

The Global Turn: National Encounters with the World

ISBN 87-7307-915-4

© 2003 Ulf Hedetoft & Aalborg University Press

Published by:

Aalborg University Press

Niels Jernes Vej 6B

DK-9220 Aalborg Ø

Phone 96357140

Fax 96350076

E-mail aauf@forlag.auc.dk

<http://www.forlag.auc.dk>

Cover design: Tobias Lidegaard Rossel

Layout: Julie Larsen

Printed in Denmark by:

BookPartner A/S, Copenhagen

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Chapter 2 was originally published in *European Journal of Social Theory*, 2 (1), 1999: 71-94, and is here reprinted in an updated version by kind permission of Sage Publications Ltd. Chapter 3 was first presented as a plenary contribution to a conference on *National Identities and National Movements in European History*, March 15-16, 2002, organized by the universities of Ghent and Leuven, Belgium. Chapter 4 initially took the form of a paper presented at the 3rd International Crossroads in Cultural Studies Conference, Birmingham University, June 21-25, 2000. Chapter 5 first appeared as chapter 17 in Mette Hjort & Scott MacKenzie, eds, *Cinema & Nation*, Routledge, 2000: 278-297, and is here reprinted with the kind permission of Routledge. In an earlier version, chapter 6 was presented to the German Study Group at the Center for European Studies, Harvard University, April 23, 2002. Chapter 7 is, in part, and with the kind approval of the Nordic Academic Press, based on my contribution to Bo Petersson & Eric Clark, eds, *Identity Dynamics and the Construction of Boundaries*, Nordic Academic Press (forthcoming), and was also delivered as a keynote lecture to the 12th Nordic Migration Conference, Helsinki, October 10-12, 2002.

I would like to express my thanks to a great many colleagues, associates and students who in these and other contexts have supplied thoughtful comments and ideas on chapter drafts at different stages of completion. Among these many people (far too many to list here, unfortunately), I owe a special gratitude to John Czaplicka (Harvard University), Mette Hjort (Hong Kong University), Lærke Holm (Aalborg University), Bo Petersson (Lund University) and Ray Taras (Tulane University). The spirit of constructive collaboration that has consistently informed their comments and critique has been a great encouragement. Needless to say, of course, the full responsibility for the finished product is mine alone.

Aalborg, December 2002

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Globalization-Causative, Supportive and Reactive

Persistent rumour has it that globalization is doing serious damage to the nation-state at the present historical juncture. Dramatic versions of the narrative even insist that the challenge of globalization to the nation-state is so serious that this pivotal "unit" of the international "system" is in danger of disappearing. This book focusses attention on this Global-National nexus in some of its many differing manifestations, offering both theoretical, historical and analytical thoughts and perspectives on a problem which increasingly dominates academic and public debates.

The overarching question is if, why and to what extent it makes sense to talk about what I have chosen to designate a global turn in international studies, a turn which might be as profound and consequential as the "linguistic turn" in the study of society and politics which has effected a sea-change in the academic world for a quarter of a century now. Are relations between, on the one hand, the nation-state as the core of international relations and collective identity formations and, on the other, global processes of an economic, political, cultural, technological and demographic nature being qualitatively transformed-and if so, how are we to conceptualize and explain the transformation? Or can we still use traditional concepts and models, on the assumption that the encounter between the nation-state and the world is not radically different from the way it has "always" been-though such commonplace images of national perpetuity, in light of the relatively short history of the nation-state, in themselves should alert us to the changeability of a system based on national sovereignties, national belonging and national citizenship.

There are very different backgrounds, assumptions and positions at play in contemporary debates about how to answer such questions and indeed about whether it makes sense at all to talk about a creature called globalization. There are significant differences between academics like, on the one hand, Arjun Appadurai (1996), Zygmunt Bauman (1998), Ulrich Beck (2000), Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri (2000), and Kenichi Ohmae (1990), who despite different accents and foci nevertheless agree that globalization is real and is fundamentally changing the social and political condition of the world¹-and on the other hand "national"

¹ It should be added that also Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* approach

sceptics like Paul Hirst/Grahame Thompson (1996) and Anthony Smith (1996), who from different disciplinary vantage-points and interests emphasize the resilience of the nation-state as a political or ethno-symbolic unit, or for that matter "global" sceptics like Emmanuel Wallerstein and other world-systems theorists, arguing that the world has for a very long time been a system of global economic dependencies and market-related interactions.² Though the two variants of scepticism differ fundamentally in their points of entry into the debate, they converge around the argument that "we've seen it all before", nothing is fundamentally new, history is rather continuous (or cyclical), and global processes, respectively the nation-state, are little more than an insignificant and deceptive blip on the historical trajectory of the international/global order.

