

“GLOBALISATION” — A CONTESTED TERRAIN

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1. Globalisation is not just a post—60s phenomenon, and has its roots in pre—capitalist colonialism. The term however became popular in media and academic discourse since the 1980s¹, and has been used to describe the current phase of capitalist development, where the globe is rapidly integrating, in varying degrees, economically, politically and culturally.
2. A key catalyst has been finance capital, which moves rapidly from one part of the world to another. This has been made possible by the explosive strides in technology — particularly in communications and information — since the 1960s computer chip revolution. New technology has also driven the changing nature of production, where older Fordist assembly line methods are gradually being replaced by new ‘flexible’ forms of production and distribution, requiring dramatic changes to the nature of work (characterised by increasing casualisation and loss of job security) and the intensity of work (with rising unemployment world—wide). Products and services can now be produced much faster, and in greater variety, than before, with different aspects of the product or service being located in different parts of the world. Communications have increased exponentially, with greater numbers of people in greater numbers of countries in greater contact with each other than ever before — whether directly through cheaper air travel, less directly through continuously expanding internet or telephone access, or indirectly through increasingly global radio and television coverage.²
3. Global flows of capital, goods, services and people have been facilitated since the second world war by the emergence of key global institutions: firstly, the United Nations (UN) and its various arms (including the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP)), and secondly, the Bretton Woods institutions, namely the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which became the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1994 (see Holland, 1994). These institutions — along with a range of unilateral, bilateral and multilateral initiatives and arrangements operating at the economic, political and cultural levels — have contributed to what increasingly resembles a global regime of power and accumulation, dominated by three economic centres that Ohmae called the Triad, namely the United States, the European Union and Japan.³ Economic integration, including the rise of trading blocs (such as the European Economic Community), has been accompanied by increased political integration (such as the formation of the European Union) or multilateral political and humanitarian interventions under the aegis of the UN⁴.
4. Accompanying the rise of global institutions has been a rise in global social movements and NGOs, which have played a major role in shifting global discourses and practices around aid and trade towards a greater consideration of human (including democratic and social) rights and environmental rights (see Cohen & Rai, 2000 and Aronowitz & Gautney, 2003). This has given rise to new institutions such as the International Criminal Court, which will try leaders suspected of gross human rights abuses, and global treaties on the environment such as the Kyoto Protocol to curb global

warming. Although currently boycotted by the USA, these types of initiatives have the potential to bolster what some have called “globalisation from below” (see Brecher *et al*, 1993).

5. In other words, globalisation can be characterised by “time—space compression” or “action—at—a distance”, where social relations are “stretched” across the globe, with greater intensity than ever before, facilitated by an expanding global infrastructure, global rules and a global symbolic order, with the English language at its centre (Held & McGrew, 2000b:3).

6. While most would agree that these are some of the key dimensions of globalisation, there are widely differing views as to the nature of its significance. Held (2000a) and Held & McGrew (2000b) identify four schools of thought, which, on close examination, overlap with each other in differing ways. These include two variants of the globalist perspective, namely the positive and the pessimistic; a sceptic or traditionalist perspective; and a transformationalist perspective.

7. The *globalists* believe that we are living in momentous times, in that globalisation marks a decisive break with the past. Nation—states are dissolving as global flows increasingly integrate the world economically, politically and culturally. However, while the *positive globalists* such as Micklethwaite and Wooldridge (2000) celebrate the ‘global village’, *pessimistic globalists* such as Rodrik (2000) warn of the negative consequences of the nation—state losing its ability to protect its citizens and the environment from rapacious capitalist development.

8. *Sceptics or traditionalists*, generally share pessimistic globalists’ concerns about the negative impact of continued and increasing multinational corporate power in the world. However, unlike the globalists, who believe that ‘there is no alternative’, sceptics believe that there are — indeed, some explicitly advocate a return to the Keynesian protectionism of the past, albeit under new conditions (see Lang & Hines, 1993).

