

**Reference:**

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**Modernity Globalization  
and Dismantling National Cultures,**

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**Review**

**Introduction:**

**In the last decade, speaking about Globalization has been widely spread so that such a word became the central theme for every discourse, starting by the political and economic, ending by the religious and cultural one. Discourses differ in using the term; between rejection associated with defending local heritage against globalization, fear from challenges expected from globalization, support and advocating entering its realm and active participations in its outcomes, and research in an effort to define its different meanings and clarify the ambiguity of the term.**

**Such a diverse discourse, - as a whole – uncovers a state of ambiguity and inaccuracy in using the term, as well as lack of its historical and ideological dimensions; it also uncovers either an ostensible or hidden fear from a new phenomenon that should be made aware of and confronted, according to the different discourses.**

**Probably, our awareness of the ambiguity of such a term in the Arabic cultural discourse, as well as our awareness of the problems that pervade this discourse in its reception of the intellectual outcomes of modernity, have derived**

us to use the term 'Modernity Globalization' instead of the term 'Globalization' in this context. We purported by this to defeat a host of illusions that its echoes are circulating in the Arabic discourse about globalization. Of these illusions, saying that globalization is a new phenomenon without being aware of the historical dimensions of modernism as a global one; saying that globalization turns the world into one small village without being aware of the dismantling dimension of 'modernity globalization'; or that it represents a new challenge without being aware of the 'old' challenges that have been created by 'modernity globalization'.

In reality, defeating such illusions represents only a secondary aim for this essay. Our first aim is to uncover the dialectical relation between two mechanisms of 'modernity globalization', which are integration and deconstruction, hoping to uncover some of the contradictions and internal conflicts that are produced by 'modernity globalization'. Such contradictions and conflicts leave the peripheral societies in a state of continuous degradation, and implant in it a picture of modernity different from that which evolves and flourishes in the centre of the advanced world.

Our discussion, in order to fulfill this goal, will follow three routs. We start, first, by asserting the relative oldness of the processes of 'modernity globalization', stressing on that what is now called 'Globalization' is no more than a contemporary form of 'modernity globalization'. Then we move afterwards to expound what the processes of 'modernity globalization' produce, as effects on dismantling national cultures and on creating forms of contradiction and conflicts, and hence on supporting a specific form of modernism. (P.7- 8)

### **I- Modernism and Surpassing Time and Space Limits**

Societies have known through their history different forms of globalization. Every civilization had, one way or another a global ambition. Moreover, the history of the world is no more than a series of mini forms of globalizations 'mini-globalizations' [Robertson, 1990: 21].

However, despite the existence of such a tendency toward globalization, 'modernity globalization' has taken a different form. The political and social

systems of the ancient Empires had traditional systems, which depend on centralization and concentration of power, with isolation of the governed groups, which were traditional self-sufficient societies, from the center of power. The matter was different when the European societies have broken the traditional system and entered the world of modernity. For, appearance of modernity, and across its history, was accompanied with relentless endeavor toward becoming global, and overcoming the limits of space and time, albeit with difference in ways and mechanisms that have been used across time (military and economic occupation, commercial exchanges, trans-continent companies, modern communication systems...etc).

Therefore, research in 'modernist globalization' is not new in any way. Theorists of the world Capitalist system, since the fifties of the twentieth century, have defended the idea that asserts the international aspect of the Capitalist system, saying that the analysis of the micro economic units has no meaning except within an international system of Capitalist economy. Those theorists have referred the history of the international economic system to the very beginnings of the world geographic discoveries [Zayed, 1981]. For example, Robertson, one of the early theorists of globalization, divides its history into five stages, as follows:

