

The Transformation of Local Actors in the Globalization Process

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ABSTRACT

It is known that the dizzying development of mass communication technologies has transformed the people of the world into a global family. When it comes to globalization, it is a fact that the powerful actors ruthlessly swallow the local ones, and the discourses that everything local is erased hold a larger place in the memories; however, the erosion of local elements should not be considered as an absolute negative situation. In this context, all local actors, from local businesses operating in different sectors to primitive cultural groups isolated from the world, have gained worldwide advertising and promotion opportunities with globalization. From this point of view, it can be said that the fact that the local actors have the opportunity to promote, share and cooperate on a global scale is more meaningful than the fact that the global ones have become a more dominant power in the world. Concepts such as local business, “local newspaper and “local television channel” are no longer valid. There seems to be little place for the concept of “local” in the world, thanks to globalization. It should be added that the globalization of the local actors also includes the meaning of transferring some features from the global ones and evolving towards them.

This study was carried out with the literature review method and aims to shed light on the direction of change of local actors in the globalization process.

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1. Introduction

Today, it is not easy to say clearly what globalization means as a concept and to what purpose the globalization process is advancing. Globalization, which is included in many studies in the field of social sciences, is a door to prosperity and happiness for some, and the beginning of collapse and disaster for others (Yüksel, 2004: 3).

It is necessary to deal with certain aspects of globalization, which no one can ignore and whose effects are felt somehow; however, the reality that must be accepted above all is that globalization is a giant historical step toward the information society.

According to Gibson-Graham, globalization is “a set of processes by which increased production, trade and financial markets are internationalized, thereby rapidly integrating the

whole world into a single economic space. In other words, it is the internationalization of a commodity culture supported by an increasingly powerful global telecommunications system (Gibson-Gramham, 1997: 1). Naturally, globalization brings important advantages such as the dizzying speed of developments in information technology to provide universal access to individuals, the increase in R&D studies and inventions, the transformation in the definition and functions of information, and the adaptation of information to other information, is on the way to creating a unified world society governed only by information.

All these processes, which manifest themselves with giant steps taken in technology, especially in communication technology, are expressed with the concept of “globalization”. The concept of globalization refers to a process in which not only information but also raw materials, products, and services have increasingly begun to circulate and share internationally since the end of the 20th century (Otsubo, 1996: 1). From this point of view, it is more accurate to define globalization as the “deepening” of international economic relations among countries and other related elements rather than expanding them (Thompson, 1995: 199).

Considering all these, it seems possible to talk about a few main dimensions such as the increase in the total capacity in the use of technological tools; standardization of lifestyle worldwide in parallel with the radical change in production and consumption patterns; economic, social, cultural and political structures entering a monopolistic universalization process and increasing mutual interactions of societies (Held et al., 2003: 68). On the other hand, some writers, who are skeptical and critical of globalization, defined the process as “creating a capitalist international” (Eroğul, 1997: 47); “an ominous stage in the development of capitalism” (Şaylan, 1997: 9) or “internationalization of the capital” (Harvey, 1995: 10). Therefore, these authors argue that the positive views about globalization are a hoax because it is a hegemonic pressure and an invasion attempt by international trade and financial institutions against the world. Some other writers and thinkers see globalization as a process of opportunities that removes the commercial, economic, political, social, cultural, and artistic barriers between the countries of the world, thus transforming the world into a global village.

2. Method

This study was carried out with the literature review method and aims to shed light on the direction of change of local actors in the globalization process.

It does not seem possible to talk about a clear beginning for globalization, which is a multidimensional process. What is more clear and certain is that social scientists have not been able to reach a consensus on this issue. When globalization is considered as the communication of a human community with other human communities, it is also certain that it is as old as human history.

However, it is not necessary to go back to the early years of human history to prove that globalization is not a new phenomenon. In this context, some social scientists say that the process got started after geographical discoveries when all parts of the world began to become known (Kazgan, 1997: 17), because historical studies provide concrete evidence that human societies on earth have never lived separate, isolated lives from each other, on the contrary, there have been various forms of communication and interaction between human societies since the early ages (Bentley, 2004: 75). Accordingly some scientists go back to ancient times while they define globalization. According to them, globalization is a process that has been developing for thousands of years. On the other hand, some other scientists

wanted to limit the globalization process to the last few decades to identify its modern features. They just go back to the beginning years of industrialization and capitalism to understand and express the term successfully. In short, they try to find traces of globalization in the important events and developments of the 19th century (Steger, 2003: 19).

A closer look at the emergence of the concept reminds more specific information in this regard.

