

Changing nature of Sovereignty of nation states in the context of Globalisation.

We had lived in a world of essentially unchallenged sovereignty for several generations now, and had begun to think of it as the natural state of affairs. However, the idea of states as autonomous, independent entities is collapsing under the combined onslaught of monetary unions, global television, the Internet, governmental and non-governmental organizations. Many have proclaimed the death of sovereignty of states while a few still believe that sovereignty is still the basis of state interaction.

According to Stephen D. Krasner, "Sovereignty was never quite as vibrant as many contemporary observers suggest. The conventional norms of sovereignty have always been challenged. A few states notably the United States, have had autonomy, control, and recognition for most of their existence, but most others have not. The polities of many weaker states have been persistently penetrated, and stronger nations have not been immune to external influence. China was occupied. The constitutional arrangements of Japan and Germany were directed by the United States after World War II. The United Kingdom, despite its rejection of the euro, is part of the European Union."

Sovereignty is still very attractive to weaker states, whose domestic structures have been influenced by outside actors, and whose leaders have very little control over trans-border movements or even activities within their own country. This is because sovereignty provides them with international recognition, which recognition guarantees them access to international organizations and sometimes, international finance. It also offers status to the individual leaders. While the great powers of Europe have eschewed many elements of sovereignty, the United States, China, and Japan have neither the interest nor the inclination to abandon their usually effective claims to domestic autonomy.

Governments and activists alike complain that multilateral institutions such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and the International Monetary Fund overstep their authority by promoting universal standards for everything, which in turn alter the scope of state authority. It is our intention to consider just how much globalization has affected state authority.

Globalization

Globalization is the word used to describe the growing interdependence of the world's economies, cultures, and populations, brought about by cross-border trade in goods and services, technology, and flows of investment, people, and information. Countries have built economic partnerships to facilitate these movements over many centuries. But the term gained popularity after the Cold War in the early 1990s, as these cooperative arrangements shaped modern everyday life. Globalization also "refers to processes whereby many social relations become relatively delinked from territorial geography, so that human lives are increasingly being played out in the world as a single place".

Sovereignty

Sovereignty is the central attribute of the state as a form of political organization.

Sovereignty and statehood have become so closely interlinked that a non-sovereign state tends to be regarded as only a quasi-state. It does not signify merely a certain degree or quantity of power, as if the extent to which a state is sovereign can be measured simply by calculating its relative military and economic power. Sovereignty signifies simultaneously a right to act and a power to act. There are cases where the power of a state to act is so confined and limited that its sovereign right to act is rendered largely meaningless. Equally, there are times when the actual power of a state is so great that,

although its sovereign right to use this power has not been formally acknowledged by others, it is tacitly recognized. These are extreme cases, however. Normally, sovereignty means the possession of a right and power, and disputes about sovereignty are disputes about right and power.

Globalization and Political Sovereignty

Globalization has led to a decline in the power of national governments to direct and influence their economies (especially with regard to macroeconomic management); and to determine their political structures. There is a strong indication that the impact of globalization is most felt through the extent to which politics everywhere are now essentially market-driven. It is not that governments are now unable to run their states, but to survive in office; they must increasingly "manage" national politics in such a way as to adapt them to the pressures of trans-national market forces.

The most dominant of the general and global organizations that had emerged was the League of Nations and now succeeded by the United Nations. At the regional levels, the African Union, European Union, Organization of American States, the Arab League, etc exist. The impact of these organizations is to create of a process of institution-building, where the organizations are able to determine and dictate what happens in the governance of member states. This is the trend of political globalization. Non member states find themselves outside this cooperation and are regarded as deviants. The future would see more states edging to conform to the norms laid down by these organizations. Already, the impact is being felt in the area of human rights. Due to the internationalization of human rights, a state is no longer free to treat its nationals and aliens the way it pleases. It must conform to international standards laid down in the various human rights treaties, most of which are now regarded as customary law. Persistent, concentration of sovereignty in international institutions will eventually lead to a state of subjugation of political sovereignty to the dictates of the institutions.

Globalization and Economic Sovereignty

The interrelationships of markets, finance, goods and services, and the networks created by transnational corporations are the most important manifestations of economic globalization. Though the capitalist world-system has been international in essence for centuries, the extent and degree of trade and investment globalization has increased greatly in recent decades. Economic globalization has been accelerated by what information technology has done to the movement of money. It is commonly claimed that the market's ability to shift money from one part of the globe to another by the push of a button has changed the rules of policy-making, putting economic decisions much more at the mercy of market forces than before.

According to Karky, economic globalization is a historical process; the result of human innovation and technological progress. It refers to the increasing integration of economies around the world, particularly through trade and financial flows. Now, shifts in economic activity in say, Japan or the United States, are felt in countries all over the globe. The internationalization of financial markets, of technology and of some manufacturing and services bring with them a new set of limitations upon the freedom of action of nation states. In addition, the emergence of institutions such as the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, involve new constraints and imperatives.