9. Hirst and Thompson (1996), the standard—bearers of the sceptic position, question whether ‘globalisation’ or a global economy actually exists. Indeed, they point to the period 1890 to 1914, when world colonisation by West European powers was being completed, as displaying greater features of global economic and political integration than currently. They believe that what we are witnessing today is more akin to “internationalisation”, described as “growing links between essentially discrete national economies or societies”, as well as “regionalisation” or “triadization” — “the geographical clustering of cross—border economic and social exchanges” (Held & McGrew, 2000b: 4—5). In other words, sceptics believe that, far from being impotent, nation—states remain key actors in the international arena, and can either act as instruments of a rising international or multinational capitalist class, or act in the interests of all citizens (as in the Keynesian or socialist developmental state).

10. However, while sceptics correctly warn against a triumphalist or unduly pessimistic over—emphasis of the extent to which economies, politics and cultures have become globalised, they can be accused of nit—picking. Transformationalists agree that there is no ‘inevitability’ about globalisation in that, given the political will, the process can be reversed. The nation—state is certainly not poised to wither away, or become irrelevant — at least not in the immediate future. However, as Ankie Hoogvelt argues,

11. "...globalisation is a *process*, not an end—state of affairs. There is no such thing as a global economy or a global society yet! Whether the process of globalisation continues along the pathways I have identified depends largely on whether and how governments resist the process or go along with it.... The sceptics...make rather much of the continuing...exercise of sovereignty and regulation by national governments. And yet.... much of this regulation amounts in effect to no more than a regulation *for* globalisation" (1997:131).

12. Transformationalists agree with globalists that the era of globalisation marks a decisive break with the past, but look to the possibility of democratising globalisation in various ways, such that the interests of citizens and the environment are expressly promoted by new instruments of democratic global governance, representing not only governments, but also organisations of civil society. These range from modest reforms of the current system (see The Commission on Global Governance, 1995) to a global covenant of "cosmopolitan social democracy" (Held & McGrew, 2002).

13. For example, some argue for the reform or reconstruction of global governance (see McGrew, 2000; Halliday, 2000; Brown, 2000 and Bull, 2000); the regulation of globalisation at local, national, regional and global levels (see Held, 2000b & Bello *et al*, 2000); and the establishment of mechanisms of transnational justice (O'Neill, 2000). In a recent book George Monbiot (2003) proposes a directly elected World Parliament to replace the UN, an International Clearing Union that discharges deficits and prevents the accumulation of debts (as first proposed by John Maynard Keynes) to replace the World Bank and IMF, and a Fair Trade Organisation that favours poor nations, to replace the WTO.

14. Hardt and Negri, in their provocative, dense and imaginative *Empire* (2000), go further, and characterise globalisation as the formation of "Empire", which they regard as being an advance over nation—state based imperialism — just as Marx and Engels (1888/1999) regarded capitalism as being an advance over preceding modes of production. While both represented breakthroughs in the progression of human history, they also ushered in new relations of exploitation, oppression and inequality. Hardt and Negri thus look to the borderless 'multitude' — the new proletariat of Empire encompassing much more than the traditional working class — to, through new forms of revolutionary praxis, discover alternatives to Empire. In other words, the multitude will depart from the tendency of social movements to seek protections from the nation—state, and find ways to break the power of global capital, and democratise globalisation in a deep and fundamental way (see also Hardt & Negri, 2003).

15. The discussion that follows considers the new development challenges facing Africa, by posing the question: If the nation—state as currently constituted, in the context of the extreme under—development of productive forces, has exhausted its democratic and developmental potential, does this mean that African social formations have no option but to embrace the market economy, and the resources of global capital, in order to develop its productive forces (as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) seems to advocate)?

GLOBALISATION AND THE AFRICAN CRISIS

16. Castells (1998) places much of Africa in what he calls “the fourth world”⁵, given its marginalisation from the fruits of globalisation. Indeed, after a period of promising growth during the 1960s and 1970s, Africa on the whole has, over the past two decades, sunk deeper into poverty, underdevelopment and dependence on western aid (see Arrighi, 2002). While internal factors such as state patronage, elite corruption, ‘ethnic’ rivalry and an undeveloped civil society in most of the continent have played their part in keeping much of Africa underdeveloped (see Chabal & Daloz, 1999), these factors have interacted with and been shaped by powerful external factors that have been, and in the main still are, determining factors (see also Zack—Williams et al, 2001 and Van de Walle, 2001).

