
PHILOSOPHIES OF GLOBALIZATION STUDIES

CONTEMPORARY GLOBALIZATION AND NEW CIVILIZATIONAL FORMATIONS

Shmuel N. Eisenstadt

In this article I would like to examine some specific aspects of contemporary globalization as they bear on the crystallization of new distinct civilizational formations. The new very intensive processes of contemporary globalization are characterized by growing interconnectedness between economic, cultural and political processes of globalization. The full impact of the processes can be understood only in the new historical context, especially against the background of changes in the international arenas which have been closely connected with processes of globalization during this period. Among different contemporary cultural and civilization forms we note a very important component of contemporary civilization attesting to the fact that different religions are now acting in a common civilizational setting. In this context competition and struggles between religions often became vicious – yet at the same time there developed strong tendencies toward the development of common encouraging interfaith meetings and encounters which focused on their relations in terms of some of the premises of the new civilizational framework rooted in the original program of modernity. These premises implied the possibility of cooperation between them – indeed, even going beyond that. Such attempts at the reformulation of civilizational premises have been taking place in some movements and in new institutional formations such as the European Union, in different local and regional frameworks, as well as in the various attempts by the different ‘peripheries’.

Keywords: globalization, hegemonic center, contemporary civilization, civilizational formations, global confrontations, non-Western societies.

Introduction

The new very intensive processes of contemporary globalization are characterized by growing interconnectedness between economic, cultural and political processes of globalization. Each of these processes entails continuous encounters between different societies and their respective sectors. In the cultural arena the processes of globalization were closely connected with the expansion especially through the major media that were often conceived in many parts of the world as uniform, hegemonic and Western, above all

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American, cultural programs or visions, giving rise to strong tendencies for global cultural homogenization and, what has been referred to as 'de-traditionalization'.

These processes of globalization have been characterized by continual growing mutual impingement of different societies and social sectors throughout the world. This process gives rise to the possibility of more intensive confrontations between them. These processes entail the continual movements of hitherto peripheral, 'local' non-hegemonic groups and sectors to the centers of their respective national and internal systems. The movement from periphery into existing centers and also into emerging hegemonic centers often bypasses the trans-local institutions and public arenas; concomitantly there is a closely related movement of non-Western societies or sectors thereof into the hitherto mostly Western centers of modernity.

The movements of many 'peripheral', be they national or international, sectors into the very hegemonic centres of globalization, were connected first with the continual development of new modes of resistance to globalization, of various 'counter'-globalization tendencies and movements; these forms of resistance include the intensification of terrorist activities and associated tendencies to appropriate conventions of modernity thus leading to the development of new visions of civilization.

Second, such incorporation entailed continual intensive encounters and confrontations between different civilizational traditions and the respective hegemonic centres – encounters and confrontations which were intensified by the multiple movements of migration and by the impact of the media.

Third, the incorporation of multiple social sectors, indeed of entire societies into the global framework was closely interwoven with far-reaching processes of dislocation of large sectors of population of many societies and their push, as it were, into states of insecurity and anomie.

Fourth, there emerge growing discrepancies in economic, political and social processes between the hegemonic centres and the more peripheral sectors. Such discrepancies were of course characteristic both of 'traditional' pre-modern globalization, as well as of the processes of globalization of early modern period and in the era of the hegemonies of the nation and revolutionary states and of capitalist market economies. In contrast to such discrepancies in the earlier periods, contemporary discrepancies develop against the background of the homogenizing and centralizing tendencies and ideologies of the nation, revolutionary states, and more contemporary forces. These discrepancies entail the possibility for the continual mutual impingement of these different societies and social sectors.