Canadian communication scientist Marshall McLuhan used “global village” and “communication age” in 1962. In the same year, the US economist Fritz Machlup used the terms “information economy” and “information society” to express the change in the society he lived in (Geray, 1997: 37). When we come a little closer to today, it is necessary to mention an important jumping-off in the globalization process. After the dissolution of the USSR at the end of the 80s, the bipolar world order turned into a unipolar world led by the United States. Since then, as the world’s ideological polarization has diminished, cooperation between capitalist national and regional economies has increased both structurally and quantitatively (Willoughby, 1991: 139), a liberalization wind has begun to blow everywhere, traditional borders have begun to lose their function, and as a result, a global sharing period has begun. In this context, the new process that started after one of the two great actors of the bipolar world left the stage has been recorded as “globalization” (Erbay, 1996: 3; Demir, 2003: 1). By the 1990s, the term “globalization” had established in the social sciences literature (Bozkurt, 2000: 18). In the following years, globalization went beyond the economic patterns and developed in social, political, cultural and artistic aspects and settled on the agenda of the world (Subaşat, 2008: 11).

Today, globalization, which is the subject of much research, is evaluated in different ways. According to some, it is the climax of global exploitation and the biggest doomsday sign, and according to others, it is a door to dreams (Yüksel, 2004: 3).

3.Results and Discussion

First of all, it should be noted that no one and nothing is “pure good” or “pure evil”. Likewise, the reality of “globalization” has to be examined not as an “absolutely good” or “absolutely bad” phenomenon, but as an “existing and functioning process”. There are barriers on the way to truth. They are called “prejudice”. If a researcher has only one prejudice about the person or event he is dealing with, his efforts will certainly be one step behind the pure truth. While some writers who consider the concept in two ways see globalization basically as a process of division, they also admit that it functions as an integration to a certain extent (Bauman, 1997: 8). In other words, globalization means that capital, produced products and services are circulating more and more rapidly around the world. A trader can send the products he produces to the far markets of the world at any time. A journalist can instantly transmit current affairs to the newspaper center. An academic can publish his academic studies from his computer and start to follow them from there from that moment on. A person can watch important events happening anywhere in the world on television or a mobile phone. Undoubtedly, globalization creates an explosion of capacity and opportunity for the citizen. According to the approaches of the thinkers in this group, globalization is a struggle for dominance that transcends borders in terms of economy and carries production tools and factors beyond traditional borders, such as a flock of birds traveling overseas. Naturally, this process removes the barriers to global production, sharing, and prosperity one by one (Giddens, 2000: 45). In this sense, it can be predicted that all

global actors will eventually form a unified system. More importantly, nation-states are at the center of this integration process (Hirst and Thompson, 2000: 219). Globalization and the information revolution complicate the public policies of nation-states and the function of distributing scarce resources. This development causes some problems in liberal democracy and democratic representation, but also increases the power and actuality of locality. In other words, processes such as the technological revolution, globalization and changes in the understanding of democracy change the way the established world order works and the structure of today's nation-states both quantitatively and qualitatively. At the beginning of these changes, the concept of locality comes to the fore. In this context, locality, as an important feature on the way to the information society and as an alternative starting point in the transformation of the nation-state, exhibits a dynamic interaction with globalization and becomes more important every day (Ökmen, 2005: 11). Therefore, it can be said that one of the most important arguments that can be used to define the concept of the new world order is the "interdependence of global powers". In this sense, it can be predicted that all global actors will eventually form a unified system. More importantly, nation-states are at the center of this integration process (Hirst and Thompson, 2000: 219). Undoubtedly, in this process, the sovereignty areas of nation-states will be redefined and it will prepare an environment for a new administrative, cultural, social and political structuring in which localization gains more and more importance (Aydınlı, 2004: 89). Globalization and the information revolution complicate the public policies of nation-states and the function of distributing scarce resources. This development causes some problems in liberal democracy and democratic representation, but also increases the power and actuality of locality. In other words, processes such as the technological revolution, globalization and changes in the understanding of democracy change the way the established world order works and the structure of today's nation-states both quantitatively and qualitatively. At the beginning of these changes, the concept of locality comes to the fore. Locality, as an important feature on the way to the information society and as an alternative starting point in the transformation of the nation-state, exhibits a dynamic interaction with globalization and becomes more important every day (Ökmen, 2005: 11). In the meantime, globalization, which opens the doors of a worldwide market to the local, and gives the chance for everything local to be universal, should also be regarded as a great revolution that advances humanity towards a borderless and classless society. If the process is handled in terms of dialectical philosophy, it can be argued that globalization has given birth to its antithesis. No conflict lasts forever. Conflicts sooner or later evolve into balance and reconciliation. Finally, a new thesis and understanding emerge. For example, if an educated, developed and modern country is occupied and a million people take refuge in an underdeveloped country, various problems and even conflicts occur between the two communities in the first years; however, over time, the host community gets a bit more civilized, while the guest community gets a bit rude and a new version of the two different cultures emerge finally. The final destination is a ground of analogy and reconciliation. In the context of the subject, it is obvious that the antithesis of globalization is "local actors". Local actors need to organize an international front of resistance against capitalist globalization and start a new internationalization movement. It is possible to call this situation "internationalization of local powers".

