Article

Reflections on Global Governance and Political Participation

Abstract: *According to Daniel Bell „The nation state has become too small for the big problems of life, and too big for the small problems," (D. Bell, 1987) yet, in a Global Era, by means of access to information and economic globalization, people are facing, in their ordinary lives, small and big problems, and it seems that no one is capable to provide an adequate response to them.*

At National-state level, in many of the developed countries, it seems that Democracy is backsliding as the phenomenon of Constitutional Retrogression is spreading. At a global level, the global governance institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, and alike ones, seem to act on a basis of calculation between benefits and costs. They are captured by economic interests that undermine the needed confidence that bound citizens and politicians and weaken the moral and social values that should be shared by people. One of the results is the increase of populist movements, which could be understood as a response to those threats. In this article, we will address those issues, intending to demonstrate that new mechanisms of political participation are needed to avoid the threats that we are facing.

Keywords: *citizenship, globalism, globalization, national-state, political participation.*

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1. Introduction. National-state and Globalization

The impact of globalization on the autonomy of Nation-states has been increasing. The need to deal with global problems, which requires the imposition of a convergence of national policies on a global scale, not only undermines autonomy but also weakens democratic decision-

making mechanisms and, with it, the legitimacy of national political systems. Seeking to transform the fundamental structures of international politics into a system of global governance calls into question the nature of sovereignty and, consequently, the legitimacy of the authority of Nation-states.

Let us begin by considering the nature of the nation-state. The Peace of Westphalia, established by the Treaties of Münster and Osnabruck, came to establish the principles that characterize the modern states, including national sovereignty, legal equality, territoriality, and non-intervention. Combining these principles, in accordance with international law, following the Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (Montevideo, 1933), a sovereign state is one with a permanent population, a clearly defined geographic borders, a single government, and diplomatic recognition of other states.

If a State, according to Max Weber, can be characterized as «a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory» (Weber, 1946), the nation-State will be an entity in which the majority of its citizens share the same culture and national identity. In essence, a nation is a constructed entity in which people are united by a common language, religion, historical narrative, and cultural traditions. It is based on a palpable but intangible sense of national identity and belonging. Historian Benedict Anderson provides useful insight here with his phrase "imagined communities". For him, nation is a social construction imagined by those who see themselves as members of this group. An imagined community is distinct from a "real" community because it is not based on the everyday interaction between its members, but on the perceived and constructed connections between those members. It is inherently constructed and linked to sentimental appeals to kinship with others (Anderson, 1983).

A nation is often confused with the notion of a Nation-state, but this is often misleading. A nation is an intangible entity based on a collective identity, while a Nation-state is a territorial construction in which the borders of a nation overlap with those of the State. The Nation-state is, above all, a legal concept based on the principle that each one is sovereign over its defined territory. Thus, if a nation can be defined as a community of people united by a common language, history or culture, a nation-state can therefore be defined as a political community united through citizenship and nationality (see Bloor, 2022). Members of nation-states are considered citizens, and such consideration includes the binding of rights and obligations. In theoretical terms, a Nation-state is an ideal in which national and cultural borders coincide with territorial ones. Combining the definitions, a Nation-state is therefore based on the belief that the nation should be able to define its own borders and thus exercise control over them.

The territorial issue is, therefore, fundamental, not only for the external recognition of the existence of a nation with the power to determine itself but also for the internal recognition of the legitimacy of the exercise of its power (see Urbinati, 2014). The power of self-determination and the legitimacy of the exercise of this power characterize the different political regimes, and many of the States have evolved towards forms of democratic states under the Rule of Law. This means that not only are citizens affected by the political decisions of those who exercise power, but they also participate in that decision-making mechanism through the election of their representatives. Only in this way can they feel, in Kantian terms, that the construction of their political community derives from their autonomy and is not imposed by a heteronomous will.

If democratic legitimacy is only possible within the framework of a political community with the power of democratic self-determination, then, beyond the borders of the Nation-state,

the social prerequisites for the existence of a democratic international political community do not exist. Hence, we are witnessing a growing search for legitimization of international institutions that exercise authority. The politicization of these international institutions arises as a consequence of their power and the need for their legitimization (see Zürn *et all*, 2012). What becomes evident, when we intend to infer its democratic quality, is the lack of representativeness, transparency and accountability of processes and decision-making bodies in international institutions.

