Reclaiming Globalisation as Our Own

Globalisation brings riches and power to some. It brings loathing and fear to many others. What is this creature or creation that we call globalisation? As a notion derived from the dominant description in most media today, it has everything in it to fear and loathe for the underclass and the subaltern, and for the weak and the uninformed.

But that is a manufactured notion of globalisation - manufactured and perpetuated to increase its power and control. It is not the predominant form of globalisation if we look at the history of human civilization, and even its current practice. The dominant discourse in the 'non-vernacular' media has given it pride of place. That is not to doubt its power and its pervasiveness. But this power and pervasiveness does not give it predominance, except in the minds - and hearts - of those who love to use it, and those who fear it.

In his quiet, matter-of-fact style ***Amartya Sen*** *posits globalisation as a world heritage, which has contributed, ' over thousands of years, to the progress of the world through travel, trade, migration, spread of cultural influences, and dissemination of knowledge and understanding (including that of science and technology)'.*

He positions democracy as part of this world heritage, as something that has intrinsic and universal value; and that the

choice of development over democracy is a false choice, that has not been tested anywhere. He goes further, and avers that it is only democracy that makes it possible to deal with scarcity and famines, and not the lack of it.

In an accompanying piece, ***Rajeev Bhargava*** *dwells on this supposed choice between poverty and freedom - whether freedom from poverty is a priority over political freedom. No contest. That they are mutually exclusive is the false choice.*

In the last piece, which we have abstracted at length, ***Hermann Maiba*** *looks at Social Movements and the process of globalization. Her conclusion - it has created not only new constraints but in turn it has also opened novel opportunities for social movement activists to resist the very processes that produced these grievances. It reinforces the notion that we reclaim globalisation as our own!*

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How to Judge Globalism

Amartya Sen

Globalization is often seen as global Westernization. Those who take an upbeat view of globalization see it as a marvelous contribution of Western civilization to the world. From the opposite perspective, Western dominance--sometimes seen as a continuation of Western imperialism--is the devil of the piece. In this view, contemporary capitalism, driven and led by greedy and grabby Western countries in Europe and North America, has established rules of trade and business relations that do not serve the interests of the poorer people in the world.

Is globalization really a new Western curse? It is, in fact, neither new nor necessarily Western; and it is not a curse. Over thousands of years, globalization has contributed to the progress

of the world through travel, trade, migration, spread of cultural influences, and dissemination of knowledge and understanding (including that of science and technology).

To reject the globalization of science and technology because it represents Western influence and imperialism would not only amount to overlooking global contributions--drawn from many different parts of the world--that lie solidly behind so-called Western science and technology, but would also be quite a daft practical decision, given the extent to which the whole world can benefit from the process.

A Global Heritage

Our global civilization is a world heritage--not just a collection of disparate local cultures. When a modern mathematician in Boston invokes an algorithm to solve a difficult computational problem, she may not be aware that she is helping to commemorate the Arab mathematician Mohammad Ibn Musa-al-Khwarizmi, who flourished in the first half of the ninth century.

Not only is the progress of global science and technology not an exclusively West-led phenomenon, but there were major global developments in which the West was not even involved. The printing of the world's first book was a marvelously globalized event. The technology of printing was, of course, entirely an achievement of the Chinese. But the content came from

elsewhere. The first printed book was an Indian Sanskrit treatise, translated into Chinese by a half-Turk.

Global Interdependences and Movements

To see globalization as merely Western imperialism of ideas and beliefs (as the rhetoric often suggests) would be a serious and costly error, in the same way that any European resistance to Eastern influence would have been at the beginning of the last millennium. Of course, there are issues related to globalization that do connect with imperialism (the history of conquests, colonialism, and alien rule remains relevant today in many ways), and a postcolonial understanding of the world has its merits. But it would be a great mistake to see globalization primarily as a feature of imperialism. It is much bigger--much greater--than that.

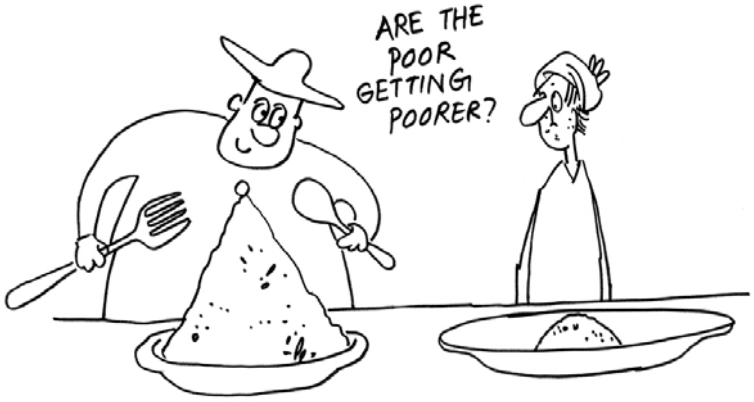
The issue of the distribution of economic gains and losses from globalization remains an entirely separate question, and it must be addressed as a further--and extremely relevant--issue. There is extensive evidence that the global economy has brought prosperity to many different areas of the globe.

We cannot reverse the economic predicament of the poor across the world by withholding from them the great advantages of contemporary technology, the well-established efficiency of international trade and exchange, and the social as well as economic merits of living in an open society. Rather, the main issue is how to make good use of the remarkable benefits of

economic intercourse and technological progress in a way that pays adequate attention to the interests of the deprived and the underdog. That is, I would argue, the constructive question that emerges from the so-called antiglobalization movements.