Now, local actors can reach almost anywhere that global capitalist powers have reached, thanks to the communication revolution. In that case, it is getting harder to think that local actors who have the chance to become universal are the losers of this process. If a

local television channel or newspaper broadcasting in a small town in an average country can be watched from all over the world, it is not correct to define that broadcaster as “local”. If any product produced in the same town can be advertised, promoted, and marketed on a global scale, it cannot be said that the business at issue is a local actor. In today’s world, anyone with a good cell phone has become a reporter or even a television station boss. A shepherd living in a remote village in a poor country can start his youtube channel. He can shoot videos with his phone, publish them on his channel, and content published on youtube can be watched by millions of people from all over the world in seconds. In this sense, all press ranks and privileges obtained in one way or another in the traditional media before the Internet have disappeared, and equality of opportunity has been provided between unreachable TV channel bosses and their famous journalists and YouTubers. All these facts show that today an increasing number of people and communities are constructing alternatives to neoliberal capitalism and capitalist globalization.

It seems that at the beginning of globalization, central big states set out toward the near and far surroundings of the globe to impose their own cultures, products, and brands, but soon, numerous local actors started to march towards the center. Global actors have not destroyed local ones. On the contrary, local actors have moved to a global scale. Driving a vintage car is not a chance for a rich man. It is at best a temporary fantasy, but it is a great fortune for the poor to have the opportunity to drive the luxury cars of the rich whenever he wants. In this respect, it is not easy to predict which side gains a greater advantage and profit, but it would not be an exaggeration to think that the current process opened up the chances of local actors and offered them greater advantages and opportunities because it coincides with the concrete reality of life.

Globalization, which can also be defined as the transgression of economic activities across national borders, is closely related to the concept of internationalization. Internationalization of a company means that one of the goals or branches of the company reaches abroad. Therefore, many social scientists think that globalization is simply internationalization (Radice, 1998: 3). In fact, it should be called “the internationalization of local actors”. This situation also forms the basis of this article.

It can be said that people sometimes make a plan for a certain purpose, but the process drags them to a place they have never wanted. Despite the overwhelming majority believing that the apocalypse will come upon local actors with the onset of the “post-reality” era, which started with the internet, it seems that local actors are likely to be luckier in this process.

To give a summative answer to the question of where the process is heading, it may be said that national borders will disappear at the end of globalization. Individuals, groups, nations, and no doubt capital will have the freedom to go where they want, settle, work and invest. Nation-states will be erased and reduced to the level of local governments. Nationalism, the most prevalent ideology of nation-states, will become obsolete. Despite some differences, a common global culture and language will emerge. Politics and some non-governmental organizations will be organized globally. A global state will be established, and there will be common global laws that all people will abide by. Accordingly, there will be global political parties and global elections (Subaşat, 2008: 11).

4. Conclusion

Conclusion It is widely believed and alleged that globalization works in favor of the world's major capitalist states and their giant companies, and local actors in the environment are the absolute losers of this process. However, while the multidimensional effects of global actors extend to the farthest corners of the world, they also have to allow the cultures and products of small local actors in remote places to reach the world. If the developed countries are accepted as the center, it is seen that wide roads have been opened from the farthest circles to the center in response to the globalization device. The issue of how much advantage this bidirectional flow provides to which side is widely discussed in the study. So the study, which was carried out with the literature review method, aims to reveal the advantages of the path followed by the local actors in the globalization process. It also clarifies that globalization internationalizes local actors and turns them into global powers, providing a greater benefit to them.

The conclusions reached in the light of the data obtained are as follows:

As stated above, the globalization process that was initiated by the advanced capitalist systems has produced an alternative within itself by the auto-dynamic laws of dialectics. This opposing force, which can be defined as "local actors", continues to move toward the center. In other words, while the central power is spreading toward the periphery, alternative peripheral actors are walking toward the center. While the center imposes its goods, services, and culture on the world, it has to allow the surrounding world to access its region of sovereignty and all other regions around the world. Thus, local actors have gained a universal sphere of influence just like central powers. More precisely, there is no local actor left in the world anymore.

The world is heading towards a place where everything is organized and performed globally. In this process, the central capitalist powers can make the world look like themselves in time; however, they will make all the local powers global, and they also won't be able to avoid being similar to them to a certain extent.

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