European Honors Program: National and Regional Identities In An Age of globalization

2014-2015

Final Essay

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Date: 1st May 2015

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**Essay Title:** “How are regionalism, globalization and nationalism different, equal or overlapping to one other? Please refer to a specific country in order to support your reasoning.”
ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to address the ‘never-solved’ issue about the interaction among the three forces that shape world politics in the modern world: globalization, regionalization, and nationalism. These three forces correspondingly underline the same concept yet with different solution. As it will be studied throughout the paper, globalization, regionalization and nationalism should be captured and studied as forces, which are relative to and overlapping one another, yet they are never cooperative or in harmony. Thus, my reasoning will look at the end of regionalism and the beginning of nationalism; as well as if they have to be considered in opposition to globalization or if the concept of 'glocalization' will solve the issue, and whether they mutually reinforce each other and if so, what might be possible positive or negative outcomes.
INTRODUCTION

Nationalism, globalization and regionalism’s relations have been the core subject of many debates among scholars in international relations and history fields. All three forces stand at an important position in our interdependent modern societies and nation-states, especially in the shaping of current politics and our identity. Given the overload of critiques on the matter, two main contrasting perspectives have been put forward. Some theorists argue that nationalism cannot co-exist with globalization, while others strongly believe that regionalism and nationalism bring about a clearer concept of globalization. On top of this, it is also suggested that global forces will overpower the European regions, which is compared by the opposing view stating that the rise of a new localism will lead to a Europe of regions.1

A. NATIONALISM IN AN ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

In times of modernization, secularization and globalization, there appears to be a growing gap between elites and masses when it comes to nation-building. This means that the state and respectively the church no longer provide a set of values and idea of what the national identity is (or should be); instead only political, economic, and cultural/intellectual elites have a say.2 Moreover nation states, as argued by Keating, have not disappeared, but instead they have lost the abilities to international organizations, their components parts and the market as a whole.3 Given this issue, globalization is also needed to enclose political and social identities since they are too complex to be contained in a national identity itself defined by the borders of the state. Thus, nationalism promotes globalization as long as the latter is desirable for national power and security and does not essentially challenge the system of nation-states.4 Although the many difficult challenges faced for nationalism due to globalization, they still do not amount to any change or fundamental transformation; and as Hurrell put it “…much understandings of the road to power and plenty may have changed, the nationalist developmental state is alive and well.”5

B. GLOBALIZATION

Globalization is defined as a phenomenon, which affects people and states all around the world, by creating a more interdependent environment, not only economically, but politically and culturally as well.6 The process of independence together with advances in technology and communications, leads to a more deterritorialized world7 and unified since the geography restrictions diminish.8 Globalization has real consequences in terms of increased movement of

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1 Chaminade, Cristina and Monica Plechero “Do regions make a difference? Exploring the Role of Different Regional Innovation Systems in Global Innovation Networks in the ICT industry” No 2012/2, Papers in Innovation Studies, Lund University, Research and Competences in the Learning Economy (2012)
4 Ibid
goods, services, technology, borders, ideas, and people, of which some are weakening. For example, the rise and development of international organizations (WTO) as well as the unification of all member states in the European Union took some of the decision-making from nation-states; this is because international organizations only grant membership if the states are willing to give away some of their sovereignty. Such concept blurs the idea of national identities and gives rise to the idea of a “United States of Europe”, which for instance is emphasized by the idea of the economy’s globalization, since current economic nationalism is seen as outdated and harmful for the state. This notion of developing global cultures leads to a loss of nationalism within states, negatively shaping the relationship between globalization and nationalism.

C. GLOBALIZATION AND NATIONALISM ARE DIFFERENT FROM ONE OTHER

Nevertheless, many theorists suggest that globalization and nationalism cannot co-exist and they are not convergent to one other because the former influences the latter’s forms by suppressing it. Nationalist thinkers perceive the concept of globalization as the compression of the world as well as its strengthening of consciousness as there is an increasing trend towards interdependence. They believe that processes such as disintegration, separation and localization are the outcomes of the globalization trend, consequently explaining how the rise of statehood is a response to the forces of globalization. The latter is also recognized as a power to destroy the tradition and culture of different ethnic groups around the world; which is clearly exemplified by the Western cultural dominance over the rest of the world. As technology and science developed in the West, other regions of the world started borrowing their ideas and values, which subsequently began to shape those of poorer countries. This, together with other less desirable consequences lead to an increase in rootlessness and loss of stability “…as people experience the effects of capitalist development, media overflow, structural adjustment policies, privatization, urbanization, unemployment, forced migration and…” other forces.