Are the Poor Getting Poorer?

The principal challenge relates to inequality--international as well as intranational. The troubling inequalities include disparities in affluence and also gross asymmetries in political, social, and economic opportunities and power.



A crucial question concerns the sharing of the potential gains from globalization--between rich and poor countries and among different groups within a country. It is often argued that the rich are getting richer and the poor poorer.

On the other side, the apologists of globalization point to their belief that the poor who participate in trade and exchange are

mostly getting richer. If the central relevance of this question is accepted, then the whole debate turns on determining which side is correct in this empirical dispute. But is this the right battleground in the first place? I would argue that it is not.

Global Justice and the Bargaining Problem

Even if the poor were to get just a little richer, this would not necessarily imply that the poor were getting a fair share of the potentially vast benefits of global economic interrelations. When there are gains from cooperation, there can be many possible arrangements.

As the game theorist and mathematician John Nash discussed more than half a century ago (in "The Bargaining Problem," published in *Econometrica* in 1950, which was cited, among other writings, by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences when Nash was awarded the Nobel Prize in economics), the central issue in general is not whether a particular arrangement is better for everyone than no cooperation at all would be, but whether that is a fair division of the benefits.

An Analogy with the Family

By analogy, to argue that a particularly unequal and sexist family arrangement is unfair, one does not have to show that women would have done comparatively better had there been no families at all, but only that the sharing of the benefits is seriously

unequal in that particular arrangement. Many different family arrangements--when compared with the absence of any family system--would satisfy the condition of being beneficial to both men and women. The real issue concerns how fairly benefits associated with these respective arrangements are distributed.

Altering Global Arrangements

Can those less-well-off groups get a better deal from globalized economic and social relations without dispensing with the market economy itself? They certainly can. The use of the market economy is consistent with many different ownership patterns, resource availabilities, social opportunities, and rules of operation (such as patent laws and antitrust regulations). And depending on these conditions, the market economy would generate different prices, terms of trade, income distribution, and, more generally, diverse overall outcomes. The arrangements for social security and other public interventions can make further modifications to the outcomes of the market processes, and together they can yield varying levels of inequality and poverty.

The crucial role of the markets does not make the other institutions insignificant, even in terms of the results that the market economy can produce. As has been amply established in empirical studies, market outcomes are massively influenced by public policies in education, epidemiology, land reform, micro credit facilities, appropriate legal protections, et cetera; and in each of these fields, there is work to be done through public

action that can radically alter the outcome of local and global economic relations.

Institutions and Inequality

Globalization has much to offer; but even as we defend it, we must also, without any contradiction, see the legitimacy of many questions that the antiglobalization protesters ask. There may be a misdiagnosis about where the main problems lie (they do not lie in globalization, as such), but the ethical and human concerns that yield these questions call for serious reassessments of the adequacy of the national and global institutional arrangements that characterize the contemporary world and shape globalized economic and social relations.

Omissions and Commissions

The distribution of the benefits in the global economy depends, among other things, on a variety of global institutional arrangements, including those for fair trade, medical initiatives, and educational exchanges, facilities for technological dissemination, ecological and environmental restraints, and fair treatment of accumulated debts that were often incurred by irresponsible military rulers of the past.

In addition to the momentous omissions that need to be rectified, there are also serious problems of commission that must be addressed for even elementary global ethics. These include not

only inefficient and inequitable trade restrictions that repress exports from poor countries, but also patent laws that inhibit the use of lifesaving drugs.

Another--somewhat less discussed--global "commission" that causes intense misery as well as lasting deprivation relates to the involvement of the world powers in globalized arms trade. The world establishment is firmly entrenched in this business: the Permanent Members of the Security Council of the United Nations were together responsible for 81 percent of world arms exports from 1996 through 2000. Indeed, the world leaders who express deep frustration at the "irresponsibility" of antiglobalization protesters lead the countries that make the most money in this terrible trade. The arms are used with bloody results--and with devastating effects on the economy, the polity, and the society.

Fair Sharing of Global Opportunities

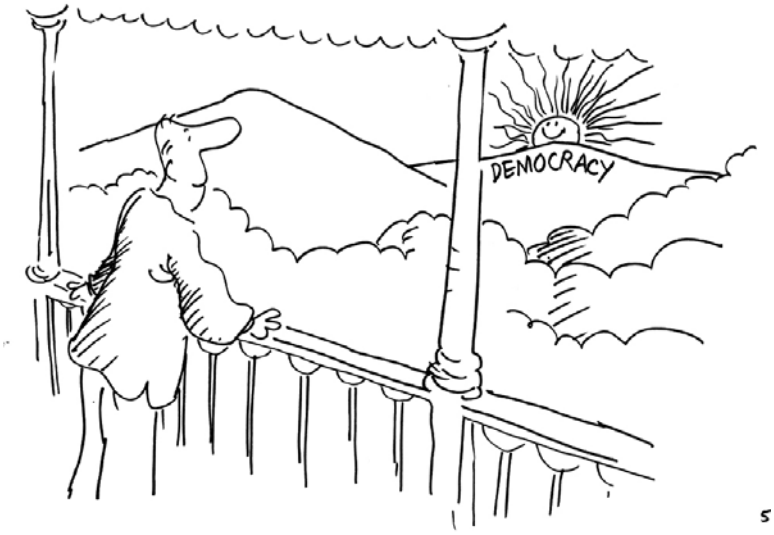
The central issue of contention is not globalization itself, nor is it the use of the market as an institution, but the inequity in the overall balance of institutional arrangements--which produces very unequal sharing of the benefits of globalization. The question is not just whether the poor, too, gain something from globalization, but whether they get a fair share and a fair opportunity. There is an urgent need for reforming institutional arrangements--in addition to national ones--in order to overcome both the errors of omission and those of commission that tend to give the poor across the world such limited opportunities. Globalization

deserves a reasoned defense, but it also needs reform.

