

BOOK REVIEWS

Globalization and the Politics of Resistance.
Edited by Barry K. Gills. New York: St. Martin's
Press, 2000. Pp. 313.

"Globalization" has become a fashionable term ever since the 1980s, but particularly during the 1990s. Despite an extensive usage of the term, globalization is a "contested concept" with many competing definitions, hypotheses, and perspectives. At the broadest level, it denotes the increasing intensification of cross-border interactions in virtually all spheres of human activity, be it culture, economics, finance, security, the environment, or government structures.

The debate on globalization has raged particularly strongly in the international political economy discourse, where it has become the main buzzword in explaining the variety of recent events in international relations. Accordingly, this edited volume, which initially appeared as a special issue in the journal, *New Political Economy* (March 1997, Vol. 2, No. 1), is a useful contribution to the literature.

The volume is divided into two main parts. The first part is called "Globalization and Resistance: Thinking through Politics". The discussion here focuses on the theoretical aspects of resistance against globalization. The second part is called "Strategies of Resistance: From the Local to the Global". This part offers a discussion on the various popular strategies emerging at local, national, regional, and global levels against neoliberal globalization.

Taken together, the eighteen chapters in the volume address various aspects of globalization and, in particular, challenge the oft-noted view that the process of globalization is "obvious and inexorable". The authors of the chapters argue that globalization is not a process that is external, that is occurring outside the society or state. The book is an effort to "bring the people back" into the international political economy as the "agents at the centre of historical change". It seeks to highlight the "political" aspect of globalization in furthering the understanding of this concept. As the editor, Barry Gills notes in the Introduction, "(t)he analytical focus of the study of the globalization phenomena must therefore shift from the technical to the political" (p. 3).

The volume addresses the "politics of resistance" against globalization from a wide variety of perspectives. It argues that marginalized groups have the right and ability to mitigate the negative repercussions of the globalization process through greater co-ordinated efforts. Richard Falk refers to this process as resisting "globalization-from-above" through "globalization-from-below" (Chapter 4). This volume contends that for the acts of resistance against neoliberal globalization to be successful in the post-Cold War era, at least four changes are required.

First, resistance efforts of today cannot "retreat into narrow localism or traditional nationalism". Second, greater participation of new groups, such as organized labour and women, is needed so as to construct new practices of global civil society, which is more suited to this globalized era. Third,

such acts of resistance would require extensive networking, new communicative and organizational modes of practice, linking local, national, regional, and global level strategies of resistance. Fourth, for successful results in the resistance movements, it is important that a major attitudinal change occur in the social movements. It means not only overcoming the internal flaws of past movements, such as sexism, racism, xenophobia and protectionism, but also overcoming cultural stereotyping by the dominant point of view.

On the other side of the coin, there are important issues that the chapters seem to have paid insufficient attention to.

For instance, while countries might want to resist the potentially undesirable side-effects of globalization, not every country has the ability, or is in the position to do so. There seems to be a nexus between the level of development of a country, and its capacity to resist the adverse effects of globalization. For example, advanced Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries are in a better position to resist the undesirable effects of globalization due to their ability to provide for basic needs to the population, and in turn, create conditions conducive for the emergence of civil society groups. However, the situation is quite different in less developed or developing countries. In such countries, the inability of the government to provide basic needs, combined with adverse domestic problems — high unemployment and limited and ineffective social safety nets — does not create an environment conducive for “resistors” to emerge to combat the destabilizing effects of globalization.

Indeed, it would be grossly incorrect to suggest that globalization inevitably leads to the exploitation of the weak. For instance, in a number of developing countries, it allows them to learn, provides them knowledge, and equips them with technical know-how. For example, the America Online (AOL) member-services located in Philippines employs 900 young Filipinos. There is a long waiting list for jobs there, which pays three times the local minimum wage.¹ This could point to the fact that the best hope to alleviate poverty in

a less developed country is actually through increased integration with the world economy in a market consistent manner. Nowhere is this more so than in India, particularly with the recent boom in the software industry.