I should confess from the outset that my analysis of globalization is closer to the former approach than to either of the two sceptical variants, though I reserve the right to differ from both.³ The reading of globalization put forward in this volume will be one that can best be described as a *repositioning argument*: I contend that globalization is both real, unique and deeply consequential for the nation-state and the international system, but also that this does not imply the withering-away of the national state, but a process of adaptive structural repositioning through which it undergoes a profound change of functionality.

Thus the guiding scholarly problem of this volume is to investigate if the two pivotal analytical "sites"-the nation-state and the global arena-are to be seen as complementary or contradictory: does globalization provide a new context and new roles for the nation-state and its forms of identity and culture? Is it busy weakening or eroding the national state? Is globalization mainly a hyped-up phenomenon with little basis in reality, basically identical with "internationalization"? Are we witnessing a combination of some or all of the possibilities inherent in these scenarios? Is globalization driving a wedge between masses and elites, because it threatens the political cohesiveness and cultural homogeneity of the nation-state, as some would argue? Or is it rather providing new fertile ground for the cultivation of both national, regional and local cultures,

(Huntington, 1996), though no doubt premised on an essentialist understanding of Cultures and Civilizations, at least implicitly shares this premise of a thoroughgoing transformation from a "national" to a "global" explanatory matrix-"civilizations" (in the plural) filling a transitional function between national cultures and a global culture (or "civilization" in the singular mode), between particularism and universality. For further reflections on the link between the Huntingtonian reading of international affairs and globalization, see particularly chapter 8 (*Conclusion*).

² See e.g. Anthony King's "Introduction" in, and Wallerstein's contribution to, King, 1991, as well as his and Roy Boyne's contributions to Featherstone, 1990.

³ In addition, it needs to be said that these categorizations are rough-and-ready roadmaps and do not allow for the many cross-variants and alternative readings that are also legion; for instance, Hirst & Thompson's *Globalization in Question* does not unequivocally fall into the second category if the argument is scrutinized in its many ramifications.

new forms of autonomy, and new "glocal" versions of identity politics-as others contend (Robertson, 1992)? Is globalization a cultural leveller but an economic differentiator, widening the economic gap between the developed and the less developed world while obliterating the historical specificities of the same disadvantaged countries in the process? How are globalization, migration processes, multiculturalism and new forms of belonging and integration among immigrant newcomers connected? And not least: is globalization a word which at bottom conceals a new form of worldwide empire, engineered and organized by the global hegemon, the USA?

The list of interesting questions could be expanded almost *ad infinitum*. The list of answers, in spite of the multiplicity of publications that have been dedicated to the issue of "globalization" over the past 10 years or so,⁴ is less impressive, and it is certainly hard to identify any positive consensus among globalization scholars. In light of such confusion, it is important to outline clearly the three most important assumptions on which the argument in this book is based and different segments of which will be fleshed out in the course of the individual chapters.

The *first* assumption is that "globalization" is much more than hype. Rather it is a real and profound factor of significant change in current world affairs and thus also in the study of international relations. I contend that it makes sense to conceive of a global turn in these domains, and also that this turn indeed has profound implications for the nation-state, although (a) it most likely does not imply a disappearance of the nation-state, but rather a refunctionalization of it based on the adaptive requirements of global forces and with wide-ranging significance for the nature and practice of sovereignty; and (b) the impact will vary significantly from one nation-state to the next. The differentiation between powerful and vulnerable states, cores and peripheries, strong and weak sovereignties will be enhanced, depending on the degree of control over economic, political, military and technological resources or, conversely, the degree of vulnerability to those resources being mainly in the hands of others in the new global order. In turn this situation forces weaker states into new, possibly regional alliances in order to contain the "global threat" or utilize the opportunities presented in an optimal way; or alternatively push them into isolation, conflictual relations or other forms of opposition to the forces and agents of globalization. It is thus the assumption that globalization does have its winners and losers, its triumphalists and its victims, its independent and dependent variables, and that the liberal optimistic view of globalization as a universal leveller and booster of productivity, wealth and welfare for all is seriously misguided (though there is no