Democracy as a Universal Value

Amartya Sen

In the summer of 1997, I was asked by a leading Japanese newspaper what I thought was the most important thing that had happened in the twentieth century. Among the great variety of developments that have occurred in the twentieth century, I did not, ultimately, have any difficulty in choosing one as the preeminent development of the period: the rise of democracy.



Democracy as we know it took a long time to emerge. Its gradual--and ultimately triumphant--emergence as a working system of governance was bolstered by many developments, from the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215, to the French and the American Revolutions in the eighteenth century, to the

widening of the franchise in Europe and North America in the nineteenth century. It was in the twentieth century, however, that the idea of democracy became established as the "normal" form of government to which any nation is entitled--whether in Europe, America, Asia, or Africa.

Throughout the nineteenth century, theorists of democracy found it quite natural to discuss whether one country or another was "fit for democracy." This thinking changed only in the twentieth century, with the recognition that the question itself was wrong: A country does not have to be deemed fit *for* democracy; rather, it has to become fit *through* democracy. This is indeed a momentous change. It was also in this century that people finally accepted that "franchise for all adults" must mean *all*--not just men but also women.

I do not deny that there are challenges to democracy's claim to universality. These challenges come in many shapes and forms--and from different directions. Before I begin to examine this claim and the disputes that surround it, it is necessary to grasp clearly the sense in which democracy has

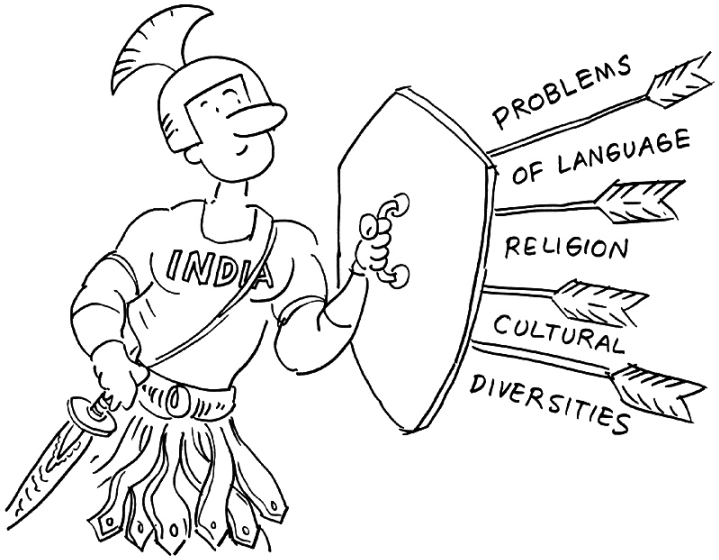
become a dominant belief in the contemporary world.

The Indian Experience

How well has democracy worked? India, of course, was one of the major battlegrounds of this debate.

In denying Indians independence, the British expressed anxiety over the Indians' ability to govern themselves. India was indeed in some disarray in 1947, the year it became independent. And yet, half a century later, we find India survives and functions remarkably well as a political unit with a democratic system. Indeed, it is held together by its working democracy.

India has also survived the tremendous challenge of dealing with a variety of major languages and a spectrum of religions. The fact that consternation greets sectarian violence and that condemnation of such violence comes from all sections of the country ultimately provides the main democratic guarantee against the narrowly factional exploitation of sectarianism.



Democracy and Economic Development

It is often claimed that nondemocratic systems are better at bringing about economic development. This belief sometimes goes by the name of "the Lee hypothesis," due to its advocacy by Lee Kuan Yew, the leader and former president of Singapore.

There is, in fact, no convincing general evidence that authoritarian governance and the suppression of political and civil rights are really beneficial to economic development. Systematic empirical studies (for example, by Robert Barro or by Adam Przeworski) give no real support to the claim that there is a general conflict between political rights and economic performance.

The question also involves a fundamental issue of methods of economic research. We must not only look at statistical connections, but also examine and scrutinize the *causal* processes that are involved in economic growth and development.

There is overwhelming evidence to show that what is needed for generating faster economic growth is a friendlier economic climate rather than a harsher political system. We must go beyond the narrow confines of economic growth and scrutinize the broader demands of economic development, including the need for economic and social security. In that context, we have to look at the connection between political and civil rights, on the one hand, and the prevention of major economic disasters, on the other.