- 1- the embryonic stage, from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, which witnessed the beginnings of the crystallization of a central theory for the world.
- 2- The emergence stage, from mid the eighteenth to the seventies of the nineteenth centuries, which witnessed the appearance of nationality and international relations.
- 3- The Launching stage, from the seventies of the nineties to the twenties of the twentieth centuries, in which majority of the nations have been included in the 'international society'.
- 4- The conflict stage, which lasted till the ends of the sixties, which witnessed the great wars and the appearance of the national liberation movements.
- 5- Finally, the uncertainty stage, which is realized by the current state of globalization [Robertson, 1998: 132-134]

One of the most important aspects which accompanied globalization, across its historical stages, what Anthony Giddens calls 'Time and space distancing', or the separation between space and time. [Giddens, 1990: 17-21]. This means simply that modernism has the tendency – through what is included within it of adventure, rationalism, science and ability of self-criticism and revision – to surpass its place and change the meaning of time. The result is a continuous tendency toward globalization, not on the abstract but the realistic level... This aspect of modernism allowed it to formulate rational systems that relate what is local by what is global; it also allowed it to write its history in an organized and accurate way.

Accordingly, it is not right to speak about 'globalization' (of our contemporary world), rather, we should be speaking about a new stage of globalization, or 'modernity globalization'... And because this stage of modernism is new, then it should be carrying something new that makes it the most eras of globalization clamor and perplexity. P. 8 -11

## **II- The new faces of Modernity Globalization**

Since the beginnings of the seventies of the twentieth century, the world has entered a new era of its history. Capitalism has entered a new crisis of depression that motivated it to produce new mechanisms to confront the crisis and surpass it safely. G. Frank in his 'Crisis in the world economy [1980] asserted on an important hypothesis, that the world crisis will reformulate the structure of the world capitalist system, as well as its internal politics, and probably it will reformulate the political map of the world itself. In fact, his hypothesis has been realized to a great degree during the eighties and nineties. Capitalism has overcome its crisis, but the world left behind became a new world, in addition, the individual in this world – as a living human being – became totally new one.

On the economic level, the new capitalism tends toward unification of the world and supporting mechanisms of a greater Globalization. Mechanisms of globalization that are associated with the new capitalist system were new, to the extent that researches in political economy are inclined toward describing this new era with special descriptions, such as 'Disorganized Capitalism; [Offe, 1980],

'Empire of Chaos' [Amin, 1991, Lash& Urry, 1987], 'Post-Fordism' [Lipietz, 1987].

Along with such economic mechanisms political as well as intellectual changes has been going on deeply. Conflict between countries of the center resulted in increasing pressure on third world countries. In addition, culture became, an area of confrontation and a means to realize economic and political purposes [Wallerstein, 1990]. On the other hand, according to Samir Amin [1989: 29] Euro-centrism has failed to unify the world, for it produced a counter-centrism of the local cultures. These world new phenomena lead Robertson [1990] to describe this period as the 'uncertainty phase'.

However, whatever the names given to this period, there is a consensus that it depends on two mechanisms in its performance: the first is the mechanism of transformation toward globalization through creating forms of uniformity and integration across different fields of life. According to Appadurai [1990: 295-303], this global culture creates 'cultural flows' on five dimensions: the ethnoscope, flow of tourists, immigrants and workers; the technoscope, flow of technology through multi-national companies; the finanscope, flow of money through the market; Mediascope, flow of pictures and information through media; and ideoscope, flow of ideologies about freedom and enlightenment.

The second mechanism is that of deregulation, which works on deconstructing local commercial systems, so that local capital becomes subjected to international capitalist strategies. In addition, it works on deconstructing local cultures for reformulation and adaptation with world systems. P. 11-13

In this context, we assert on the following:

- 1) Modernist globalization has been related since its very beginnings by disparity between time and space. This disparity has been greatly widened today, so that it aims at dissolving space and time, through means of transportation and communication, and hence, guiding humanity toward an idealistic state of 'no-time', and 'no-space'. P. 13-14
- 2) Modernity globalization aims at creating a universal culture. Hence, globalization culture surpasses national cultures through trance-cultural and trance-social mechanisms, such as

international relations, flow of commodities and information and pictures. This universal culture, despite its realization in real life, it is comprised of rational structures that are built through an eclectic processes from different existing cultures, and put into media technology. This trans-national culture structures surpasses the limits of time and space in which it has appeared [Smith, 1990: 177-179]