⁴ Apart from the works already cited, see especially Baylis & Smith, 1997; Held, 1995; Jameson & Miyoshi, 1998; Scholte, 2000; and Østerud, 1999, for illuminating and level-headed contributions to the subject.

doubt that globalization entails a profound redistribution of wealth across the globe).

The *second* major assumption is that we can sensibly differentiate between three modalities of globalization: *causative, supportive and reactive*. The root causes of globalization as a major force in the reordering of the international system must be located in the economic and financial domains, in the expansive forces underlying the economic-political order of the western world; these "causative" processes are aided and promoted by the globalization of natural science and technological advances-these are the major *supportive* factors, basically neutral but today harnessed to global forces; but the major *impacts* are to be found in the spheres of national politics, society and culture. For this reason, globalization debates in the first two areas are subdued or absent (or at least non-controversial), whereas they are heated in the third. The reasons are relatively self-explanatory: economic actors, business people, financiers and currency speculators, as well as representatives of their technological underpinnings, generally have an ingrained interest in the globalization of markets and the opening of borders, not least multinational corporations (but not only either). Political actors, representatives of national societies and cultural identities, on the other hand, in various ways feel the mounting pressures of these forces on the cohesiveness and power of their national frames of reference and practice, predicated as they are on the survival and strength of the sovereign context of nation-states. This leads to globalization being not just a hotly disputed issue in these areas, but also to different ideas of how to cope with it and its champions in their many varied guises.

This is not to impute to causative and supportive modalities of globalization, in spite of their border and sovereignty disturbing tendency, an *interest* in the disappearance of the national state as a territorially situated site of political order and stability. In fact, quite the contrary, as many commentators have argued (e.g. Hirst & Thompson in the work cited above). All the same, there is significant tension in both the national and the global "camps": the "causative actors" of globalization-as well as their instrumental technological support structures-are responsible for setting processes in motion that threaten the cohesion and sovereignty of nation-states, but are nevertheless interested in the maintenance of the same states in order to avoid undesirable anarchy that could impair long-term planning and investments (as a consequence, Zygmunt Bauman (1998) argues that such global actors are interested in "weak states"). And the "reactive actors" in the areas of politics, society and culture, basically interested in and dependent on the continued strength of the nation-state context, are faced with a situation where national interests are increasingly becoming linked to transnational fields of action; where sovereignty is being transformed into modes of influencing decision-making in international or supranational institutions; where cultures are commercialized and homogenized through the impact of transnational business and global consumer life-styles. All the while their imagined cultural

underpinning, electoral backing and long-term political objectives nevertheless privilege maintaining "the nation" as it is. Thus strategies for defending interests and protecting identities are increasingly becoming decoupled from each other: it takes new and extraordinary measures to maintain the mass/elite bind, and populist-sometimes racist-nationalism as well as the compulsive (almost convulsive) control of borders to monitor illegal and unwanted immigration are some of the conspicuous forms that this tension between Globality and Nationality assumes (Guiraudon & Joppke, 2001).

