, the UN is an international body rather than a transnational one, constituted of, and driven by the nation-states. No international organizations are above the nation-state. What is happening in the international arena, is happening within the framework of the existing system. It is not global, but international and interregional, with nation-states, regional blocs, and similar alliances commanding a major role, dumping the very idea of a globalised system into the backburner. Now, they also argue that the powerful states still exercise sovereignty over TNCs, international institutions, and market forces.⁹ Welfarism and protectionism still exist in developed and powerful countries¹⁰, and hyper-globalists claiming the demise of the welfare state and protectionist regime are sitting in their armchairs and dreaming up Utopias, according to sceptics.

⁵ Take, for example, Pakistan- recently, IMF questioned Pakistan on the \$1.5 billion subsidy package Mr Khan announced- what does it mean? Can I interpret it that the sovereign nation-states are answerable to supranational bodies for their financial decisions? Also, recently, the Sri Lankan government began to implement policies dictated by the IMF.

⁶ Some sceptics even argue that the global economy was more open between 1870 to 1914, by giving statistical data on humongous trades and massive migration, which was arrested during the inter-war period (Hirst and Thompson, 1966).

⁷ Take, for example, Poland. In 2017, there was an Al-Jazeera coverage of the country which exhibited extreme right-wing tendencies, ultra-nationalism, and xenophobia. Some even claim that the history of Poland is rewritten, and disseminated through movies, videos, songs, comics, etc., obviously, in support of extreme nationalism. According to DW, the number of recorded racially-motivated attacks, especially against the Muslim minority in Poland, between 2000 and 2015 was 10 times higher than pre-2000 figures. Another example is India, where right-wing nationalism is significantly on the rise. If there was a global economy that seldom care about national borders, why is the Indian government insisting on Make in India? Why are we celebrating the all-time high export of \$400 billion? Moreover, some companies take pride in declaring that all their products are manufactured with raw materials sourced from the nation. For instance, Dusty Workbench is a Canadian furniture company that has declared that its products are made with timber sourced from Canada, which might act as an emotional (*pathos*) appeal to Canadians. A similar declaration is found on the webpage of McDowell-Craig, a California-based furniture company, which goes a bit further by claiming that all their products are made of wood sourced within the frontiers of California.

⁸ According to the World Bank data, the US and China hold more than 70 trillion USD, India, Japan, the UK, and some EU countries hold 10-30 trillion USD. Except for Egypt and Brazil, all countries in Africa and Latin America hold less than 1 trillion USD. Also, according to CNBC, there are more billionaires in the US than in China, Germany and India combined.

⁹ The Trump administration's war on WTO is not unknown. The international organisation once reached a breaking point with America refusing to appoint new judges to the appellate body. While the US supported WTO decisions that were in its favour, it lashed out at WTO, even threatened to leave it, while WTO noted that the trade sanctions imposed on China were against the rules of global trade.

¹⁰ For instance, in his first address to a joint session of Congress, Mr Trump said, “Currently, when we ship products out of America, many other countries make us pay very high tariffs and taxes. But when foreign companies ship their products into America, we charge them nothing or almost nothing...I believe strongly in free trade but it also has to be fair trade”.

Finally, coming to culture, Sceptics claim that greater nationalism puts restrictions on the cultural effects of so-called “globalisation”.¹¹

2.3 Post-Sceptics/ Transformationalists

In contrast to radical globalists and outright sceptics, the post-sceptics or transformationalists acknowledge the reality of globalisation. With globalists drawing inferences from pictures, and sceptics critiquing it with numbers, for transformationalists, globalisation is neither too good as the hyperglobalists claim, nor is it as besmirched as sceptics assert. They believe that globalisation existed for a long time, but the current levels of the same are unprecedented.¹² Concerning nation-states, transformationalists believe that they started sharing sovereignty with other actors- TNCs, international institutions, global civil society, and global social movements- but are neither marginal nor removed from the globalised world order. The state power is being reconstituted, not diminished. Also, states can control TNCs and MNCs in many ways.¹³ They acknowledge the mobility of capital, the role of MNCs and economic interdependence, however, believes in deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of commodities and services.¹⁴ Moreover, they claim that the sceptics presented an oversimplified view of global inequality, which is, *en réalité*, more complex. Beyond the narratives of core-periphery, different areas experience globalisation differently.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the transformationalists acknowledge the existence of a global system, but not a global society.¹⁶ Also, post-sceptics view globalisation as a bag of benefits and burdens. On one hand, free and fair trade has benefitted many, but on the other, the trade of drugs and arms has wreaked mayhem in many places. In contrast to the hyperglobalists who argue that globalisation steers economic development and global prosperity and sceptics who outrightly reject globalisation as an attempt to forge a global capitalist system based on exploitation, transformationalists note that globalisation has benefitted many, but not all.¹⁷ They also believe in the differentiation of the performance of globalisation in different aspects.¹⁸ Coming to culture, they argue that it is a two-way process and not just the imposition of Western culture over natives and mass McDonaldisation.¹⁹ Also, they believe that globalisation is not about the expansion of liberal democracy. For instance, China used the forces of globalisation to invent Communist-Capitalism. Furthermore, they also criticise sceptics for being overtly empirical, failing to take into effect the qualitative aspects of changes.²⁰