There are diverse groups of “resistors” to globalization, often with very different agendas, and sometimes with mutually contradictory ones. Their common loathing of the established economic order and major institutions of political and economic control (the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO)) is hardly a reason for these groups to come together. Even if there exists a certain amount of integration among these resistors, as displayed by the WTO (Seattle) debacle, and recent World Bank and IMF annual meetings, it is unclear whether these groups are able to progress from just merely opposing globalization to offering a viable alternative to neoliberal globalization.

This being said, the presence of such resistance should not be seen negatively (though admittedly it is hard not to give some of the extreme actions of the groups involved), as it acts as a check on the excessive imbalances of the effects of globalization. Instead of devising an alternative ideology, governments would want to work within the system by taking steps to develop institutions to lessen the negative effects of globalization, and introduce greater equity into the system. There is also a need for a consolidated effort to spread new technologies and new business models appropriate for poor countries, so that even they can harness the positive effects of globalization. In other words, globalization does not imply no role for government, but rather, a more targeted and nuanced role.²

All in all, the volume tackles various important issues about the process of globalization and the strategies of resistance in terms of both theory and practice. It is a useful contribution to the existing literature on the subject, especially when everyone is still trying to come to terms with the globalization phenomenon.

NOTES

1. Thomas Friedman, "Foreign Affairs: Under the Volcano", *New York Times*, 29 September 2000.
2. See Dani Rodrik. "Development Strategies for the Next Century", February 2000 (mimeographed). Available at <<http://ksghome.harvard.edu/~drodrik.academic.ksg/devstrat.PDF>>.

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Demystifying Globalization. Edited by Colin Hay and David Marsh. New York: St Martin's Press, 2000. Pp. 197.

This volume is a collection of papers presented at a conference entitled *Globalization: Critical Perspectives*, at the University of Birmingham on 14–16 March 1997. It forms part of a series of volumes on globalization edited by the same authors.

There appears to be no more topical a debate as the one on globalization and its supporting cast of issues. This has been the burning issue of the 1990s and beyond for economists, other social scientists, and many a policy-maker. Indeed, it is the individual contributions of disparate disciplines in social sciences that this volume seeks to fuse into a more concise, inter-disciplinary theory of globalization. This is the over-arching theme of the book.

More specifically, this volume attempts two things. First, it tries to construct a road map of the development of the literature on globalization, in order to evaluate the nature and magnitude of the literature up to this point. Secondly, it endeavours to lead the literature in a direction that it refers to as the "third wave" of globalization theory.

Before proceeding into a definition of the third wave, it would no doubt be useful to briefly define the first two waves. The first wave, as discussed in the introductory chapter, represents the basic philosophy that globalization is unstoppable and inevitable, and that it comprises a number of quite

negative consequences. Such consequences include the eventual extinction of the nation-state, the welfare state and other social and political institutions, to be replaced by a borderless world characterized by a single market place and culture. This according to the prescriptions of Friedman (1999) will follow a predominantly American model, that is, the infamous "golden straitjacket".

The second wave began as a critique of the somewhat exaggerated claims of the first wave — and an attempt to capture the empirics in a more rigorous way. The result has largely been to refute the claims made during the first wave by observing barriers to the globalization process. Some of the barriers are presented in page 5 of the volume and can be summarized mainly by reference to a "home (or regional) bias". This bias exists with respect to consumption, investment, and trade across countries, as well as in the observed lack of convergence of certain macroeconomic variables (most notably, interest rates), and government policy (most notably, monetary policy).

The influences of the second wave are felt throughout this volume. Take, for instance, the chapter by Nigel Thrift (Chapter 4). This chapter can be interpreted as a criticism of the notion that globalization will result in a decaying of the role of the state. He points to such factors as the availability of information, the growth of mass media and the growth of the "psy" disciplines as factors that can potentially erode the power base of the state. However, it is argued that the state can preserve its power if it adopts strategies that Thrift sources from modern management ideas which will enable the state to evolve into a "leaner, meaner ... apparatus" (p. 95) and therefore, ride the bumps caused by globalization.

The Third Wave

So, what is this third wave? A distinct theme emerges. This is the view that, up to this point, the literature on globalization has proceeded under the premise that it is a causal factor and, as such, its repercussions have been the focus of attention. The third wave represents an attempt to reverse