The *third* assumption follows from the second: globalization, though differently distributed across societal domains (scholarly disciplines), is a ubiquitous and comprehensive phenomenon. As will be argued both in this introduction and throughout the book, there are certainly important *substantive* differences between internationalization and globalization, though both "systems" will tend to retain the nation-state as a central unit (but in very different roles). Whereas internationalization and the international order recognize the national states as the principal and proactive units of the system, the emerging global order, superimposed on it, attempts to subordinate (most) nation-states to its own objectives and to turn them into local and reactive units of regulatory governance-agencies of law and order in the service of global economic liberalism. These processes are especially damaging to the practice of real political sovereignty in the ambit of nation-states, sovereignty increasingly becoming a formal property held "on license" and made conditional on the fulfillment of order-providing requirements or other services rendered to powerful agents and beneficiaries of global processes. In the same vein and for similar reasons, discourses of sovereignty are being invaded and colonized by discourses of influence, cultural autonomy and transnational networking, all of which bear indirect witness to the relative "dispowerment" of the traditional core unit of international relations and its new structural embeddedness in the global order (Camilleri & Falk, 1992; Walker & Mendlovitz, 1990). At the level of collective identity formation, the growth of so-called transnational nationalisms, national but "de-territorialized" forms of identification that straddle political boundaries in multiple ways, is an obvious manifestation of the impact of globalization and its qualitative difference as compared with the international order.

Such differences between a purely international and a global order partly originate in the substantive processes that have already been briefly addressed; but importantly, they also accrue from the sheer *quantitative proliferation* of inter-, trans- and supranational processes in *all* societal, technological and cultural domains. In this sense, globalization is an illustrative example of a Hegelian historical juncture where quantity transmutes into quality: the multiplication and intensification of processes where "the world" makes a direct and tangible impact-in more or less institutionalized forms-on decision-making, communication, mobility, commodity exchange, everyday life-styles, and images of time, space and belonging are *per se* constitutive of a new social, political and

cultural order, reflected in the intensity and ubiquitousness of discourses about and positions on this many-faceted phenomenon.

For this reason, I regard one of the commonplace arguments against globalization-that it is so "diffuse" and "badly defined" that it does not deserve a common designation and is basically hollow rhetoric-as an oblique articulation of its very strength: it is precisely the multiple and comprehensive nature of these phenomena that add to their potency and which are fundamentally constitutive of "globalization" as a set of interlinked processes which everyone has to confront and which together with the still-extant national context are setting new parameters for people, politics and societal trajectories, and especially for the nation-state and its attendant forms of identification and practice. Conversely, the multiple nature of globalization-not just at the level of "factual processes" but also that of discursive orchestration and utilization by very different societal actors and institutions-calls for precise typologization, conceptualization and terminological usage in the analysis of the different domains where globalization is active. Moreover, since encounters between Nationality and Globality are differently configured in different domains and circumstances, these configurations, too, need to be clearly specified in order not to get immersed in fuzzy wording and imprecise references. The substantive chapters of this book try to meet this criterion. Further, the question of the nature and implications of the global turn will be addressed in terms of a few concluding perspectives in chapter 8. For now, let me dwell on three common misconceptions of the nature of globalization, which will be helpful in framing the issues in hand and in clarifying the presumptive basis of this book.

Three Misconceptions

Current discussions about globalization are characterized by a number of misconceptions. The most significant of these have underlain the argument so far and have been obliquely referred to already, but it is nevertheless useful to discuss them in a more detailed manner. The focus here will be on what I regard to be the three most significant fallacies of globalization studies.

The *first* misconception is a conflation of globalization and internationalization, a "global" and "international" order (or "system"). There are certainly important links and in certain ways also a grey zone of overlap between them, but at the level of analytical distinction and conceptual explication, they are quite dissimilar-and the difference between them is one that makes a serious difference. The international order complements the nation-state, providing it with an environment in which it may thrive and prosper, both through the institutions of the international system and through more direct bi-, tri- or multilateral relations among states. In terms of classic IR theory, the nation-state is the basic unit of an international but relatively anarchic system consisting of the aggregation of all the units and their different forms of contact, more or less grudging recognition, (interdependences and power struggles.

Ideally, the units maintain themselves and each other in and through the international order, which in turn provides them with a modicum of stability, trust and predictability through a series of intergovernmental institutions, regimes and normative arrangements. In this sense, unit and system are interdependent and mutually keep each other alive; nation-states can live in a relatively "calculable" world environment. Formally speaking, the international order is a symmetrical structure composed of like-minded and equal entities, though of course in real terms it is a highly inegalitarian and uneven mosaic, a structure of dominance, imbalances and hierarchical relations.