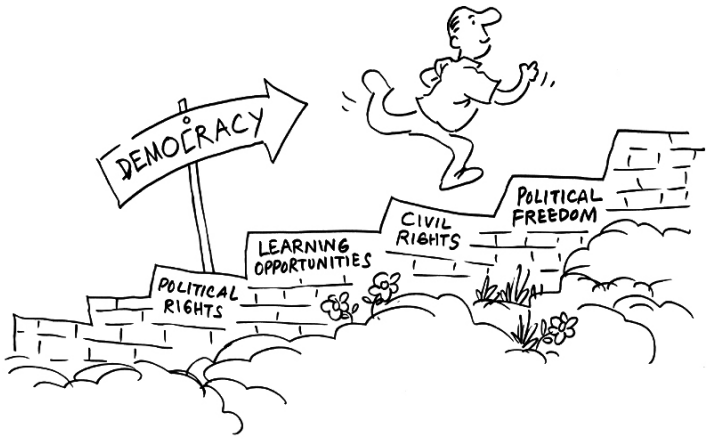
I have discussed elsewhere the remarkable fact that, in the terrible history of famines in the world, no substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent and democratic country with a relatively free press.

Famines are easy to prevent if there is a serious effort to do so, and a democratic government, facing elections and criticisms from opposition parties and independent newspapers, cannot help but make such an effort.

There is, I believe, an important lesson here. Many economic technocrats recommend the use of economic incentives (which the market system provides) while ignoring political incentives (which democratic systems could guarantee). The protective power of democracy may not be missed much when a country is lucky enough to be facing no serious calamity, when everything is going quite smoothly. Yet the danger of insecurity, arising from changed economic or other circumstances, or from uncorrected mistakes of policy, can lurk behind what looks like a healthy state.

The Functions of Democracy

What exactly is democracy? Democracy is a demanding system, and not just a mechanical condition (like majority rule) taken in isolation. We can distinguish three different ways in which democracy enriches the lives of the citizens. First, political freedom is a part of human freedom in general, and exercising civil and political rights is a crucial part of good lives of individuals as social beings. Second, democracy has an important *instrumental value* in enhancing the hearing that people get in expressing and supporting their claims to political attention (including claims of economic needs). Third, the practice of democracy gives citizens an opportunity to learn from one another, and helps society to form its values and priorities.



There are many things that we might have good reason to value and thus could be taken as "needs" if they were feasible. In the formation of understandings and beliefs about feasibility (particularly, *social* feasibility), public discussions play a crucial role.

Universality of Values

In the light of this diagnosis, we may now address the motivating question of this essay, namely the case for seeing democracy as a universal value. In disputing this claim, it is sometimes argued that not everyone agrees on the decisive importance of democracy, particularly when it competes with other desirable things for our attention and loyalty. This lack of unanimity is seen by some as sufficient evidence that democracy is not a universal value. Clearly, we must begin by dealing with a methodological question: What is a universal value?

I would argue that universal consent is not required for something to be a universal value. Rather, the claim of a universal value is that people anywhere may have reason to see it as valuable.

It is with regard to this often *implicit* presumption that the biggest attitudinal shift toward democracy has occurred in the twentieth century. In considering democracy for a country that does not have it and where many people may not yet have had the opportunity to consider it for actual practice; it is now presumed that the people involved would approve of it once it becomes a reality in their lives.

Some who dispute the status of democracy as a universal value base their argument on the presence of regional contrasts. They say, poor people are interested, and have reason to be interested, in bread, not in democracy.

As discussed above, the protective role of democracy may be particularly important for the poor. Second, there is very little evidence that poor people, given the choice, prefer to reject democracy.

The Argument from Cultural Differences

There is also another argument in defense of an allegedly fundamental regional contrast, one related not to economic

circumstances but to cultural differences. It has been claimed that Asians traditionally value discipline, not political freedom, and thus the attitude to democracy must inevitably be much more skeptical in these countries.

It is very hard to find any real basis for this intellectual claim in the history of Asian cultures, especially if we look at the classical traditions of India, the Middle East, Iran, and other parts of Asia.

To dismiss the plausibility of democracy as a universal value because of the presence of some Asian writings on discipline and order would be similar to rejecting the plausibility of democracy as a natural form of government in Europe or America today on the basis of the writings of Plato or Aquinas (not to mention the substantial medieval literature in support of the Inquisitions).

Due to the experience of contemporary political battles, especially in the Middle East, Islam is often portrayed as fundamentally intolerant of and hostile to individual freedom. But the presence of diversity and variety *within* a tradition applies very much to Islam as well. In India, Akbar and most of the other Moghul emperors (with the notable exception of Aurangzeb) provide good examples of both the theory and practice of political and religious tolerance. The Turkish emperors were often more tolerant than their European contemporaries.

Diversity is a feature of most cultures in the world. Western civilization is no exception.

Where the Debate Belongs

I have tried to cover a number of issues related to the claim that democracy is a universal value. The value of democracy includes its *intrinsic importance* in human life, its *instrumental role* in generating political incentives, and its *constructive function* in the formation of values (and in understanding the force and feasibility of claims of needs, rights, and duties). These merits are not regional in character. Nor is the advocacy of discipline or order.

The force of the claim that democracy is a universal value cannot be disposed of by imagined cultural taboos or assumed civilizational predispositions imposed by our various pasts.

Poverty and political freedom

Rajeev Bhargava

The great Indian economist Amartya Sen has proposed the mind-opening idea that democracy is a protection against famine. It is part of a conventional, commonsense worldview that freedom means little to those without shelter, clothing or food and that, for the poor, the fulfilment of basic needs has priority over political freedoms.

Freedom in exchange for life? This is one of the many points I was fortunate to discuss with Amartya Sen when he was present at a seminar in Delhi organised around his book Development as Freedom. The urgency of their economic needs forces the poor to put their lives at enormous risk. If people are ready to do so just to earn their daily bread, why would they not readily give up their liberties and rights to keep their lives going?