Of special importance in this context is the combination of discrepancies between those social sectors which were incorporated into the hegemonic financial and 'high-tech' frameworks and those which were left out. The closely connected far-reaching dislocation of many of the people who comprise the latter sectors, suffered a decline in their standard of living and, as a result, gave rise to acute feelings of dislocation and dispossession. Most visible among such dislocated or dispossessed groups were not necessarily – and certainly not only – those from the lowest economic echelons – poor peasants, or urban lumpen-proletariat, important as they were in those situations. Rather, most prominent among such dislocated sectors were, first, groups from the middle or

lower echelons of the more traditional sectors. Those sectors comprise people who were hitherto embedded in relatively stable, even if not very affluent, social, cultural and economic frameworks or niches. These sectors (and the people they comprise) were transferred into the mostly lower echelons of new urban centers. Secondly, large social sectors which were put out from the work force; and third, various highly mobile, 'modern' educated groups – professionals, graduates of modern universities and the like who were denied autonomous access to the new political centers or participation in them – find themselves dispossessed from access to the centres of their respective societies or from their cultural programs. Thus, for instance, it was not only the dislocation of the Shia clergy from strong positions in the cultural centre or close to it that was important in the success of the Khomeini revolution. Of no less importance was the fact that highly mobile modernized occupational and professional groups, which developed, to no small extent, as a result of the processes of modernization, and which were controlled by the Shah, were barred from any autonomous access to the new political center or participation in it – very much against the premises inherent in these processes. Such groups were especially visible in Turkey, India and Pakistan, and in many of the Muslim Diasporas in Europe – but they were also important in other Muslim or South Asian societies.

These groups often find themselves in a situation of social anomie in which old ways of life have lost their traditional standing. They are caught in the pressure of globalization and of international markets for greater efficiency and are losing their security nets and for whom the programs promulgated by the existing modernizing regimes, are not able to provide meaningful interpretations of the new reality. A very important group which may be highly susceptible to communal-religious or fundamentalist messages are younger generation of seemingly hitherto well-established urban classes who distance themselves from the more secular style of life of their relatively successful parents. But even more important are the relatively recent members of second-generation immigrants to the larger cities from provincial urban and even some rural centres (Eisenstadt 1999).

Changes in the International Arenas and in the Constitution of Hegemonies

The full impact of the processes analyzed above can be understood only in the new historical context, especially in the changes in the international arenas which have been closely connected with processes of globalization that have been taking place in this period.

The most important aspects of the new international scene were: first, shifts in hegemonies in the international order; second, the development of new power relations between different states; third, the emergence of new actors, institutions and new regulatory arenas and rules in the international arena. All of these changes attest to the continual disintegration of the 'Westphalian' international order with far-reaching implications for the transformation of political arenas, especially those of the national and revolutionary states.

In the continuous shifts in the relative hegemonic standing of different centres there developed the concomitant growing competitions or contestations between such centres about their presumed hegemonic standing. Second, there developed continual contestations between different societies and sectors about their place in the international order – and the concomitant increasing destabilization of many state structures – above all but

not only in the different peripheries – all of them contributing greatly to the development of the ‘New World Disorder’ (Jowitt 1993). The development of such a disorder was intensified with the demise of the Soviet Union, the disappearance of the bipolar order of the ‘Cold War’ and the relative stability it entailed, and of the disappearance of the ideological confrontation between Communism and the West. These developments – with only one Superpower, the US, remaining – gave rise to greater autonomy of many regional and trans-state frameworks and within these frameworks to new combinations of geopolitical, cultural and ideological conflicts and struggles over their relations standing and hegemony, including indeed those between major global powers – the US, the European Union, post-Soviet Russia and China.

Further, far-reaching transformations in the power relations in the international order took place around the last decade of the twentieth century. During the first two decades after the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States was not only the single superpower but also the almost non-contested hegemon, in both military and economic terms, of the neo-liberal economic order. This status was epitomized by the Washington Consensus being aggressively pursued by the major international agencies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. But the situation has greatly changed with the onset of the second post-Soviet decade. In this decade, post-Soviet Russia, China and to a smaller extent India and Brazil, became much more independent players in the international economic order, pursuing more independent policies, pursuing their own geopolitical as well as economic interests, generating changes in the balance of regional geopolitical and economic formations challenging the American hegemony, as well as the premises of the Washington Consensus. All these tendencies were intensified attendant on the international financial crises which developed from 2008 on – which shattered and transformed most of the hitherto predominant arrangements for regulating power relations in the international economic and political arenas.

