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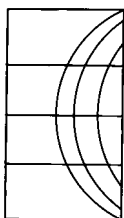
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Alberto Martinelli

Global Order or Divided World? Introduction

The title of this issue dramatically describes a basic contradiction of the present day, but could just as well be rephrased as 'global order *and* divided world', since the social world at the beginning of the 21st century is both globally interconnected and globally fragmented according to the dimensions we consider: global, economic and technological interdependence and social interconnectedness, on the one hand, and cultural fragmentation and political division, on the other. The world can be conceptualized as a single system, but a world society does not yet exist, and widespread conflict and fragmentation are more evident than global integration and governance.

Building on the prevailing definitions of globalization – as action at a distance (Giddens, 1990), time-space compression (Harvey, 1989), accelerating interdependence (Ohmae, 1990), networking (Castells, 1996–8), interconnectedness in complex webs of social relations – we can conceptualize it as a multifaceted process with far-reaching consequences for the lives of all women and men, imposing constraints and opening opportunities for individual and collective action. The spatial organization of social relations is deeply transformed insofar as relations become more stretched and more intensively interconnected. Transcontinental and transregional flows and networks of activities, exchanges and power relations are generated, with major implications on decision-making processes. New patterns of hierarchy and inequality and of inclusion and exclusion are shaped, that cut across national borders. And new problems of global governance and democratic accountability arise, insofar as the sovereign power of nation-states is eroded and their role in world politics reshaped. These various tendencies towards the worldwide extension, impact and interconnectedness of social phenomena and towards the erosion and reshaping of borders also foster a world-encompassing awareness among social actors of the interdependence of their activities and of their communality of fate.

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Globalization raises new research questions, and reshapes old ones, among sociologists, other social scientists and political leaders, in the mass media and for public opinion, such as the extent of the phenomenon and its degree of novelty; the various processes which take place under this general heading and their different scope and dynamics; the beneficial or detrimental effects of those processes for different countries and social groups; the identification of major actors and their strategies.

The fast growing literature on globalization can be arranged in a conceptual space with three major axes (Martinelli, 2002):

1. 'Hyperglobalizers vs sceptics' – where the key distinction concerns the degree of novelty of globalization and its impact on nation-states;
2. 'Neoliberals vs neo-Marxists and radicals' – where the key points are the balance between positive and negative impacts of globalization and its truly global or western hegemonic character; and
3. 'Homogenization vs heterogeneity and hybridization' – which focuses on the cultural dimension of globalization.

Various conceptualizations differ in terms of the type and number of aspects which are analysed: causal dynamics, periodization and trajectory, major actors, social impact on people in terms of new patterns of hierarchy and inequality, and political implications for state power and world governance. Analyses also vary according to the type of countries, social groups, institutions and cultural phenomena under investigation. But all scholars of globalization can be placed in the conceptual space defined by those three dimensions, with the first axis (hyperglobalizers/sceptics) as the key one, and the other two as specifications.

For the hyperglobalizers, globalization is mainly conceptualized in economic terms. Peoples are increasingly subjected to and integrated into the global marketplace, and economies are increasingly denationalized through the establishment of transnational networks of trade, finance and production. Contemporary globalization is seen as a novel condition, hardly reversible, a 'reconfiguration of the framework of human action' as Albrow (1996) puts it, which constrains the range of choices of nation-states and individuals, compelling them to adopt neoliberal economic policies in order to compete in the world market. The global economy reshapes the traditional division of labour between centre and periphery and between the 'North' and the 'South' of the world, and replaces it with more complex patterns of hierarchy of inequality (resulting in 'winners' and 'losers' both among and within countries) and with new tacit transnational class allegiances.

Hyperglobalizers sharply disagree among themselves with regard to evaluating the risks and opportunities of the global market for individuals, countries and groups. Neoliberals are convinced that globalization has non zero-sum outcomes and that the benefits are far greater than the costs, and

go so far as to state we are witnessing an emerging global civilization. Neo-Marxists and radicals portray a much gloomier picture of growing inequalities and dominance by the strongest economic actors. Both agree, however, in stressing the loss of sovereignty and autonomous power of nation-states (Ohmae, 1995), and in arguing that the impersonal forces of world markets are now more powerful than the states (Strange, 1996) and that governments' major concerns are competing to attract investments and managing the social consequences of globalization for those who are marginalized. States are considered increasingly unable to control transnational flows of people, money and goods, and have to reduce their welfare policies because of the budget constraints imposed by global competition.

Many of the arguments of the hyperglobalizers remind us of the contradiction exposed in the 1970s by the theories of the overloaded government (Crozier et al., 1975), the legitimation crisis (Habermas, 1973) and the fiscal crisis of the state (O'Connor, 1973). Again, national governments are torn between the need to foster economic competitiveness and that of enhancing social cohesion, but this contradiction is framed in the new context of the challenges set by the global market.

The hyperglobalist thesis of the demise of the nation-state should be criticized for not distinguishing among states with quite different power and influence. While in the case of the countries of the European Union we can agree that their sovereign power has been reduced – both through their spontaneous giving away of portions of sovereignty to the institutions of the European Union and by the constraints of the global market – the same situation does not apply to the United States, which is the hegemonic power and continues to exert an unprecedented state strength.

Close to the hyperglobalist pole are also those cultural descriptions of globalization which stress the increasing homogeneity of world values (rationalization, market competition, commodification, democratic rights), and of consumption patterns and lifestyles (according to a 'McDonaldization', 'CocaColization', or 'Disneyfication' of the world).