Globalization and Cultural Sovereignty

From our perspective, culture refers to the patterns of behaviour and thinking that people living in social groups learn, create, and share. Culture distinguishes one human group from others. A people's culture includes their beliefs, rules of behaviour, language, rituals, art, technology, styles of dress, ways of producing and cooking food, religion, and political and economic systems.

Since no human society exists in complete isolation, different societies also exchange and share culture. In fact, all societies have some interactions with others, both out of curiosity and because even highly self-sufficient societies sometimes need assistance from their neighbours. Today, for instance, many people around the world use similar kinds of technology, such as cars, telephones, and televisions. Commercial trade and communication technologies, such as computer networks, have created a form of global culture. Therefore, it has become increasingly difficult to find culture that is shared within only a single society.

Cultural exchange can provide many benefits for all societies. Different societies can exchange ideas, people, manufactured goods, and natural resources. Such exchanges can also have drawbacks, however. Often, the introduction of aspects of another society's culture can disrupt the cohesive life of a people.

Whereas the modern world-system has always been, and is still, multicultural, the growing influence and acceptance of Western values of rationality, individualism, equality, and efficiency is an important trend of the twentieth century; a trend which has heightened both in speed and nature. Time and space compression by new information technologies is simply an extension and acceleration of the very long-term trend towards acculturation.

Sovereignty in a Globalized World

Sovereignty used to mean final authority. This is no longer so. When philosophers Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes elaborated the notion of sovereignty in the 16th and 17th centuries, they were concerned with establishing the legitimacy of a single hierarchy of domestic authority. Although they both accepted the existence of divine and natural law, they believed the word of the sovereign was law.

However, in the contemporary world, sovereignty primarily is linked with the idea that states are autonomous and independent from each other. Within their own boundaries, the members of a polity are free to choose their own form of government. Another point is that no state has the right to intervene in the internal affairs of another state. Sovereignty is also associated with the idea of control over trans-border movements. Finally, sovereignty also means that political authorities can enter into international agreements.

States are free to endorse any contract they find attractive. Any treaty among states is legitimate provided that it has not been coerced. This is the new strength of sovereignty. Technological changes over the last 200 years have increased the flow of people, goods, capital, and ideas. The response of states to globalization and its impact on their sovereignty is nothing compared with what followed the invention of the printing press. Most sovereign monarchs could not contain the spread of the concepts that spread with it and many lost not only their kingdoms but also their heads. Despite the perceived impacts of globalization on sovereignty of states, states appear to be stronger and more able to address internal problems and no leader has lost its state yet to globalization. In addition to attempting to control the flows of capital and ideas, states have long struggled to manage the impact of international trade. The opening of long distance trade for bulk commodities in the 19th century created fundamental cleavages in all of the major states. One thing is certain; globalization is changing the scope of state control. The reach of the state has increased in some areas and contracted in others. Rulers have recognized that walking away from issues they cannot resolve can enhance their effective

control. For instance, beginning with the Peace of Westphalia, leaders chose to surrender their control over religion because it proved too volatile.

Monetary policy is an area where state control has contracted. Along with the erosion of national currencies, we now see the erosion of national citizenship – the notion that an individual should be a citizen of one and only one country, and that the state has exclusive claims to that person's loyalty. For many states, there is no longer a sharp distinction between citizens and non-citizens. Permanent residents, guest workers, refugees, and undocumented immigrants are entitled to some bundle of rights even if they cannot vote. The ease of travel and the desire of many countries to attract either capital or skilled workers have increased incentives to make citizenship more flexible.

International Institutions – A violation of Sovereignty?

Belonging to an international institution like the AU, the EU, the OAS is inconsistent with conventional sovereignty rules. Member states have created supranational institutions that can make decisions opposed by some member states.

In one sense, these institutions are products of state sovereignty because they were created through voluntary agreements among its member states. But, in another sense, it fundamentally contradicts conventional understandings of sovereignty because these same agreements have undermined the juridical autonomy of its individual members.

Human rights have made a significant impact on international law. It has particularly affected the sovereignty of states and the assumption that international law is solely a state-based system and that states are free to treat their nationals the way they please.

This development is the reflection of a wider phenomenon: the increased concern of people all over the world with the treatment accorded to their fellow human beings in other countries, particularly when the treatment fails to come up to minimum standards of civilized behaviour. Therefore, human rights principles are the same everywhere, irrespective of sex, race or creed. That means that human rights are applicable in every society and association of human beings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, even though it can be shown that globalization has reduced certain state powers, it is still within the sovereign power of a state to decide not to be part of the integrated global life. It is a choice a nation makes in exercise of its sovereign powers.

The central challenge however is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for the entire world's people. While globalization offers great opportunities, at present its benefits are very unevenly shared, while its costs are unevenly distributed.

This situation is quite aptly captured by the United Nations thus;

“We recognize that developing countries and countries with economies in transition face special difficulties in responding to this central challenge. Thus, only through broad and sustained efforts to diversity, can globalization be made fully inclusive and equitable.

These efforts must include policies and measures, at the global level, which correspond to the needs of developing countries and economies in transition and are formulated and implemented with their effective participation.”