- 3) Globalization culture has the following properties:
- a. Accompanied with a scientific – technical discourse, hence, it is oriented toward specific aims, economic, political, and cultural. P. 15
  - b. Elite, imposed from above, without a people's base. When globalization culture flow into the wider base, it becomes shallow concentrating on pictures and direct needs. P. 15
  - c. It purports to concentrate power. Here power is not only political, but also power of technology, which is related to huge industrial projects. This property has produced what is called 'Cyberculture', and 'Cyperspace', as well as the 'Virtual community'. Those communities are not enclosed in a specific space, they don't know each other, and don't share common beliefs [Meyrowitz, 1985: 209-210]. P. 16-17
  - d. Intimate relation with consumer culture. Processes of propagation of globalization spread symbols and values and types of behavior that are related with consumption, which motivates people toward competition in consumption. P. 17-18
  - e. These processes impose models of behavior that limit, in the final analysis, freedom of the lay person which is guaranteed in liberal societies. In this context the term 'Macdonaldization' has appeared to point to the model of 'fast food', which is based on efficiency, expectation, quality control, and using non-human technologies. [Ritzer, 1993: 1-8]. This model applies also to other consumer products, such as education, tourism, Malls, etc. These models transmit and propagate cultural and symbolic behaviors that

change the way of living as well as the relation between individuals. P. 18-20

- f. Turning reality into images and simulations, which replace the creative abilities of people as well as realistic representation of life. These simulations distort reality and prevent it from appearance; moreover, it turns out to be illusory with no relation to reality [Baudrillard, 1993: 94].

### **III- National cultures: inclination toward disintegration and degradation**

The previous analysis may suggest for us that processes of modernity globalization are working toward unification of the world, or at least creating horizons of similarity in the fields of economy, politics and culture. This is right, however, it is also right that there exist other mechanisms working on dismantling local national cultures, creating conflicts and polarizations within these cultures. So that these weak societies that are searching for its cultural and social identities turn out to be focal points for conflicts and struggles. These focal points appear clearly on the peripherals, i.e., societies that fall on the margins of the world capitalist system. The world created through globalization appears unified at the top and disintegrated at the bottom. On the top, flows of cultures, economies, and technologies appear which create frames of resemblances. But at the bottom, searching for identity, history, and nationality continues, and the process of unification stays faraway.

Theorists of globalization introduce several views about the relation between the centre and the peripheral, or the global and the local. In the following, we introduce three general views:

- 1- Globalization processes support the appearance of a unified world system, but at the same time create frames that identify local cultures and assert its existence. This double-sided process produces a state of polarization between the 'global' and the 'local' cultures [Wallerstein, 1990: 39-49]. This polarization appears clearly between proponents of modernism, who defend modernism culture as a means for advancement, and critics of Westernization who defend heritage and local cultures. In the same way, Robertson asserts what he calls an

intertwining between universality and particularity, what is local includes a view to the world, and what is universal includes a view to the local [Robertson, 1998: 224]. P. 23-25

2- Conflict between local movements and national states are based on implementing and making use of universal flows of globalization (such as, technology, media, ideology, etc). Such conflicts are expected to continue through these same flows and the state of uncertainty brought about through globalization [Appadurai, 1990: 303-308]. P. 25

3- These conflicts turn out to be universal on the basis of a confrontation between the world of 'Mac' (Rationality) and the world of ' Islamic Jihad' (different forms of rejecting modernism). These two models will continue in a dialectical interaction. P. 26

These attributed properties of globalization, despite their differences, are in agreement that globalization represents a reality that can't be resisted or overcome. For, every form of resistance is itself one of its manifestations. Hence, these views can be seen as some form of ideological justification for the new hegemony of modernity globalization in its concurrent form. P. 27