Intercivilizational Settings – Anti-Globalization Movements and Transformation of Movements and Ideologies of Protest

All these processes provided the background for the crystallization of new civilizational frameworks. One of the most important manifestations of the new civilizational framework that developed attendant on all the processes analyzed above has indeed been the close interweaving between the numerous anti-globalization movements and the new types of orientations and movements of protest that developed from the late sixties of the twentieth century. While intercivilizational ‘anti-globalization’ or anti-hegemonic tendencies combined with an ambivalent attitude to the cosmopolitan centres of globalization developed in most historical cases of globalization – be it in the Hellenistic, Roman, the Chinese Confucian or Hinduistic, in ‘classical’ Islamic, as well as early modern ones – yet on the contemporary scene they become intensified and transformed. First, they became widespread especially via the media throughout the world. Second, they became highly politicized, interwoven with fierce contestations formulated in highly political ideological terms. Third, they entailed a continual reconstitution in a new global context, of collective identities and contestations between them. Fourth, the reinterpretations and appropriations of modernity (giving rise to new inter-civilizational orientations and relations)

were attempts by these actors to decouple radical modernity from Westernization, and to take away from the 'West', from the original Western 'Enlightenment' – and even Romantic programs – the monopoly of modernity; to appropriate modernity and to define it in their own terms, often above all in highly transformed civilizational terms. A central component of this discourse was a highly ambivalent attitude to the West, above all to the US, its predominance and hegemony most fully manifested in the worldwide expansion (including many European countries) of strong anti-American movements.

All these developments were perhaps most clearly visible in the various new Diasporas and virtual communities and networks. It was indeed within these virtual communities and networks that there developed extensive and highly transformed intensified 'reactions' to the processes of globalization, especially to the hegemonic claims of the different, often competing centers of globalization, attesting, to follow Arjun Appadurai's felicitous expression, 'the power of small numbers' (Appadurai 2006) and constituting one of the most volatile and highly inflammatory components on the global scene; as well as an important factor in the transformation of inter-civilizational relations in the contemporary scene, often promulgating visions of clashes of civilizations.

One of the most important manifestations of the new civilizational framework that developed attendant on all the processes analyzed above has indeed been the close interweaving between these processes and the new types of orientations and movements of protest that have developed since the late sixties of the twentieth century (Eisenstadt 2006).

Movements and symbols of protest continued indeed to play a very important central role in the political and cultural arenas – as they did in the constitution and development of modern states – but their structure, as well as their goals of visions have been continually reinforced by the processes of globalization. The most important among these movements were the new student and anti-(Vietnam) movements of the late 1960s – the famous 'movements of 1968', which continued in highly transformed way in the great variety of movements that have developed since then. These movements and orientations went beyond the 'classical' model of the nation state and of the 'classical' or liberal, national and socialist movements, and they developed in two seemingly opposite but in fact often overlapping or cross-cutting directions. On the one hand, there developed various 'post-modern', 'post-materialist' movements such as the women's, ecological and anti-globalization movements; on the other hand, many movements promoted very particularistic local, regional, ethnic cultural autonomous movements that were very aggressive and ideological in spirit. Among different sectors of the dispossessed there also blossomed various religious-fundamentalist and religious-communal movements that promulgated conceptions of which identity was supreme above all others.

The themes promulgated by these movements were often presented or perceived as the harbingers of far-reaching changes being spawned by the contemporary cultural and institutional scene, indeed possibly also of the exhaustion of the entire classical program of modernity entailed far-reaching transformations, both in internal state and international arenas. In turn these themes of protest spawned the revolutionary imagination and thus were constitutive of the development of the modern social order and above all indeed of the modern and revolutionary states.

