Chapter 4

Economic Nationalism and Globalization, Evidence From China (Belt and Road Initiative)

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ABSTRACT

Nationalism can manifest itself in different forms. It is not only closing the door to the other nations (autarchic policies). On the contrary, sometimes it exhibits as crazy expansion, combining autarchy and imperialism. Economic nationalism presents contradictions. Nowadays, in front of the experience of globalization, driven by the so-called “Washington consensus,” we do witness new projects coming from the PRC. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), formerly known as One Belt One Road (OBOR), is the most important economic policy for China in the 21st century and represents at the same time a new idea of globalization, based on cooperation instead of a sharp competition. On the other hand, countries located in and around this area have their own views regarding this program, positive and negative. This chapter attempts to provide a deep understanding of the economic nationalism concern through the BRI program.

GLOBALIZATION

Globalization is a term that every person is using but the meaning is multiple, depending on the perspective adopted. According to Meydan Larousse, the origin of “global” means “undertaken entirely”; it also means “homogeneity” in French. Therefore, in sum, the word “global” means “entirety” and “homogeneity” in western languages. The word “globalization” may ground to the term “global village”, named by Marshall McLuhan in his book “Explorations in Communication” in 1960. In the book “Global Modernities” published in 1995, Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson explained the theoretical definition of the term “globalization”. It is also defined as “fast and continuous inter-border
flow of goods, services, capital (or money), technology, ideas, information, cultures and nations” by the
American Defense Institute. In addition, the American Defense Institute infers that economies will be
integrated through the globalization processes, accompanied by the internationalization of corporations,
organizations, markets, and governments (Dulupçu & Demirel, 2013).

Thereby, we can see globalization as a process of interaction of national policies and economies. On the
other hand, the debate on globalization has brought to light two main standpoints with a broad
heterogeneity of temporal references.

There are those who believe that globalization is a phenomenon which already existed between the
nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Hirst & Thompson, 1999; Frieden, 2006), or that it even evolved in
harmony with imperialism and European colonialism since 1492 (Swyngedouw, 2003; Harvey, 2000;
Shiva, 1997). Conversely, other authors, sociologists, and political scientists believe it is a completely
new phenomenon (Held-McGrew, 2000; Scholte, 2005), a product of the radical reorganization of
trans-planetary and supra-territorial human activities. This latter standpoint could be partly included in
the so-called ‘geo-economics of neo-liberal common sense’ (considering the success of the theses by
Thomas Friedman), that notwithstanding the diversity of analysis, offers an a-geographical, fluid and
flat view of the world, marked by the processes of deterritorialization and extra-territoriality (Sparke,
2004; Smith, 2005). However, the geographical concept of globalization can be restricted to the last
thirty years during which capitalism has been radically reconfigured and reorganized (Harvey, 2006,
2001, 1990; Brenner, 1999; Brenner & Theodore, 2002). This is not to deny deep historical continuities
of globalization in colonial and imperial eras (nothing comes from nothing), but rather to affirm the
importance of analyzing the most recent space-time discontinuity.

From our point of view, the concept of globalization exists as a purely geographical concept referring
to complex territorial forms/spaces taken on by capitalism in the post-bipolar period. Some radical ge-
ographers have made significant contributions to unraveling the complexity and originality of the social,
political and economic geography of globalization. The analyses of the capitalism spatial evolution by
understanding of the historical reasons responsible for the present reconfiguration of the nation-state
and the globalization processes.

Political Analysis of Globalization: Globalization
and the World Order Reconfiguration

Politically, we can start to say that the widely applicable concept of globalization has favored ideologi-
cally transmitted debates related to the expansion of US military and financial neo-liberalism. There
are links for example between the liberal theses of Wilson and Roosevelt and the neo-liberal ones of
Thatcher, Reagan, and Blair (Smith, 2005). Far from seeing globalization as a finishing line in a more
just world without historical roots, we think it is worth to assert that the novelties of the last decades,
which inform globalization, require a more advanced theoretical systemization of its geographical ar-
ticulation (Parenti, 2010). More specifically, the current world (dis)order is a combination of multi-polar
geopolitical and geo-economic dynamics which, downsizing the USA’s role in the world, would explain
the following macro-processes: the US ‘military neo-liberalism’ as set out in the New American Cen-
tury Project, the new pervasiveness of the Beijing Consensus in Africa and Asia (Ramo, 2004; Arrighi,
2007), and finally the regionalization of the world (Geopolitics, 2007). We are living in a hierarchical
and globalizing world indeed!
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