In any case, these views cover, or ignore, two important issues. The first is related to the different forms of uneven exploitation that are imposed through modernist globalization since its beginnings till today. The second, is related to the role it plays in deconstructing and dismantling local cultures and pushing it toward a world of struggles and conflicts. There are many theoretical works have studied such issues and clarified the role of globalization in asserting an uneven system of international work division and the role played by Euro-centric capitalism in absorbing its revenues. These issues have been raised within the critical discourse of modernity globalization, and culminated in a call for a counter-globalization, in which people not capitalists impose values and mechanisms of the world [Samir Amin, 1999: 69]. P. 28

Different forms of cultural defense appear, more clearly, in the peripheral societies, which receive products of modernism without participating in its production. Here, consumption of the universal culture becomes a way of asserting the self and strengthening the feeling of identity. This process is performed through a continuous series of what is called 'Recognition of



territories', such as limits of space, time, class, ethnic origin, religion, and body. If globalization theorists assert the process of surpassing these territories, we assert here that the counter process pushes, internally, toward asserting them:

- 1- Space territories are asserted through the local conflicts as well as reproduction of local cultures [Harvey, 1989].
- 2- Time territories are asserted through the interference between 'the modernist time' and the 'heritage time'. Peripheral societies tend to preserve its heritage, and hence, produce a mixed discourse between the two territories of time [Featherston, 1989].
- 3- Class territories are maintained through producing modernist culture and its consumers, in addition, class division in its extreme form exists in the peripheral where modernism is basically shallow and superficial.
- 4- Religion and ethnic origin are used as tools for domestication of modernity globalization.
- 5- Body territories are asserted in different ways, to support local cultures from one side, and to support the model of globalization, on the other side. Freedom, or limiting the freedom, of bodies of women is the classical example. P. 29-32

### **Conclusion**

The heritage of social sciences, since the enlightenment till today, informs us that modern society does not get its existence except through creating 'the we', and through strengthening it continuously. This has produced the concept of the national state as an alternative to the 'Empire'. The national state became the tool that is capable of maintaining the balance between the process of strengthening 'the we' and the process of fulfilling the different needs and plurality in ideologies and ways of life.

Modernism has been extended to non-Western countries through its tendency toward universality. This process of extension has accompanied evolution of modernity since its very beginning. It was natural that the newly independent non-Western nation has made use of the Western modernist models of the nation and state. After many years of this process, the results was disappointing, so that the modernizing processes didn't produce a similar form

of modernism. Rather, it has produced a specific type we may call it 'external modernism'. The word 'external' here means superficial and unauthentic sort of modernism, which concentrates on the external mechanisms not on the human being, on the material not the mental, and on consumption not production.

This sort of modernism didn't go toward constructing the concept of the nation that is capable of unifying the goals, and forming 'the we' that is capable of developing mechanisms of internal integration to confront the universal deconstructing mechanisms. At this point, the problem, which threatens the existence of the peripheral societies, becomes an existential not an epistemic one. Mechanisms of the universal system have lead to weakening the national state [of the peripheral societies] and hinder its abilities to perform its functions or making use of it to participate in the universal system. On the other side, the social structure [of these societies] became a stage for disintegration that is amenable to explode internally.

Within this general view, societies such as the Arabic society consume its efforts in intellectual and cultural debates about questions such as, who we? who we are? what is our relation to the west? what way is better for us, modernity or heritage? what is the best political system for us? what is the relation between our heritage and being contemporary? Here, the important question appears when we think about the future of our societies: which way should we follow, the existential problematic or the epistemological one? No doubt both ways are important. But our understanding of the mechanisms of globalization and the deconstruction it makes in our societies motivates us to consider that what is threatening us currently is much more important than advancing idealistic thoughts about an ambiguous future. The tasks of constructing the nation – understanding its structure and strengthening 'the we' – should be prior to introducing conceptions about the future of its culture. P. 33-35