Poverty, liberty and human need

Does not authoritarianism have a strong, watertight case in poverty-stricken societies? There are three possible replies to this anti-democratic argument. The first reply is given by Amartya Sen himself. The claim that the citizens of the 'third world' are indifferent to political and democratic rights can be verified, Sen says, only when there is a large sample available across

countries on the importance of political rights, the freedom of expression and dissent and of free elections.

To this argument of Amartya Sen, let me add a second and third of my own. Is it really accurate to say that a person who lacks food or shelter is not concerned with freedom at all?

The fulfilment of basic needs is very deeply connected with basic freedoms. People do not wish to choose between basic needs and basic freedoms. Rather, they are compelled to pay attention to one particular kind of needs-freedoms package. This is true of everyone, even of the rich.

The third argument is that the case for authoritarianism appears to hinge on extreme examples taken in abstraction from the actual life-context of the poor in 'third world' societies and not on instances of commonplace, chronic but less dramatic deprivations. Sen's argument and my own, rests on entirely different, more routine examples from poor societies.

Consider a person who goes through a rough, daily grind to make two ends meet. He may feed himself and his family all right - but only with a Herculean effort that takes the very life out of him, day after day, month after month, year after year. Would he want to escape this crushing situation? Would he try to do something to change it? It depends entirely on the price he must pay for transformative action.

To begin with, he would speak up against his horrendous condition. Perhaps privately at first, and then in public. But I don't think mere expression, or even communication would satisfy him. He would want to do more. He would wish to earn a living by a less severe form of labour. If exploited, he would want to end it. Since this is unlikely to happen instantly, he might wish to join a group with similar objectives. Perhaps, if a political

party with such a promise exists already, he would, if he could, vote for it.

Give this man the choice between his daily grind and his right to speak out freely, to associate with others, and to vote. He would certainly not give up his daily grind, even if he wanted to. Since this altered life-context can be secured only with the help of his political freedoms, he would put up with his daily grind so long as he could have his political freedoms.

So, political freedoms are important for four reasons. First, they are intrinsically valuable because the opportunity to participate in the life of one's community is fundamental to human existence and valuable by itself. Second, they have a constructive value because through dialogue, discussion and debate, we come to understand what our real needs really are. Third, they have instrumental value, particularly in poor societies. They make governments accountable and responsive to ordinary citizens, prevent rulers from privately consuming a large share of resources or squandering them publicly, protect us from poor governance, help governments to take correct decisions, and by providing a space for people to come together and act publicly, they help ensure the provision of essential services and monitoring their functioning.

This instrumental value in poor societies extends also to prevention of catastrophes. Despite severe crop failure and massive loss of purchasing power, there has been no recurrence

of famine in India since 1943. In contrast, between 1958 and 1961, 30 million people died in famines in China. To the three justifications for political freedom offered by Sen, I would add a fourth. This can be called its reconstituting (or reconditioning) role in human life. Political freedoms help us to change the way we experience our current condition. They give us hope of an alternative future. Our perspective on our own future makes a profound difference to how we live our present.

Social Movements In The Age Of Globalisation

Hermann Maiba

Introduction

For many decades social movements have been understood from a state-centric perspective. In their historical research on French social movements, Tilly (1984) and Tarrow (1995) have forcefully demonstrated that the emergence, shape, and development of social movements was closely related to the development - in its scope, resources, and penetration - of the modern state.

In light of the protest events of the last few years (Zapatista uprising in 1996, Seattle 1999, Washington, DC 2000, Quebec and Prague 2001, Genoa 2002, etc.), this state-centric perspective has become increasingly contested. On what has been called Global Days of Action, decentralised protest events in different parts of the world coincided with large-scale protests that took place parallel to the meetings of supra-national institutions.

The global anti-war demonstrations on February 15th provide only the latest instance of transnationally coordinated movement events. A range of publications on this topic has emerged, most

of which argue for a theoretical adjustment of how we understand social movements today. For example, Ray suggests, "In an age of globalisation of economic and political structures it is no longer appropriate to analyse social movements solely at the level of nationally defined space" (Ray, 1993: XVII). In a similar vein Buechler argues, "contemporary social movement activism can be understood only in a global frame of reference. This premise has been sorely lacking in prevailing social movement theories, and they will remain impoverished until they can incorporate the diverse and subtle ways in which global dynamics and structures both enable and constrain the opportunities for social movement mobilisation in different times and places" (Buechler, 2000: 78).

Despite the burgeoning literature on transnational social movements, we still lack a coherent theoretical foundation for studying this phenomenon. Some movement commentators have focused on the organisational features that connect activists in different countries, while others have applied it to the boundary crossing aspects of the Internet. I will propose several dimensions of transnationality (networks, spaces, diffusion, political opportunity structure, identity & consciousness) that can help guide the empirical analysis of today's social activism.