The common core of the distinctive characteristics of these new movements, attesting to their difference from the 'classical' ones, has been first the transfer of the central focus of protest orientations from the centers of the nation and revolutionary states and from the constitution of 'national' and revolutionary collectivities as the charismatic bearers of the vision of modernity into various diversified arenas of which the by now transformed nation states was only one; second, the concomitant weakening of the 'classical' revolutionary imaginaire as a major component of protest; third, the development of new institutional frameworks in which these options were exercised; and fourth, the development of new visions of inter-civilizational relations.

Contrary to the basic orientations of the earlier, 'classical' movements, the new movements of protest, were oriented to what one scholar has defined as the extension of the systemic range of social life and participation, manifest in demands for growing participation in work, in different communal frameworks, citizen movements, and the like. Perhaps the initial simplest manifestation of change in these orientations was the shift from the emphasis on the increase in the standard of life which was so characteristic of the 1950s as the epitome of continuous technological-economic progress to that of 'quality of life' – a transformation, which has been designated in the 1970s as one from materialist to post-materialist values. In Habermas' (1989) words these movements moved from focusing on problems of distributions to an emphasis on the 'grammar of life' (Taylor 2007: 299–505). One central aspect of these movements was the growing emphasis, especially within those which developed among sectors dispossessed by processes of globalization, on the politics of identity; on the constitution of new religious, ethnic and local collectivities promulgating in narrow, particularist themes often in terms of exclusivist cultural identity – often formulated in highly aggressive terms.

Closely related to these processes was the transformation of the utopian, especially transcendental, orientations whether of the totalistic 'Jacobin' utopian ones that were characteristic of many of the revolutionary movements, or the more static utopian visions which promulgated a flight from various constraints and tensions of modern society. The focus of the transcendental utopian orientations shifted from the centers of the nation state and overall political-national collectivities to more heterogeneous or dispersed arenas, to different 'authentic' forms of life-worlds, often in various 'multicultural' and 'post-modern' directions.

In the discourse attendant these developments, above all in the West, but spreading very quickly beyond it, there developed a strong emphasis on multiculturalism as a possible supplement or substitute to that of the hegemony of the homogeneous modern nation-state model and as possibly displacing it.

New Intercivilizational Relations, Anti-Globalization Tendencies and Movements, Global Confrontations, Attempts at Appropriation of Modernity

The crucial differences from the point of view of civilizational orientations between, the major 'classical' national and religious, especially reformist, movements, and the new contemporary communal, religious and above all fundamentalist movements, – all of which were closely connected with the constitution of the new virtual communities –

stand out above all with respect to their attitude to the premises of the cultural and political program of modernity and to the West. They constitute part of a set of much wider developments which have been taking place throughout the world, in Muslim, Indian and Buddhist societies, seemingly continuing, yet indeed in a markedly transformed way, the contestations between different earlier reformist and traditional religious movements that developed throughout non-Western societies.

These developments signaled far-reaching changes from the earlier reformist and religious movements that developed throughout non-Western societies from the nineteenth century to the present. Within these contemporary anti-global movements confrontation with the West does not take the form of searching to become incorporated into the modern hegemonic civilization on its terms, but rather to appropriate the new international global scene and modernity for themselves, in their own terms, in terms of their traditions.

These movements do indeed promulgate a markedly confrontational attitude to the West, to what is conceived as Western, and attempts to appropriate modernity and the global system on their own non-Western, often anti-Western, terms. This highly confrontational attitude to the West, to what is conceived as Western, is in these movements closely related either to the attempts to decouple radically modernity from Westernization or to take away from the West the monopoly of modernity, and to appropriate the contemporary scene, contemporary modernity in terms of visions grounded in their own traditions.