III. CONCLUSION

In toto, globalisation is a multi-dimensional concept. It is a reality, an ideology, force, structure, monopoly, and a path towards decentralisation. Globalisation is McDonald's and KFC, at the same time, it is the have-nots sitting just near its window panes. Globalisation is McDonaldisation, at the same time, it is having a Cappuccino with samosa. Globalisation is the torchbearer to the era of information, at the same time, globalisation is a part of the world's disinformation order

¹¹ For instance, in McDonald's outlet in *Kamla Nagar*, there's a billboard saying that “products made of beef and pork aren't available here”. Here, ethnonationalism or local/ religious traditions of the people are circumventing the cultural impacts.

¹² After the second world war, connectivity rose tremendously, now covering the entire globe. They acknowledge the role of media in facilitating unprecedented global communication and helping suppressed people from repressive governments. For instance, social networking platforms played a substantial role in the Arab Spring. Also, intense interconnectedness gave a fillip to migration, and developments in information and communication technologies facilitated the rapid transmission of information, including news, and popular broadcasts. Moreover, the current era of globalisation is characterised by its speed, as I mentioned elsewhere, the time I take to reach Delhi from Thiruvananthapuram is just three hours. Also, the time I take to withdraw and invest in a stock of companies in countries separated by hundreds and thousands of kilometres is just a few seconds.

¹³ From environmental laws to corporate social responsibility and corporate tax to labour laws, corporates seldom escape the state power. For instance, consider the Indian government, which slammed Twitter for “trying to dictate terms to the world's largest democracy”.

¹⁴ For instance, consider Indianised English, Indianised *chow mein*, and the tag “French Omelette made in India”.

¹⁵ For instance, the middle class in peripheries has integrated itself into the mainstream global middle class but some in countries like Sub-Saharan Africa failed to do so. According to the World Bank, the middle class in Latin American countries grew by 50% over the last ten years, integrating themselves with the benefits of globalisation.

¹⁶ For instance, prices of commodities and interest rates are different in different countries, and some like North Korea are relatively closed economies. This negates the existence of a global economic society, though there is a system. The same holds true with others as well.

¹⁷ For instance, I've seen a group of beggars begging in front of the Spark Mall at *Kamla Nagar*. While the people who have the purchasing power to enter the mall are benefitted from globalisation, those who are begging, are, unfortunately, left out.

¹⁸ For instance, while it is easier for economic systems and the movement of capital to be globalised, such a level of globalisation has not been yet possible in political and cultural aspects. Also, in some regions, the level of economic integration is pathetic. Example: North Korea.

¹⁹ For instance, I've seen people in the airport wearing a *dhoti* with a suit, and have seen people taking Cappuccino with *samosa*- the concept of glocalisation.

²⁰ For instance, let's take international migration. Sceptics argue that the current rate of international migration is incomparable with the pre-World War I period. However, they fail to consider the qualitative aspect of international migration. For instance, countries like the US, Canada and Britain have value-added immigration policies, aimed at capitalising on immigration for GDP growth.

and cyber troop propaganda. Also, everyone has their own views on globalisation, and this article attempted to explain three major perspectives- hyperglobalist, sceptic, and transformationalist. While hyperglobalists exaggerate the benefits of globalisation, the sceptics undermine its benefits and even question its existence, to an extreme level. With a third way to perceive globalisation, post-sceptics, see the phenomenon as a bag of benefits and burdens.

ABBREVIATIONS

1. EU- The European Union
2. FDI- Foreign Direct Investment
3. GDP- Gross Domestic Product
4. IMF- International Monetary Fund
5. LDC- Least Developed Country
6. MNC- Multinational Corporation
7. TNC- Transnational Corporation
8. UN- The United Nations
9. US- The United States
10. WTO- World Trade Organisation

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BIOGRAPHY

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