At the other extreme of the conceptual spectrum are the sceptics, like Hirst and Thompson (1996). For them globalization, defined as a perfectly integrated world economy, is a myth. What is happening is not a novel phenomenon, but another wave of internationalization, i.e. of interactions among predominantly national economies, as happened at the start of the 20th century. In order to prove their point the sceptics conceptualize globalization in even stricter economic terms than the hyperglobalists. The indicators they select to prove their argument are mostly based on trade and finance flows and on their value as percentages of the GNP of various countries.

The sceptics make a good point in arguing that what is actually taking place is the division of the world economy into regional financial and trading blocs: North America, Europe, Asia-Pacific. Actually, most foreign trade of

the EU countries – which are among the most export-oriented economies in the world today – takes place among themselves. The concentration of trade and foreign investments in the most advanced capitalist countries also accounts for the continuing patterns of inequality and hierarchy in the world and for the marginalization of most ‘third world’ countries. But globalization is not just trade and finance.

Sceptics strongly disagree with hyperglobalists also on the issue that national sovereignty is undermined by the world market and global governance, as they point to the continuing key role of governments (essentially of the most powerful western states) in shaping economic relations. The forces of internationalization themselves depend on the regulatory power of national governments to ensure free trade. Multinational corporations are not multinational at all, since they have a clear home state and regional base. The sceptics’ view cannot be said to neglect the asymmetry of power and influence among nation-states, but some of them go much further than that, interpreting contemporary internationalization as the byproduct of the US-initiated multilateral economic order since the end of the Second World War (Gilpin, 2000), or even as a new phase of western imperialism with governments acting as agents of monopoly capital (Callinicos et al., 1994).

To this predominantly economic perspective can be added Huntington’s (1996) culturalist view of a world fragmented into clashing civilizations and radically opposed religious fundamentalisms and aggressive nationalisms, which run against the very possibility of a global civilization and democratic global governance. This view has been strongly criticized for overestimating potential conflicts which have so far given rise to very limited actual clashes. Since the terrorist attack against the United States of 11 September 2001 this view has become politically dangerous since it corresponds to the declared objectives of the global terrorism of Islamic fundamentalist organizations; this view is strongly rejected by most major political, religious and moral authorities and by most Muslims.

In between the poles of hyperglobalizers and sceptics, optimists and pessimists, and homogenizers and heterogenizers, lies the perspective of those whom Held defines ‘transformationalists’ (Held et al., 1999), which is my perspective also. This perspective conceptualizes globalization in broader and more complex terms, as a multifaceted process with multiple causes (economic, technological, cultural, political). It is cautious about future developments and does not stress global integration, but rather the emergence of webs and networks of relations among individuals, groups, communities, states, international organizations and transnational actors. According to this view, globalization reinforces old patterns of inequalities, but also forms new social hierarchies which penetrate all regions of the world, thus recasting the traditional patterns of inclusion and exclusion. However, significant opportunities for empowerment of individuals, communities and

social groups also exist. Alongside the homogenizing impact of global corporations on lifestyles and consumption patterns, the transformationalists point out the increasing hybridization of cultural traits and the staunch defence of specific identities. This view stresses deterritorialization, but also the chances for a potentially greater role of national governments, and points to the need for democratic global governance based on the principles of universal rights and responsibilities.

Globalization risks becoming a catch-all word, plagued by commonplaces. I just mention one example: the demise of the nation-state. It is true that globalization implies an erosion of national sovereignty and a shake out of the world order. Among the many instances of sovereignty's erosion we may recall: the constraints set by international monetary institutions on the economic policies of national governments; the impact of transnational corporations' (TNCs) strategies on workers, consumers and entrepreneurs of the countries where they operate; the permeability of national frontiers to illegal immigrants; the difficulties faced by authoritarian regimes in filtering or altogether banning the images and information of the 'global village'; and the problems of coexistence between different cultures in increasingly multiethnic societies.

Globalization also provokes an 'unbundling of the relationships between sovereignty, territoriality and state power' (Ruggie, 1993; Keohane, 1995); it affects the institutional encasement and implies a basic restructuring of the territorial nation-state (Sassen, 2000); and it brings about a new mix of domestic and foreign policies (see Rosenau's [1997] 'intermestic' affairs). Moreover, reactions to globalization – such as aggressive nationalism, cultural closures, religious intolerance and prejudice – can have further weakening effects on nation-state authority.

But recognizing these types of consequences does not justify statements about the death of the nation-state – which do not consider the great differences in both hard and soft power among different governments, and largely underestimate the continuing central role played by the most powerful countries in global politics. Rather than disappearing, nation-states are undergoing deep transformations in today's global politics. Nation-states remain fundamental sources of collective identities and basic institutions of collective decision-making. Moreover, globalization brings about a variety of adjustment strategies by national policies that require a rather active state – not the neoliberal minimum government, but the 'developmental' or 'catalytic' state. Finally, as I argued in my presidential speech,¹ nation-states, along with other major global actors – such as international governmental and non-governmental organizations, world markets, TNCs, global collective movements and transnational communities – are a major component of global governance as a polyarchic mixed-actor system.

The articles in this issue of *Current Sociology* discuss different aspects of the tension between 'global order' and 'divided world'.

Note

- 1 Presented at the Presidential Session, 'Global Order or Divided World?', at the 15th ISA World Congress, Brisbane, 7–13 July 2002.

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