17. Other factors, such as undeveloped human resources to meet the challenges of modern industrial development, are a direct result of colonialism — or, as could be argued, *incomplete* colonialism, in that, having disrupted patterns of indigenous development to meet the needs of western economies, capitalist industrialisation and modernisation did not penetrate deeply enough to substantially embed itself as a new mode of production, as it did in South Africa to a large extent. As Mamdani (1996) argues, colonialism’s legacy in sub—Saharan Africa is the “bifurcated state”, where a modern, urbanised state coexists uneasily with a pre—modern system of hereditary rule, operating under customary law (which is, by its very nature, patriarchal).

18. While the re—emergence of multi—party democracy throughout the developing world (and with it individual liberties such as freedom of speech, movement and association) brings hope of better governance, and better development prospects, there are few success stories. New elites, embedded in the circuit of global capitalism, often replace the bureaucratic elites that are ousted from power, in the name of ‘democratisation’. In many instances old ‘autocratic’ elites become, or merge with, the new ‘democratic’ elites, as former bureaucrats use their connections to manoeuvre within the new environment. They are often at the forefront of the newly emerged entrepreneurial class, whether it be in legitimate industrial and commercial operations, or the underworld. (see Van de Walle, 2001; Dixon, 2002 & Baker, 2002).

19. The retreat or collapse of the state in most parts of sub—Saharan Africa has meant that the challenges of development are being placed increasingly in the hands of foreign donors, the NGO sector, and local communities themselves. The informal economy has grown dramatically throughout Africa, and is the major source of income for urban dwellers, and many rural people. The formal economy absorbs only a fraction of the employable population. In Uganda, for example, whole communities exist outside the ambit of the state. They have built their own houses, organised their own sanitation, and operate their own informal economy. They pay little or no taxes, and receive little or nothing in return. (see Nabudere, 1997 & Mukamba, 1997). In politically unstable countries like Chad, Liberia and the Sudan, there is no longer a single national authority, but competing powers, sometimes divided along communal or religious lines. The state in the former Zaire was almost non—existent in large parts of the country, and the government under Kabila has a long way to go before it can assert its authority everywhere. Such an assertion by a democratic government, many argue, is essential for national development, which requires national cohesion. (see Herbst, 2000).⁶

20. But the nation—state in Africa seemed doomed from the beginning. As Basil Davidson (1992) has argued, the colonial powers carved up Africa with little regard to logical boundaries based on communities of similar language and culture. In some case whole communities were split, resulting in on—going border disputes in many parts of the continent. The liberation movements, filled with noble ideals, assumed political power using the colonially—imposed nation—state as the basis for the nationalism. In most cases they failed to serve their people.

21. Given this scenario, what are the alternatives available to Africa? The World Bank argues that it needs to be *more* integrated into the world economy in order to develop, while others believe that a partial “de—linking” from the world capitalist economy is necessary for self—reliant development (see Amin *et al*, 1990).

22. Castells (1998) believes that while proposals for self—reliance may seem feasible if not desirable in principle, in practice it will take a number of revolutions of immense dimensions to implement. The promising African revolutions of the past, such as in Angola and Mozambique, spawned protracted civil wars that rapidly stifled socialist experiments in those countries, leaving a legacy of devastation.⁷ More recent attempts at self—reliant development in countries like Eritrea and Ethiopia were disrupted by a protracted and inexplicable war between the two countries (see Cliffe, 2002 and Clapham, 2002). Given continuous outbreaks of civil war in different parts of Africa, bringing nothing but further hardship and suffering for the people in those countries (see Kandeh, 2002 & Clapham, 2002), the ‘revolutionary’ option does not have bright prospects, at least in the foreseeable future.