D. GLOBALIZATION AND NATIONALISM ARE EQUAL TO EACH OTHER

However an opposing standpoint imply that globalization and nationalism have a ‘mixed relationship’ in which one has led to the other and one promotes the other. On one hand, many theorists believe that globalization has promoted nationalism, in cases where a national event or a state’s economy becomes a cultural resource in different global regions, influencing other nations in

13 Supranote 3, pg. 8
a positive way. Globalization has also strengthened the support of nationalist movements by increasing the importance and the voices of small groups such as ethnic groups, religious groups, and ethno-language groups.19 On the other hand, globalization is understood as the result of nationalism, because each nation has participated and gives something to the globe in a successful collective way; implying the idea of how each independent nation has in one way or another been involved in making up the globe as it is now. As writer Sabanadze argued in her papers, both globalization and nationalism are in harmony with one other, because their coexistence is not seen as a fight where only one of them is the winner, but it is rather a mutually beneficial coexistence of two harmonious trends.20

E. NATIONALISM AS OPPOSED TO REGIONALISM

Nationalism and regionalism are seen as two similar, yet very contrasting forces. Most Nation States differ from one another; in fact some has a strong centralized administration, while others have been structures depending on the national government. The former was able to then transfer political power to its regions, such as the devolution of power in the UK to Scotland and Wales in 199821; whereas the latter (includes countries like Italy and France) tends to diminish its regional autonomy. However in order to avoid such process and to enhance the significance of regions as well as to represent them as the layer of the EU government administration right below the nation state level, in 1994 the European Union created a Committee of the Regions (CoR).22 This Committed was also ‘built’ with the principle to maintain regions’ historic autonomy as well as strengthening their political and economic situations.23 Nationalist thinkers strongly uphold that regionalism in this case is aiming to exceed the authority of the state in a supranational direction by setting limits and constraints to the development of a regional identity and supranational institutions. Yet, they do not recognize how nation-states can essentially be strengthened through regionalism since its main goal is not to transcend state’s authority, but to guarantee the region’s members greater security in their international relations in a context of increasing vulnerability of either the world economy or global security.24

F. REGIONALISM AS A PROCESS OF GLOBALIZATION

As the last force, new regionalism\textsuperscript{25} gained importance on the assumption that it is important for the cultural and social backgrounds to economic growth.\textsuperscript{26} It may be understood in many different ways, which vary from being a threat to, or protest against the State, a potential separation danger, fragmentation, or otherwise as a way to modify the State authority, in order to gain more autonomy.\textsuperscript{27} The new concept of regionalism is also based on the idea that “…despite globalization, places and regions still matter…”\textsuperscript{28} as well as being a process where states, institutions and non-states interact under an economic, cultural, diplomatic, political, and military field.\textsuperscript{29} This phenomenon is believed to be in harmony with both nationalism and globalization since it is best known as the ability to recognize regions as an ‘intermediate form of community,’ between the national community of the state and the global community of humankind, for example regarding pluralistic security communities.\textsuperscript{30} Yet, regionalism still faces unanswered questions, such as whether it is a newly created political discourse, a provisional phenomenon, or a serious and lasting consequence of and challenge to the flaws of the nation-state and hence a new form of political modernity.\textsuperscript{31} Under this context, regionalism can then be recognized as a socio-political development aimed to restore past ethnic and cultural identities and autonomies; however it is also perceived as a creation of the present, often being based upon distorted histories and contemporary claims to specific ethnic identities.\textsuperscript{32} Thus, in certain cases the process of regionalism helps legitimizing and giving scope to the emergence of autonomous ethnic groups;\textsuperscript{33} whereas in other cases regionalism represents those units that may be located within or across the borders of a nation-state but are irrelevant regarding nationalistic identities.\textsuperscript{34}

Nevertheless, regionalism brings about societal problems to its populations, which it has never introduced. These defects mostly concern the delineation of its exact territorial borders,\textsuperscript{35} which lead to consciousness of geographical contiguity, interaction, and the lack of belonging to a specific community and having a collective regional identity.\textsuperscript{36} Its main concern is regional security complex, which as stated by Barry Buzan\textsuperscript{37}, is a set of states continually affected by one or more