Historiography of Globalisation

As world system scholars have pointed out, the propensity of stretched social relations that encompass the whole globe has

not just happened over the course of the last fifty years (Arrighi, 1994; Hirst and Thomson, 1996; and Wallerstein, 1998). According to Wallerstein, the incessant search of market expansion is an inherent characteristic of capitalism and globalisation that dates back as far as the 15th century. Even though Genoese merchants in the 15th century traded goods from far away, the increasing speed to innovate and revolutionise the means of production led to a qualitative transformation of worldwide social relations. Castells' and Arrighi's discoveries do account for this crucial fact. They argue that the informalisation of societies, i.e., the growing importance of the generation and distribution of information, has enabled a qualitatively new form of global social relationships. Technical revolution in the telecommunication and transportation systems also has significantly altered the economic realm. Thus, I follow both Castells and Arrighi, who date the onset of the qualitatively different process of globalisation with the revolutionary innovations in the 1970 in the communication industry. It is from this Marxian historical-materialist perspective of social development that I want to discuss the different dimension of globalisation.

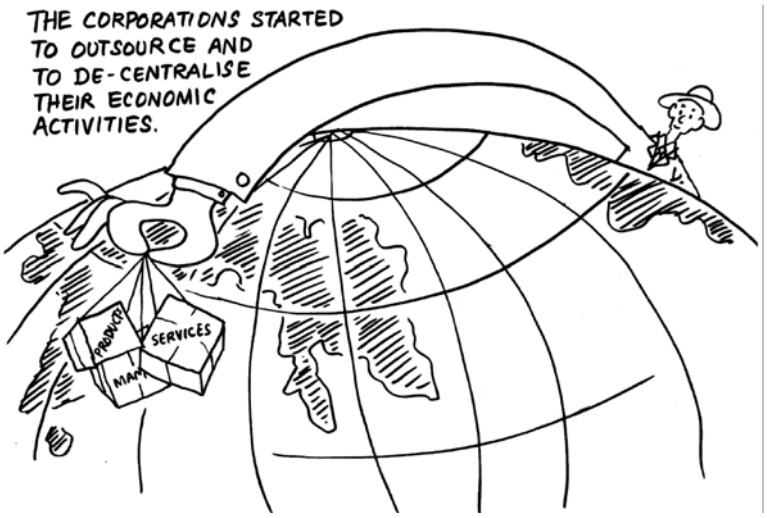
Economic Globalisation

The capitalist economy is the driving force of globalisation. In its incessant pursuit for new products, markets and cost-efficient ways of production, this economic engine has created the technological possibilities for global economic integration. The

modern communication technologies are the backbone of today's global economic practices.

Like the invention of the steam engine, which provided the technological means for the transition from the agrarian economy to industrialism, the new communication technologies need to be considered as the building block that made possible the transition to post-industrialism. This paradigmatic shift not only affected the economic organisation but the social order as a whole.

Modern communication technologies provided the technological means to circumvent the nation-state that regulated all inter and intra economic practices. The global flow of information enabled the expansion of the market on a worldwide scale that, in turn, led national economies across the world to become globally interdependent. According to Castells, these new information technologies unleashed the power of networking and decentralisation and thus undermined the centralising logic of one-way instructions and vertical bureaucratic surveillance.



This race-to-the-bottom dynamics levels out the stark country specific differences. People in the developed and developing world recognise that their fate is connected by the mechanism and dynamics of global capitalism. Fighting the downward pressure in the developed world, i.e., dismantling the welfare state, is linked to the same cause as struggles to improve the conditions in the developing countries (poverty, environment devastation and economic underdevelopment). Hardt and Negri's concept of "the multitude" tries to capture the confluence of a diversity of social groups that are negatively affected by capitalist globalisation. Despite the diversity of local struggles around the world, global capitalism is seen as the root cause of their problems.

What is more recent is the sense of common purpose that groups and movements have found as they realise that various modes of oppression are, in their contemporary forms, contingent upon a particular historical moment in which the contraction of state welfare and the rise of neoliberal privatism have had widespread negative effects. (Redden, 2003: 2)

The recognition that the disparate local and national problems are all related to the mechanism of the global capitalist economy has provided the basis for transnational cooperation and coordination in the sense that "your struggle is our struggle." This recognition of the interconnectedness of local struggles has created the basis for people to join together in a transnational movement whose guiding motto is "Let our resistance be as transnational as capital." Despite the fact that problems do manifest themselves quite differently in various local and national contexts, the sense that struggles in one place are connected to those in another has made it possible for social movements throughout the world to become involved in transnational social movement networks.

Capitalist globalisation has not only created socio-economic conditions that lend themselves to a common recognition of the interconnectedness of political struggles, but it has also provided the technological means - as an unintentional dialectic of this structural transformation-that enables the resistance struggles in different parts of the world without the mediation of corporate or governmental controlled media the decentralised mode of the internet has provided a communication tool for activisits. Modern communication tools, particularly the Internet (websites, list serves, video and audio streaming, chat rooms) have become available also for political activists, and they have used them very effectively. Access to these communication technologies was essential for it has helped to sustain transnational social movement activism and proved to be an important tool for the creation and fostering of transnational movement networks.

Movement activists from different parts of the world are connected in transnational movement networks.

In my work I distinguish between two kinds of transnational movement networks: campaign-based networks and ideology-based networks of activists who share a similar political vision. The network form of organisation seems to be the most conducive form of social organisation in the age of globalisation.

Because of the vast differences that groups bring into transnational movement networks in terms of their ideological history, organising mode, activist culture, etc., the looseness of the networks does not put that much pressure to conform to every aspect in order to collaborate [(cf. Rucht (2001)]. Activist groups can participate in activities of the network when they deem it worthy and possible without subscribing to a host of formal procedures. This open and malleable nature of networks has produced a greater transnational repertoire of strategic actions.