23. Former advocates of delinking such as Samir Amin, recognising the enormous and diffuse power of globalisation, have begun to appreciate greater possibilities of democratising globalisation in the interests of the poor and marginalised. He now advocates interventions at the economic and political levels that will reconcile “globalisation with local and regional autonomies”(2001:19). This includes measures to “modify the forms of market regulation so as to protect the weak (classes and nations)”, as well as global disarmament and the “elaboration of a new system of international law governing individuals, peoples, and States” (p20).

24. At the other extreme is Uganda’s ‘neo—liberal’ model of development, under former ‘Marxist’ Yoweri Yuseveni, which follows that of Ghana under another former ‘Marxist’ Jerry Rawlings. Both countries have achieved impressive economic growth rates, and while Ghana’s performance has been questioned (in that its growth was primarily resource based), Uganda is still hailed as a ‘success story’ (see Van de Walle, 2001). Could this path be interpreted from the perspective of classical Marxists like Bill Warren who, during the 1970s, advocated the full development of capitalism before socialism, believing that “capitalism both exploits and promotes development” (Brewer,1980:292).

25. This is regarded as an absolute necessity, especially for underdeveloped social formations that need to build their productive base. Given sparse public resources, this has to occur primarily through the market, where external investment plays a crucial role. The state in this conception plays a facilitative role, and ensures that the growth of the market along with necessary regulatory and facilitative institutions fits into a long—term development vision where, presumably, society eventually collectivises production, distribution and exchange. This view holds that any attempt to build socialism before

capitalism is fully developed can only lead to bureaucratic state capitalism, with disastrous consequences in the long term.

26. Nepad, which falls under the aegis of the newly formed African Union (AU), accepts that Africa requires substantial foreign investment for its development. Such investment, in turn, requires the creation of credible institutions and effective governance, preferably within the context of a viable liberal—democratic system of government (see Gelb, 2002). It thus explicitly rules out any notion of ‘de—linking’ — inviting charges that it amounts to a capitulation to global capitalism, and their continued dependency and under—development. Critics see Nepad, which was devised without civil society participation, as amounting to little more than the extension of South Africa’s ‘neo—liberal’ Growth, Employment and Redistribution (Gear) macro—economic strategy to the rest of the continent. (see Bond, 2002)

27. Nevertheless, Nepad and the AU, despite its flaws and unclear enforcement mechanisms, do offer the possibility of extending principles of democratic governance and accountability throughout the continent, through its still—developing peer review mechanism (see Gelb, 2002). These principles are derived in part from the relatively successful, if incomplete, democratisation of South Africa (see Marais, 2001). However, it seems unrealistic to expect all African countries, with widely differing political cultures, to willingly submit to the principles of democratic accountability demanded by Nepad and the international community. Powerful regimes like Muammar Gaddafi’s Libya, which bankrolled the AU’s ineffective forerunner, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), is unlikely to submit to ‘foreign’ pressure, paving the way for other regimes, such as Robert Mugabe’s in Zimbabwe, to ignore AU strictures.

28. While the Nepad and AU framework does offer some investment carrots for those regimes willing to submit to peer review scrutiny, it seems, as an immediate all—African initiative, a non—starter. It seems that South Africa should first form a club of democratising African nations willing to submit fully to the goals and aspirations of a revised Nepad, which incorporates the concerns and active participation of civil society organisations.

CONCLUSION

29. The perspective presented here recognises the dangers inherent in globalisation, but is sceptical about the feasibility of a return to the protectionism of an unreconstructed or ‘delinked’ nation—stat. It consequently identifies with the quest to seek ways to democratise globalisation as a precondition for local, national and regional development, in the interests of all citizens of the world — accepting the necessity to keep alive, as the late Rick Turner (1972) would have it, a Utopian vision of the future.