\textsuperscript{25} Keating, Michael “The New Regionalism in Western Europe” (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1998
\textsuperscript{26} Kees Terlouw, “Rescaling Regional Identities: Communicating Thick and Thin Regional Identities” Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism 9 no. 3 (2009) 452–464
\textsuperscript{29} Mace, Gordon and Jean-Philippe Therien. “Introduction: Foreign Policy and Regionalism in the Americas” (1996) pg. 6 in Gordon Mace and Jean-Philippe Therien, eds., Foreign Policy and Regionalism in the Americas (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner), pg. 1-17
\textsuperscript{30} Whiting, Van R. “The Dynamics of Regionalization: Road Map to an Open Future?” 1993 in Peter H. Smith, ed., The Challenge of Integration: Europe and the Americas (Miami, FL: North-South Center), 17–49.
\textsuperscript{31} T.O. Hueglin “Regionalism in Western Europe: Conceptual Problems Of A New Political Perspective” Comparative Politics, pg. 440 (1986)
\textsuperscript{33} Arie M. Kacowicz “Regionalization, Globalization, and Nationalism: Convergent, Divergent, or Overlapping?” Alternatives: Global, Local, Political Vol. 24, No. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1999), pp. 527-555
\textsuperscript{34} K. Ohmae “The End of the Nation State, the Rise of Regional Economies” Harper Collins, London pg. 5 (1995)
\textsuperscript{35} Haas, Michael. 1970. “International Subsystems,” American Political Science Review 64 (March): pg. 100-123
security externalities; which may include security power restraining power; collective security; pluralistic security communities;\(^{38}\) and integration in an ascending order of institutionalization.\(^{39}\) Despite these flaws, as Holm and Sorensen\(^{40}\) have argued, regionalism can be seen as a chapter of globalization because by helping national economies to become more competitive in the world market, integration between regions will lead to mutual cooperation on a global scale and the emergence of regional economies.\(^{41}\)

**G. ITALY LEGA NORD CASE vs. THE UK DECENTRALIZATION OF POWER**

In a country like Italy, for instance, where there are several regionalist parties; there is also the emergence of the Northern League (Lega Nord, also known as LN) political party\(^{42}\), in the North of Italy. This party has given a new incentive to debates about the significance of regionalism in Italy as well as across Europe; yet it differs from other regionalist European parties.\(^{43}\) This is because it does not protest against foreign rule but against common economic interests of the region,\(^{44}\) the political class, the immigrants and the underdeveloped South.\(^{45}\) The region of ‘Padania’ has never ‘existed’ as an administrative and political region, hence why LN has attempted to construct its geography borders and its history in order to justify its territorial and political claims.\(^{46}\) Globalization in this sense helped regionalism, because thanks to the use of modern technology as well as its cultural symbolism and political publicity it is possible to ‘artificially’ invent the existence of a new political identity.\(^{47}\) I strongly believe that the invention of Padania illustrates the way that a ‘new’ political identity can appeal in a harmonizing rather than competing way with other political identities at other scales, such as the nation state Italy and the EU at the global level. The creation of a new ‘Padanian’ political identity underlines the idea that in Italy, both local and national identities are easily able to co-exist with one other, instead of making the old ones disappear. On the contrary to the Italian Lega Nord Case, there is the case of the UK, where the increase of regional autonomy led to a huge decrease in nationalism occurs. The UK government has been going through various changes, such as going from a centralized government to a system of governance and later on through different locations of power from the supranational to the local, ‘raising eyebrows’ to the extent of how efficient and justifiable the older forms of institutional

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\(^{38}\) Morgan, Patrick M. 1997. “Regional Security Complexes and Regional Orders” in Lake and Morgan pg. 32-41  
\(^{44}\) Benito Giordano “Italian Regionalism or ‘Padanian’ Nationalism — the Political Project of the Lega Nord in Italian Politics” Political Geography, 19; pg. 445-71 (2000)  
\(^{45}\) Poche, B. “The Lombard League: From Cultural Autonomy to Integral Federalism”, TELOS 90, pg.75 (1992)  
\(^{46}\) Ibid.  
structure are.\textsuperscript{48} In fact, England devolved its power to both Wales and Scotland, who both have long had their own territorial institutions, such as government offices, secretaries of state and development agencies.\textsuperscript{49} Unlike other autonomous regions, both Wales and Scotland were able to gain forms of directly elected government following a referendum in 1997, where they used claims to national identity as a legitimizing device. This consequently gave them regional autonomy, however it left England void of any directly accountable structures of territorial governance. Both examples clearly underline two dissimilar outcomes of the concept of ‘glocalization’ and the idea of regionalism, and how the outcome of a harmonious regionalism trend with nationalism and globalization may lead to an increase in regional autonomy and national autonomy as well as a lack of sovereignty for both.

**CONCLUSION**

On the surface, the message conveyed throughout this paper has been one of complexity between glocalization and the other trends. All three forces, globalization, nationalism, and regionalization are central in shaping world politics, though their main importance is relative to one another through complex relations of convergence, divergence, and uneasy coexistence or overlapping. As seen throughout, nation states still remain the basic political units for the analysis of world politics;\textsuperscript{50} however they are continuously affected by new and recent trends of regionalization and globalization, which have ‘pooled’ the nation states in undefined and unfamiliar directions, including the chance of creating ‘megastates’ of trade.\textsuperscript{51} Given this concept, it is better to regard to the three forces as having different types of regionalism and nationalism, and even to several shapes and dimensions of globalization, rather than a single, ‘global’ one. Their existence is dependent to one other in terms of convergence and divergence, yet they do not seem to overlap each other, since they are completely contrasting forces with a possible similar outcome.

\textsuperscript{50} Mayall, James “Nationalism and International Society” (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) pg. 152, 1990
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