Because of its loose and more flexible character, the social network is more adaptive and responsive to changing environments. As Keck and Sikkink (1998: 200) have pointed out, "the agility and fluidity of networked forms of organisation make them particularly appropriate to historical periods characterised by rapid shifts in problem definition." For example, the global anti-war network is already prepared to circulate an emergency

mobilisation in case the American government starts the war against Iraq.

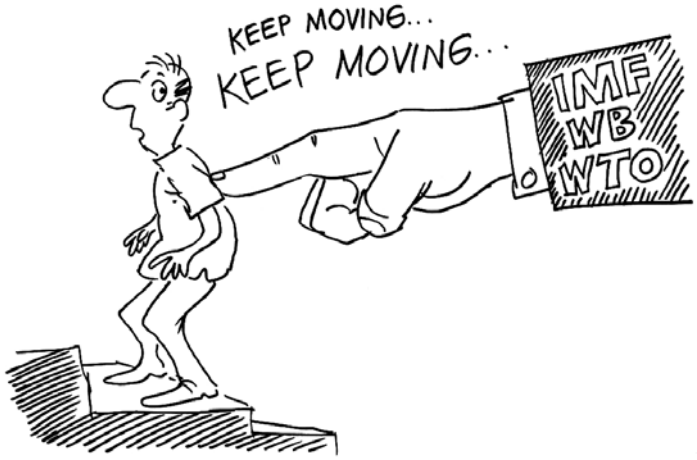
Cultural Globalisation

Cultural globalisation refers to diffusion processes of cultural products to other societies. The appropriation of life-styles, ideas, cultural symbols, and customs from their original societal context, together with their adaptation, re-interpretation, and integration into existing practices is the subject matter of cultural globalisation. The direction of cultural globalisation is highly controversial. Some (Ritzer, Barber) portray globalisation as the cultural homogenization of Western cultural practices (mainly in its American version) that are being diffused and adopted around the world.

Other scholars (Appadurai) reject the idea of global cultural homogeneity and argue for a more complicated account of global cultural processes. They argue that diffused cultural products take on different meanings in their new societal settings. This line of thought insists that cultural globalisation does not proceed like a steamroller. Instead, despite the diffusion of cultural products, significant heterogeneous cultural practices remain among countries.

There are clear examples of the existence of global flows of cultural practices. Migrants bring their folklore as well as their eating habits to their host society; ideas get exchanged via the

Internet between like-minded folks and epistemic communities in chat rooms and list serves; and merchandise and life-styles become diffused by the global reach of transnational corporations and media networks. By synthesising the heterogeneity/homogeneity arguments, I propose that both processes occur simultaneously. Let me illustrate this by pointing to two global cultural processes, both of which I deem crucial in relation to social movement dynamics: one supports the homogenisation paradigm and the second the heterogeneisation perspective.



The diffusion of neo-liberalism as the dominant economic paradigm provides the historical backdrop to the globalisation process that triggered movement struggles in different parts of the world. Struggles begun in the Global South where the impact of its policies were felt most harshly. Ten years after the Wall

came down; the anti-neo-liberal opposition movement emerged in the Global North. This convergence of resistance of the neo-liberal doctrine provided the connecting bridge as well as common targets for the transnational cooperation of a broad spectrum of social movement organisations.

Now I want to turn to another aspect of cultural globalisation that demonstrates the paradoxical nature of the globalisation process. While better, faster, and cheaper technologies for communication and transportation provided the material infrastructure for world-wide economic exchanges and the spread of cultural products such as pizzas, these global flows have not just been restricted to corporate merchandise and images. People travel to far away lands as tourists, if they are affluent enough, for business or educational purposes, or as migrants and refugees.

Never before in human history have so many humans traveled so far so fast. With increasing frequency, people today live a significant period of their lives in societies in which they were not born. People make friends from other societies, they learn and sometimes appreciate different cultural practices, they speak different languages.

The exposure to different life realities also affects one's self-definition. People adopt ideas and practices they like regardless of the cultural backgrounds from which they stem. By assembling the best and personally most rewarding aspects of each culture, people create a patchwork of cultural practices. Their identities

thus can best be described as hybrid. Mainly through personal contacts with people from other societies but also through travel and electronic communication, individuals and communities form social bonds and experiential empathy with individuals and communities around the world.

Core activists in transnational movement networks are, in effect, like itinerant movement entrepreneurs who have extensively traveled the world and lived in different societies for a substantial time. They speak multiple languages. Such core activists are best characterised by their transnational identity and their commitment to global solidarity. As Max Weber suggested in a different context, one has to look at movement leaders and the intellectual carriers of movements to understand movement dynamics and their trajectories. Not only do they diffuse the global orientation to the other movement participants, but such core activists link movements in different parts of the world where they have established personal contacts.

Despite cultural differences, people experience the common bond of humankind; every attempt to withhold humane treatment is considered an insult to all. This perception and attitude of global solidarity is a very crucial aspect for building and sustaining transnational cooperation. Furthermore, the feeling of transnational connectedness helps to shape a transnational collective identity that provides cohesion for transnational movement networks.

These transnational virtual spaces (mailing lists, website, e-mail, chat rooms, etc.) play an important role in the diffusion of information, ideas, resources, and tactics among social movement activists. For example, the reports of the uprising of the Zapatistas was posted on the Internet, inspired the imagination of other activists around the world, and brought the world's attention to the conflict in the Jungle of Chiapas. The distribution of the draft text of the WTO's proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) over the Internet started a broad-based mobilisation campaign in different parts of the world that successfully derailed the MAI accord (Warkentin).

