

Global Politics – State and Globalisation

Politics Edexcel and AQA – revision notes – based on Hodder Education revision guides

Aliza Samorly

Sovereignty = a sovereign state holds ultimate power and authority over its territory and its citizens. From an international point of view, sovereignty is recognised and respected by other states; a breach of sovereignty, therefore, is considered illegal. Thus, the state maintains the right to protect itself/sovereignty.

It implies the legitimate use of force/imposition measures.

Internationally, violation of sovereignty/intervention, can be justified on humanitarian grounds.

Nation-state = the nation and the state align. Nation, a population with shared history, culture, language, etc, and the state, clearly define the territorial borders of a sovereign power. There are nations without states, such as Kurdistan.

Non-state actors = some actors in the international arena are not bound by government/sovereign power, such as terrorist groups, NGOs, and multinational corporations MNCs.

Globalisation = the process of increased and rapid interconnection and interdependence in the world.

Types included:

Economic = increased international trade and global economy.

Political = increased global and international forms and institutions of governance, such as IGOs, SGOs and international law.

Cultural = the sharing of lifestyle, food and popular culture that are often linked with cosmopolitanism; a form of a melting pot process, compared with the idea of a 'salad bowl'.

Homogenisation and monoculture = the idea that rather than globalisation resulting in diversity and pluralism, it is leading towards a blending of cultural distinctions and its related identities, into a homogenous global culture = **sameness**. The nature of

homogeneity is predicated on the Western culture as the main global culture. Hence some criticise this development as reflecting a form of cultural imperialism that has very little to do with liberal ideas of diversity and pluralism.

Interconnectedness = similar to the idea of the cobweb model, the world is becoming increasingly and inextricably interconnected and by implication, interdependent. This process was primarily galvanised by economic globalisation and the rapid sharing of technology and communication.

World governance = an idea regarding the hypothetical existence of a sovereign/authority/power with a global 'control' over states. It is not the same as global governance, wherein states retain sovereignty.

Global governance = the process of governing on a global scale which involves international agreements and treaties among sovereign states. It is expected to be both transparent and accountable.

Economic globalisation = the process of trading across and beyond borders with the development of international trade treaties and institutions such as the World Bank, non-state actors such as MNCs. States trade a degree of sovereignty to enjoy the benefit of being part of a trading bloc. The motives can vary, and poor versus rich states' motivations can be based on different considerations.

Bretton Woods Agreement = the agreement established the World Bank, and influenced the leadup to the World Trade Organisation WTO.

The agreement was primarily aimed to establish clearer monetary policies to facilitate international trade. While Bretton Woods system was abandoned, these organisations are still sometimes referred to as the Bretton Woods institutions.

Political globalisation = inextricably linked with economic globalisation, political globalisation developed to regulate the rapidly growing international trade and address global issues such as poverty, leading to the rise of IGOs and SGOs.

World government = the hypothetical idea that there exists a global sovereign with legitimate authority over states.

Global governance = when international organisations hold supra and intergovernmental elements while states nevertheless maintain their own sovereignty, such as the UN.

The impact of globalisation on the state system

(1) Widening and deepening

As globalisation increased, the international system has seen a parallel rise in the movement of regionalism.

Regionalism sometimes worked with globalisation = a building block, or against it = a stumbling block.

Widening = can be seen as the expansion of regional blocs to include more states.

Deepening = can be considered as a greater level of integration within the regional bloc itself.

Building blocks and stumbling blocks = some argue that regionalism operates as a building block because it fosters a greater and more effective coordination. For example, the EU can act as a single spokesperson on behalf of all its members. The member states can also achieve greater combined power as they pool their resources together and enjoy a greater combined sovereignty.

On the other hand, some argue that regionalism may act as a stumbling block because the regional entity seeks to entrench its power and benefits, at times, at the expense of global cooperation.

(2) State control

Globalisation, by its nature, can be considered a major threat to state sovereignty. The question also becomes does the 'trade-off' of sovereignty with the emerging benefits of 'going global' is actually paying off for the state itself.

Liberals believe that globalisation is essentially good because a global system encourages greater multiculturalism and mutual accountability. In contrast, realists argue that states should always remain the most significant global actors.

IGO = **intergovernmentalism** does not influence state sovereignty because it is based on mutual agreements between governments who always retain absolute authority over themselves.

SGO = **supragovernmentalism**, it does erode a certain degree of sovereignty because it involves a degree of surrender to a form of authority that is higher than the individual states; its agreements and policies are binding with the power to impose them, like a sovereign entity, only it is above the states.

The establishment and increased dominance of non-state actors in the international arena significantly challenge the centrality of the nation-state in global politics.

However, there are limits to the globalisation influence. States still retain considerable influence over their domestic issues and prioritise national interests on various fronts and occasions.

(3) International law

International Court of Justice ICJ = one of the key institutions of the UN and operates as an arbitration body to resolve disputes between states. The states need to agree to the process and can decide if they wish to accept the resolution.

International Criminal Court ICC = this body is not part of the UN; it is a separate institution that is based in the Hague and solely focuses on issues related to violation of human rights and war crimes and criminals. It seeks to investigate and prosecute such violations especially when national courts failed to acknowledge and act.

It was founded in 2002 under the Rome Statute and incorporates more than 124 members (2024).

(4) The impact on conflict

- Liberalism argues that globalisation reduced conflict by increased cooperation and interdependence in the political arena.
- Economic globalisation, according to Thomas Friedman means that it is irrational for states with so many supply-chain connections, to go to war with one another = The Dell Theory of Conflict Prevention.
- However, while economic globalisation increased economic growth, its wealth is unequally distributed: the developing world is becoming richer and more powerful compared with the developed world that is becoming poorer, suffering from increased poverty and unemployment.