The decisions of international institutions aim to assert their legitimacy through the legitimacy of their representatives, namely the signatory states, however, with the rise of a multipolar system that combines national interests with international interests, the authorities of international institutions have been undermining the principle of the traditional consensus in International Relations. At the same time, there is a growing need for direct accountability of the main political actors, although we do not know how to respond to how to achieve this. In an era characterized by globalization, Nation-states find it increasingly difficult to protect their borders from external threats posed by non-state actors operating in the space between states – terrorism may be one example, but it is not the only one.

It appears that the Westphalian era is on the wane due to the widespread impact of globalization. Transnational institutions that manage to partially escape the control of Nation-states are multiplying; non-state transnational institutions develop regulations and political activities without being formally authorized by States; such regulations are based on the principle of self-determination, encouraging the spread of private authorities that partially replace the principle of consensus of the traditional international system.

All over the world, as international interdependence has become a fact that affects both internal and external affairs, governments feel powerless to manage their own internal affairs alone – environmental degradation, cyberterrorism, and global pandemics do not respect national borders. To achieve their domestic policy objectives, governments are required to have the capacity to negotiate with non-state entities and this is demonstrated most dramatically in the economic sphere.

In the context of globalization, the weakening of national power and sovereignty can be explained by the fact that the magnitude and speed of international economic exchanges weaken the State's capabilities. On the other hand, the extension of market relations beyond national borders weakens citizens' recognition of national authority, leading to a deterioration of the feeling of legitimacy of national governments. Contemporary politics in advanced industrial countries provides plenty of evidence of growing distrust in elected politicians (see, for example, Przeworski, 2019).

Economic globalism involves the global distribution of the production of goods and services, through the reduction of barriers to international trade, such as tariffs, export taxes and import quotas. A more integrated world economy leads to the proliferation of multinational companies operating across borders and a global market for finance and labour. In this context, Nation-states also find themselves relatively powerless in the face of the dynamics of a global financial system with a limited level of state regulation – transactions worth billions of US dollars occur outside of any government control.

As the pressures of the international economy invade national societies, citizens increasingly turn urgently to their own governments for help. What many of those citizens want is protection against the unregulated flow of capital, labour, and information from outside the national territory. That is because this unregulated flow passes through unprotected national borders, ac-

centuating domestic problems – for example, unemployment, the relocation of industry or immigrants. Increasingly, citizens demand a qualified answer to these types of questions, that is, globalization requires us to rethink our conventional vision of world politics.

The sovereignty and authority of national governments is being transformed by globalism, but global governance also raises issues such as political participation in transnational networks, as well as the merger and interaction of political institutions that were once conceived as separable units.

2. Globalism and global governance

Globalism is a complex and multifaceted concept that refers to various systems with global reach. It is characterized by the growing interconnectivity and interdependence of nations around the world, encompassing not only the economy, but also the political, technological, and cultural dimensions.

Political globalism reflects the tendency toward international partnerships and institutions, such as the United Nations or the European Union, that govern or influence relations between nations. It promotes concepts of global governance, with the aim of addressing global issues that transcend national borders, such as climate change and human rights.

Technological globalism is driven by the rapid development of communication and information technologies that connect people and businesses around the world. The Internet, social media, and mobile connectivity are excellent examples of technological advances that have facilitated instant communication and information sharing across the world.

Cultural globalism, also known as cultural globalization, refers to the transmission throughout the world of ideas, meanings, and values in order to expand and intensify social relations. This has led to the phenomenon of cultural homogenization, as well as the countertrend of cultural preservation and the celebration of national identities.

The effects of globalism are widely debated. Proponents argue that globalism leads to economic growth, cultural exchange, and diplomatic cooperation, which can promote global peace and stability. Critics, however, point to disadvantages such as economic inequality, cultural erosion, and the potential for multinational companies to exploit labour and resources. Either way, globalism represents a significant shift in the way nations interact, and while it offers opportunities for cooperation and shared prosperity, it also presents challenges that require careful management to ensure equitable and sustainable outcomes for all involved.

One of the most relevant challenges is, without a doubt, that of global governance. Whether supranational or transnational, global governance undermines the notion of a sovereign Nation-state understood in the sense of the affirmed Peace of Westphalia. Understood in the breadth of its concept, *supranationalization* describes a process in which international institutions develop procedures that contradict the principle of consensus and the principle of non-intervention (see Zürn, 2013). Some international norms and rules create obligations for national governments to take action even when they do not agree to do so. As a result, political authority partially shifts to the international level.

States, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and private sector entities, as international actors, develop collective efforts to identify, understand, and solve global problems that transcend the capabilities of each nation. What is called global governance involves the establishment of international norms and rules to manage global issues, sharing knowledge and data to inform political decisions based on international agreements that aim to

balance national autonomy with the need for international cooperation. Although there has been an attempt to explore decentralized and collaborative approaches to solving global problems, there is still a certain Western hegemony in the formation of institutions, entities, and structures of global governance. Prominent examples of global governance institutions are:

– United Nations (UN): International organization founded in 1945, made up of several specialized agencies, programs and funds that address issues such as health, education, climate change, peace and security.

– World Trade Organization (WTO): An international body that regulates trade between nations and resolves trade disputes between member countries.

– International Monetary Fund (IMF): Provides financial support to countries in economic difficulties and works to promote global monetary cooperation.

– World Bank Group: A family of five international organizations that provide leveraged loans to developing countries for capital programs.

– World Health Organization (WHO): Specialized UN agency responsible for international public health.

– International Labor Organization (ILO): deals with labour issues, particularly international labour standards and decent work for all.

– International Criminal Court (ICC): An intergovernmental organization and international court that has jurisdiction to prosecute individuals for the international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

These institutions play a crucial role in facilitating cooperation between nations, establishing international norms, and addressing transnational issues that affect multiple countries and regions and providing platforms for collective action. This collective action is guided by global regulations that member countries agree to follow. This can include everything, from trade agreements to environmental standards, which help create a more stable and predictable global system by providing a forum for the peaceful resolution of conflicts between nations, which is essential to maintaining international stability and security, but also economic integration, promoting global growth through increased efficiency and reduced costs for consumers around the world. On the other hand, many international organizations are involved in providing humanitarian aid, coordinating efforts, and pooling resources to face challenges such as pandemics, migratory movements and trafficking in human beings, refugees, or international criminal networks.

At the same time, international organizations face a multitude of challenges in today's complex global landscape. In addition to the fact that there is a constant change in geopolitical dynamics, with unpredictable effects, many international organizations operate with limited budgets and are under pressure to demonstrate effectiveness in action and, at the same time, minimize costs for taxpayers who do not fail to be citizens of political states, hence the tension between the principles of multilateral cooperation and the growing trend of protectionism. This trend is accentuated by cultural differences within and between organizations that raise operational difficulties. All of this requires a constant capacity to adapt to change and the flexibility to adopt and review common policies such as, for example, what was determined in The Paris Agreement of 2015, aiming to combat climate change and its negative impacts, or the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by all UN member states in 2015.

Combining nation state governance with global governance involves creating a synergy between the sovereignty of individual nations and collective decision-making processes at the

international level. Therefore, we seek to establish shared sovereignty, that is, nations can agree to share certain aspects of their sovereignty with a view to the common good, while maintaining sovereignty in other areas. Often, global governance decisions are implemented at the national level respecting the unique contexts of each nation, but their success implies public participation in such decisions, particularly through civil society organizations, which can help align national interests with global agendas. Likewise, its success also stems from monitoring its progress and being accountable for commitments made in implementing such policies, promoting transparency and trust.

In the complex interaction between national interests and global responsibilities, actively participating in the construction of the international community and at the same time safeguarding the well-being of their own country, national governments must promote civic participation and embrace the feeling of global citizenship. While the level of concern that people have about national governments *versus* global governance can vary widely depending on individual perspectives, cultural contexts, and current global events, generally, individuals feel more directly affected by the actions of governments. National governments are the entities that have the most immediate impact on citizens everyday lives through laws, policies, and services. They are responsible for responding to the specific needs and interests of their citizens, and people often have a stronger sense of affiliation and influence over their national political processes.

On one hand, global governance, which includes international organizations and agreements that have to deal with global issues, may seem more distant and less tangible to many people. Public opinion can shift toward greater concern about global governance when international issues become more pressing and when the consequences of global decisions become more evident at the local level. On the other hand, when national issues are more pressing, such as during economic crises or political upheavals, the focus may return to national governments. Ultimately, the balance of concerns between national governments and global governance is dynamic and can be influenced by a range of factors, including media coverage, education, personal values, and the global political climate. In this sense, decentralization plays a crucial role in empowering communities to face global issues, bringing decision-making closer to the local level, as it allows for personalized solutions to be found that better respond to the specific needs and conditions of local communities, where community members can meet and actively engage and participate. Above all, decentralization can improve accountability, not only because local leaders are more accessible to the community but also by making it easier for citizens to hold them accountable for their actions. Given that globalism, or global governance, appears to have a complex relationship with political participation, it is necessary to empower and challenge the traditional forms of political engagement of ordinary citizens.