Political Globalisation

The process of globalisation also substantially changed the configuration of political power. As my socio-historical overview showed, the onset of modernity shifted power from local lords and nobility to nationally consolidated power structures. If one needed an empirical case for the transformation of the inter-state system, the terrorist attack on September 11 was a demonstration par excellence. The attack showed that conflicts and confrontations not only are fought between nation-states but that non-state actors, organised in a transnational network as in the case of Al-Qaeda, can forcefully challenge nation-states.

But also in its domestic effects, the state-centric perspective argued that all internal affairs of a society are regulated by the political configurations prevalent in the particular nation-state. This

state-centric perspective suggested that basically all domestic realms (national economy, education, social welfare, and so on) are controlled and shaped by domestic forces under the umbrella of the state apparatus.

This state-centric perspective and the primacy of the nation-state eventually became undermined by the overwhelming global flow of images, information, products, and people across state-borders. "State control over space and time is increasingly bypassed by global flows of capital, goods, services, technology, communication, and information" (Castells, 1997: 243). The nation-state became increasingly powerless in controlling monetary policies, organising production and trade, collecting corporate taxes, and fulfilling its commitments to provide social benefits.

Even where individual nation-states attempted to restrict or prevent these global flows from circumventing their influence, as demonstrated by the Chinese government's effort to block certain websites or to shore-up the border control to prevent the influx of migrants, such measures have produced paradoxical effects. For example, despite the blocking of certain websites, Chinese cyber geeks created mirror websites that evaded governmental control. Even where the government is aware that the trans-border activities curtail its political power, it is also conscious that its political survival might depend on the participation in the global dynamic. For this very reason the Chinese government

joined the World Trade Organisation and opened the Chinese market to foreign products.

Because of the increasing inability of the inter-state system to influence and direct these global flows, supra-national institutions became important actors in the realm of global politics. Another byproduct of the growth of supra-national institutions was the increase of international non-governmental organisations and transnational social movement organisations. Between 1953 and 1993 the number of transnational social movement organisations grew from 110 to 631 (Rucht: 211). The growth was particularly connected to the international conferences within the UN system.

The development of international agencies and organisations has led to significant changes in the decision-making structure of world politics. New forms of multilateral and multinational politics have been established involving governments, IGOs and a wide variety of transnational pressure groups and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) (Held et al., 1999: 53). There seems to be consensus among movement analysts about

the emergence of a transnational political opportunity structure (cf. Hilson, 2002; Marks and McAdam, 1996; Marks and McAdam, 1999; Passy, 1999; Smith, 1999; Smith, Pagnucco and Chatfield, 1997; Keck and Sikkink, 1998). I would like to propose that we distinguish analytically three crucial aspects of transnational political opportunities: (1) Supra-national institutions and IGOs as allies; (2) Supra-national institutions, IGOs and TNCs as targets for political protest; and (3) transnational spaces around supra-national institutions.

Where the domestic opportunity structures are closed for social movements at the local and national levels, the movements link themselves to international social movement organisations in order to put pressure on their government from outside.

The UN system became predominantly an ally for reform-oriented social movements and an important provider of resources. The UN system emerged as a field where global policies have been shaped and many transnational social movement organisations (TSMOs) gained access to the UN forums by achieving consultative status and thus were able to exert certain leverage to influence the global rules. Because of the relative openness of the UN system to reform-oriented social movement organisations, many activists groups have been accredited by the UN and thus became eligible for institutional funding. Furthermore, under the umbrella of the UN summits, movement activists were able to build and sustain transnational networks. These transnational spaces have been enormously important for networking,

information sharing, and strategising. Face-to-face encounters at these parallel summits have facilitated the establishing of new ties and the fostering of existing ties between individual activists and groups they represent.

On the other side, certain inter-governmental and supra-national institutions such as the IMF, WB, WTO, G8, etc., which are far less open to social movement organisations, have become ready targets for popular protests. The summit meetings of these institutions provided the occasion for activist groups around the world to converge in counter summit protests at the official summit meeting site, or to organise coordinated de-centralised solidarity protests in other parts of the world.

The centralised counter summit protests also furnished a transnational space for skill sharing, education, and networking. The time preceding the protest has been used for teach-ins, media work, puppet and banner making and for networking among activists and groups.

Transnational corporations (TNCs) form another set of influential actors impacting global level politics. Because of their economic might, TNCs emerged as powerful new actors on the global level. TNCs use their economic power as a leverage vis-à-vis national states and supra-national institutions. TNCs have been identified as promoters of the neo-liberal agenda. Given this background, it is not surprising that TNCs have been perceived as the epitome of evil and thus became targets for protests.

Conclusion

This essay has sought to shed some light on the paradoxical nature of the macro-structural transformations that have been triggered by the process of globalisation. The process of globalisation has created not only new constraints, but in turn it has also opened novel opportunities for social movement activists to resist the very processes that produced these grievances. It has been argued that in the age of globalisation, social movement activities cannot be merely understood from a state-centric perspective, but any social movement analysis must also account for structures and processes that occur above the nation-state level. Theorising social movements in the age of globalisation means that we need to grasp the transnational dynamics of today's movement activism. This article in particular highlighted several dimensions of transnationality that I deem crucial for understanding these phenomena.