They aim to take over as it were the modern program in terms of their own civilizational premises, which are rooted, according to them, in the basic, indeed highly reformulated images and symbols of civilizational and religious identity – very often formulated by them as the universalistic premises of their respective religions or civilizations, and aiming to transform the global scene along such terms.

At the same time, however, the vistas grounded in these traditions have been continually reconstituted under the impact of ‘modern’ programs and couched paradoxically enough in terms of the discourse of modernity in the contemporary scene. Indeed these discourses and the discussions around them resemble in many ways the discourse of modernity as it developed from its very beginning in the very centres of the modernities in Europe, including far-reaching criticisms of the predominant Enlightenment program of modernity and its tensions and antinomies. Thus, for instance, many of the criticisms of the Enlightenment project as made by Sayyid Qutb, possibly the most eminent fundamentalist Islamic theologian, are in many ways very similar to the major religious and ‘secular’ critics of Enlightenment from de Maistre, the romantics, the many populist Slavophiles in Central and Eastern Europe, and in general those who, in Charles Taylor's words emphasized the ‘expressivist dimension of human experience’, then moving, of course, through Nietzsche up to Heidegger. Or, in other words, these different antiglobal and anti-Western movements and ideologies reinforce in their own terms the basic tensions and antinomies of modernity, attesting – perhaps in a paradoxical way – that they constitute components of a new common global civilizational framework rooted in the program of modernity, but also going beyond it.

Another very important component of the contemporary civilizational scene attesting to the fact that different religions are now acting in a common civilizational setting is the changes in the relations between the different – especially the ‘major’ – religions.

Competition and struggles between religions became very often vicious – yet at the same time there developed strong tendencies to the development of common encouraging interfaith meetings and encounters focused on their relations to some of the premises of the new civilizational framework rooted in the original program of modernity and on the possibility of cooperation between them – but indeed going beyond it.

Such attempts at the reformulation of civilizational premises have been taking place not only in these movements, but also – even if perhaps in less dramatic forms – in new institutional formations such as the European Union, in different local and regional frameworks, as well as in the various attempts by the different ‘peripheries’ – as for instance in the discourse on Asian values, to contest the Western, especially American, hegemony, as well as to forge their own constitutive modernities. These reformulations of rules and premises have also been taken up by many developments in the ‘popular’ cultural arenas challenging the seeming predominance of the American vision. Thus giving rise to distinct new trans-state Indian and East Asian media productions and regional, diasporic and even global spheres of influence.

The debates and confrontations in which these movements or actors engage and confront each other may often be formulated in ‘civilizational’ terms, but these very terms – indeed the very term ‘civilization’ as constructed in such a discourse – are already couched in the language of modernity, in totalistic, very often essentialistic, and absolutizing terms derived from the basic premises of the discourse of modernity, its tensions and antinomies, even if it can often draw on older religious traditions. When such clashes or contestations are combined with political, military or economic struggles and conflicts they can indeed become very violent.

Indeed, at the same time, the combination of the far-reaching changes in the international arena and the distinct characteristics of the contemporary processes of globalization with the changes in the structure of the international arena has given rise to the multiplication and intensification of aggressive movements and inter-civilizational contestations and encounters.

Indeed among various anti-global movements, of special importance was the multiplication, extension and intensification of highly aggressive terrorist movements, which became closely interwoven with international and intercivilizational contestations and encounters. Already in the first period of the post (Second) World War era, a central component of the international scene was the growth of revolutionary and terrorist groups and this component became even more central being interwoven with the crystallization of new international and intercivilizational orientations, new patterns of inter-civilizational relations. When these transformations became connected with increasing confrontations in many societies, both in local, as well as in global scenes and arenas, and with political, military or economic struggles and conflicts they can indeed become very violent; they may become a central player in connection with movements of independence of different regional contestations, what G. Münkler (2003) has defined as non-symmetric wars, in contrast with the symmetric wars between nation-states in the framework of the Westphalian order, which became a continual component of the international order and in which such movements played a central role.

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