(5) Humanitarian and forcible intervention

Liberals hoped that the end of the Cold War would have led to the universal establishment and enforcement of human rights, monitored by the international community. Several interventions were indeed followed, such as during the Gulf War.

Realists, on the other hand, argue that state sovereignty ought to be maintained and protected against any breach. They also argue that any attempt at humanitarian intervention is doomed to fail because ultimately the state, as the sovereign, can decide whether to grant and protect human rights, or not. Realists thus imply that human rights are not necessarily universal rights.

R2P, the responsibility to protect, was designed to reconcile the tension between sovereignty and protection of human rights as universal values that the international community has the right and the duty to enforce.

It is based on three tenets:

- 1 - The state has the ultimate responsibility to protect its citizens.
- 2 - The international community has the responsibility of supporting the state in protecting its citizens.
- 3 - The international community should intervene, by force, if necessary, to protect citizens that are deemed unprotected by their own state.

(6) The impact of cultural globalisation

- The spread of global brands such as Apple, Microsoft, and Disney has led many to argue that globalisation is creating a monoculture.
- However, this monoculture is an American one...
- Increased popularity and influence of celebrities with a universal appeal for Hollywood blockbusters.
- Social media.
- However, there are many limitations to the cultural globalisation: Bollywood for example, demonstrates how a nation like India is not only adapting to global culture, but actually penetrating the Western one.
- A backlash favouring traditional values that are part of the specific culture of the nation-state.
- In Russia, Putin cultivates the values of the Orthodox Church in contrast to the decadent Western liberalism.
- This coincides with differing attitudes to LGBTQ in different countries: both legal status and social attitudes, including gender politics.

(7) The impact of globalisation on the environment

- Globalisation led to increased industrialisation that increased global carbon emissions.
- Increased air travel.
- Transnational corporations' negative impact such as Shell being criticised for the degradation of the Niger Delta.
- Consumerism.
- Increased life-expectancy aligned with increased world population, increased consumerism and waste.
- Increased awareness of global climate as a 'collective dilemma'.
- Treaties such as Paris Climate Change Agreement in 2015 trying to tackle the states' responsibility to environmental challenges.
- In 2015, Bill Gates set up the Breakthrough Energy Ventures to advance carbon-neutral energy development.
- The internet provided a platform to increase awareness; activism, Greta Thunberg and Extinction Rebellion.

Contrasting views

In what way globalisation is impacting the state system?

(1) **Hyperglobalists** = the nation-state is obsolete because of all-encompassing globalisation.

- Power has relocated as a result of globalisation.
- Free trade, capital and information flow, cultural homogenisation and the increased dominance of IGOs undermine the nation-states.
- Power is relocated: post-sovereign state borderless world.

(2) **Sceptics** = globalisation is not a new process, and it has not changed the features, roles and status of the nation-state as an independent entity.

- Nation-states remain key actors.
- They are reluctant to surrender sovereignty to overarching entities such as the International Criminal Court.
- Trump implemented high tariff to protect American industries from foreign competition. Xi in China, Trump in America, Putin in Russia and Erdogan in Turkey – built their popularity on advancing national interests at the expense of global cooperation.

(3) **Transformationalists** = globalisation impacted the nation-state in ways that required adaption of its features and roles, yet the nation-state is a central actor in the international system, far from being made redundant by globalisation.

- Agree with hyperglobalist view that globalisation has changed the landscape of the world we live in, but argue that the nation-states are adapting to these changes rather than being 'hollowed out' by it.
- Various cultures penetrated other cultures in various ways: RT news, Bollywood, rather than the idea of a monolithic global entity.

Liberals tend to cultivate a positive view towards globalisation as a force for good, whereas realists tend to be more sceptic about the effects of globalisation upon the nation-state in its more traditional position.

Advantages

- Galvanised global response to global issues: environment, human rights.
- Greater consensus coordination between states over humanitarian issues.
- Enabled states to share technology, intelligence, trade etc, relatively easily.
- While the state hand over a certain degree of sovereignty, it gains added power and position by the combined composition of its alliance with other states. For example, the EU is a full member of the G20 and a permanent observer in the UN.

Disadvantages

- Can be seen as a force of homogenisation, blending important and unique characteristics of nations and cultures, cultural imperialism, Westernisation and Americanisation.
- Created security issues across borders such as international terrorism; use of social media networks.
- Erosion of sovereignty led to an erosion of states' own power and authority over some of its own affairs, such as MNCs can evade control mechanisms by an individual state.
- NGOs have increasingly integrated into the civil society, blurring the boundaries between government and non-government roles, by performing roles where the state failed to function adequately.
- **Mary Kaldor** argued that '**New Wars**' are emerging: while states are less likely to fight one another, there is increased likelihood for civil wars, internal conflicts and simmering tensions within the nation-state, including a complete breakdown of some into separate national entities.

Poverty

Global poverty occupies a central role on the global agenda

- 1** - The global debt crisis accentuated the West responsibility towards the North/South divide.
- 2** - Sustainable development in all areas ought to take into account how less-economically-developed-states LEDCs can be encouraged to develop in green ways to achieve environmental goals.
- 3** - Global financial crisis 2008 had different effects on different countries and international regions and highlighted the need to address and resolve global poverty and inequality.
- 4** - The emergence of a global civil society highlighted cosmopolitanism rather than distinct identities and therefore managed to raise awareness towards communities that are significantly disadvantaged.