30. Africa’s development, as in the case of other post—colonial regions, requires a concerted effort to democratise the emerging global regime based on key multilateral institutions, namely the World Bank, IMF, WTO and the UN system. The rules governing the global regime have to be substantially altered, to shift the balance of power away from the developed world, in favour of developing countries. This can only happen if increasingly powerful global social movements and NGOs act in concert with progressive governments in the developed and developing world — most notably Brazil under Lula,

South Africa and to some extent China (despite its lack of democracy) and India (despite its rightwing national government). While their agendas might seem to diverge (see Bond, 2001), there are common areas of concern that can be pursued, such as changing rules around intellectual property rights (see Shiva, 2000); increased regulation of capital flows (see Bello *et al*, 2000); increased market access for developing country goods and services; and greater relaxation of controls on the movement of people.

31. South Africa's careful balancing act, on the one hand, between forces of liberal democracy and traditional rule, and on the other, between global engagement and domestic development, is a tension—ridden path that many would argue has, compared to other African countries, succeeded — despite persistently high levels of social inequality and poverty. Should South Africa more assertively encourage such a balanced developmental approach in other parts of Africa, an approach that includes investment initiatives that enhance, rather than stifle, local initiatives? (see Miller, 2003).

32. The alternative, partial 'de—linking', has its attractions, and is still being pursued in countries like Eritrea, where incomes are very low, but relatively equitable. However, how long can such countries shelter from the winds of globalisation, when revolutionary regimes like Cuba's have found it impossible to maintain a basic level of social service without inviting foreign investment. In fact, it seems likely that, if US sanctions are lifted, Cuba will follow the paths of 'communist' countries like Vietnam and China, and seek *greater* integration into the global economy (albeit in a cautious manner that ensures substantial state regulation and intervention) (see Ripton, 2003).

33. While the Indian state of Kerala, with a strong Communist Party presence, has offered a path of democratic participatory development that addresses the basic needs of all citizens, it is not a closed economy. Indeed, a substantial portion of its revenue is derived from remittances of skilled workers employed in the Gulf States. While Kerala, like Cuba, shows how scarce resources can be equitably distributed, it is still grappling with questions of increased production that will sustain its social programmes. (see Heller, 1999 & William, 2003). With limited resources of its own, Kerala, like Cuba, cannot ignore foreign investment and global markets.

34. Scandinavian countries like Sweden and Denmark have shown how it is possible to achieve global economic integration *as well as* maintain the essential functions of an elaborate, interventionist welfare state — a state that is itself evolving to meet the needs of integration into the European Union (see Economist, 2001).

35. The path of 'balanced, participatory—democratic, sustainable development' that combines global engagement with local initiative, of course, is not particularly Utopian. However, if increased insertion into the global capitalist regime means increased 'proletarianisation', and with it the emergence of stronger and more viable labour and other social movements within localities, nation—states, regions and across the globe, this can only broaden and deepen the struggles currently being waged to democratise globalisation. Within those struggles, it seems, will emerge alternatives that grapple with, but also go beyond the confines of, exhausted nation—states that have, in the main, (ill—)served the modern world characterised by nationalism and imperialism.

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NOTES

¹ Held & McGrew identify “the 1960s and early 1970s” (2000b:1) as the first time the term was actually used.

² The literature on globalisation has burgeoned since the late 1980s, and some of the key texts can be found in Held & McGrew (2000a). One of the more influential and ambitious attempts to capture the depth and breadth of this phenomenon is Manuel Castells's three volume magnum opus (1996, 1997 & 1998)

³ Ohmae, K (1985) *Triad Power: The Coming Shape of Global Competition* New York: Free Press, as referred to in Castells (1996). Over the past two decades, as Castells (1998) shows, these centres of power have been challenged by the ‘Asian Tigers’.

⁴ The role of the UN in multilateral peacekeeping missions around the world has been undermined somewhat by the unilateral invasion of Iraq by the United States in April 2003.

⁵ A categorisation also used by Samir Amin (1992).

⁶ By democratic government we mean one that goes beyond liberal representative democracy, which is compatible with neo—liberal capitalism, towards a substantive democracy that embraces both liberal freedoms and substantial social equality, which can only be achieved through active social policies . As Fantu Cheru argues, there is a need to go beyond the simple state—led versus market—driven approaches, and seek a “third option: a guided embrace of globalization” (2002:xv).

⁷ Of course, apartheid South Africa’s destabilisation of these regimes played a major role.