This, on the one hand, *is* the very nature of internationalization, being constituted as a dialectical relationship between formal symmetry and real power differences. On the other hand, it is also this relationship which conceptually and historically provides the bridge between international and global processes. While the international order is predicated on this balance between symmetry and asymmetry, recognition and competition between states, the balance is by its very nature precarious and will tend to crumble and transform in the course of time, as real imbalances increasingly get the upper hand and disturb the "equilibrium".

Globalization springs from this process of "equilibrium disturbance", setting in at the point when the dominance of very powerful units in conjunction with the causative and supportive factors of global processes develop into a menace to borders, sovereignties and mass/elite nexuses of the "national kind". It is, in fact, such extreme forms of global power asymmetry which obliquely give rise to all the current discourses of "clashes", not between political entities or military organizations, but between civilizations and cultures-discourses which interestingly have a western rather than "orientalist" origin (further on this theme, see chapter 8). An obvious case in point consists of the current confrontation between the "old" tenet of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other states and the more contemporary acceptance (and practice) of the right for "the international community" to intervene nevertheless, if state practices violate human rights or threaten the global order or could be suspected of planning to do so or... etc. In this way, the international system is having a new global order superimposed on it, one that does not do entirely away with it, but makes it and its units dependent on, functional for and subservient to the interests, rules and normativities of "globalization" and its leading composers and conductors. Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri (2000) may get the analysis of globalization wrong in a number of ways (see chapters 3 and 8), but on this point they cannot be faulted.

The *second* misconception that should be dispelled is that globalization equals the disappearance of absolute sovereignty and the installment of a "relative" or "shared" or "diffused" kind of sovereignty. No doubt globalization has serious consequences for sovereignty, as the argument so far has tried to make clear, but the difference is not one that can be conceived as a transformation from absolute to relative sovereignty. Nation-state sovereignty, in spite of much mythical thinking to the contrary, has never been absolute in any of the acceptable meanings of that

word (James, 1986; Onuf, 1991). In fact, the relativity and contingency of sovereignty follow directly from the nature of the international order, on the one hand because sovereignty is predicated on the recognition by and interchanges with other sovereignties, and on the other because the international system contains "units" representing very uneven approximations to absolute sovereignty—depending on access to and control of a wide array of power resources (in other words, on degrees of national self-sufficiency).

In addition, three further facts should be recognized. First, that sovereignty has always been territorially limited. Secondly, that the domains that have been regarded and treated as pivotal for the sovereign self-image of states and their practices of ultimate authority within these territorial boundaries have never included "everything", but have both varied historically and been selective at given moments of time. And thirdly, that the absoluteness of sovereignty *discourse* has always been emphatically counterbalanced by the real negotiability of sovereignty *practice*, depending of course on the specific states in question, the concrete interdependencies on hand and the exact nature of pragmatic interests at stake.

All this, then, does *not* cover the specific contribution of globalization to the issue of nation-state sovereignty—the formal legal-political supremacy held by an agency of legitimate arbitration and last-resort control over specific societal domains and issues, or concretely: the context within which individual nation-states can freely pursue their self-defined interests in the way they see fit, while having appropriate instruments and resources at their disposal. This contribution of globalization rather consists in the radical and qualitative transformation of the resources, processes and distributive power structures on which such sovereign authority is predicated and without which it transforms, as argued above, into a scramble for influence and network relations through regional and global institutions, or degenerates into an empty shell of licensed local governance practices, where decisions may in a very attenuated formal sense still be in the hands of national polities, but where the real room for decision-making manoeuvre approximates to zero and "homogenization", "harmonization" and "adaptation" to the global imperative become the accepted watchwords.

Finally, the *third* misconception is based on a reductive conception of the relationship between globalization, migration and multiethnicity. Hence it is appropriate to point out that globalization is not the producer or causative factor underlying multinational states as such, and also that globalization is not engendered by international migratory movements. Mainly as a legacy of Empire and dynastic states, multiethnic states have existed throughout the national era (though admittedly as a real-world eyesore to the ideal national blueprint of coalescence between nation, state and culture), and migratory movements—which incidentally do not have a massively greater volume today than 100 years ago (Faist, 2000)—have constituted a continuous dimension in the international order.

This is not to argue that there are no relevant links between globalization, multiethnicity and migration (see especially chapter 7 of this volume). The role of