3. Global citizenship

We know that globalization is based on an intricate network of communication in the political, cultural, and economic realms. In political terms, globalization has called into question the continued relevance of the Westphalian conception of the Nation-state. Traditionally, the principle of national sovereignty was at the core of international relations, but due to the interconnectedness of the global system, Nation-states have little choice but to work together to deal with cross-border issues such as terrorism, security and refugee movement, to name just three.

In the political domain, globalization undermines the ability of the Nation-state to chart its own path. Given the interconnected nature of the international system, it is simply impossible for States to maintain absolute sovereignty in the economic domain. As so, the traditional conception of national sovereignty becomes increasingly obsolete, and the features that constitute a Nation (unique common language, culture, history, and social norms) become weakened or less concrete as individuals from different nations intermingle. This loss of direct control can only be interpreted as a loss of national sovereignty. In this context, it can be said that globalization has eroded our sense of national and cultural identity. What once distinguished us has been replaced by a monocultural world dominated by multinational companies. Cultural globalization is actually a misnomer for a mild, homogenized form of Westernization that ultimately erodes cultural pluralism. The threat is considered so significant that some countries have implemented protectionist measures to prevent their cultural way of life from being harmed, and this naturally has political and social consequences, as is the case with "nationalist" protectionism. In any case, the process is not irreversible, but its reduction has been proposed by the forces of nationalism and populism. In fact, there are several populist parties, figures, and movements, such as Fidesz in Hungary, the Law and Justice Party (PiS) in Poland, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), the Dutch Freedom Party, led by Geert Wilders, that gain support based on opposition to globalization and the so-called "liberal elite". At the same time, in some countries, there has been a resurgence of nationalist sentiment through self-styled "strongmen" to deal with the dangers posed by globalization (such as terrorism and uncontrolled immigration). This is an observation that immediately applies to the United States (Trump), Brazil (Bolsonaro), Russia (Putin), India (Modi), Hungary (Orbán) and the Philippines (Duterte), among others.

Protectionist nationalism and populism can also be considered a paradoxical result of globalization, consisting of the reorientation of political attention to the role of the State within the borders of a given territory. Citizens are mobilizing along new lines of cleavage, and in many advanced countries a new political camp has emerged, organized around a program of strengthening national border controls. It's just one example of how many of these citizens see the new situation as being created by their own government's actions in opening borders, negotiating new trade treaties and immigration legislation. That being said, citizens of a Nation-state often maintain a deep emotional connection to their nation, following the rise of nationalism and national identity.

The Westphalian system may have changed, but it is far from buried, because the State continues to be a relevant institution due, in part, precisely to the reaction of citizens against the process of globalization. Likewise, state agents continue to be the most important elements in implementing and maintaining law and social order, which requires a fully functioning government with an effective state apparatus. If the problems that citizens face have political origins, it seems that they can only be reversible through political action and, although the Nation-state has lost its monopoly on political authority, given that it is no longer the only source of authority and of the normativity, nevertheless, it is the idea of a Nation-state that continues to shape, for example, independence movements.

Across the world, independence movements seek to form their own Nation-state and, as such, determine the dominant mode of sovereign self-determination. In this context, it is no surprise that, alongside the growing importance of international institutions, we see a clear and strong trend towards decentralization within the Nation-state. An index of regional authority

in 42 democracies and semi-democracies reveals that 29 countries have regionalized and only two have become more centralized since 1950 (Hooghe *et al*, 2008). We may conclude that, parallel to the rise of political authority beyond the Nation-state, processes of decentralization can be observed, that is, the shift of political authority to decentralized levels within the Nation-state.

The increasing complexity of governance, in turn, creates desires to emphasize cultural differences at the regional level and to directly represent regional interests without mediation from the Nation-state. It is no longer just the political actions of the Nation-state that provoke regionalist responses, but also the weakening of some of its traditional functions through globalization and political internationalization. Together, these two factors imply a compression of the world and a transformation in our conception of ourselves and our identity. If the notion of national identity offers a sense of comfort in a world of rapid and sometimes bewildering social change, in the 21st century, politics are increasingly conducted across borders, and, as people form meaningful and lasting connections on this basis, their loyalty to the State is greatly weakened. Otherwise, as it has become more difficult for the State to control the movement of goods, services, and people within its own borders, it is understandable why national governments are imposing some type of economic protectionism and use populist language, culminating in an increase of nationalist movements that reject global cooperation, affecting international political participation.

4. Concluding remarks

In short, globalization can facilitate and complicate political participation, depending on how it interacts with local economic, social, and political dynamics. Global citizenship refers to the idea that a person's identity transcends geography or political borders and entails responsibilities to the broader global community. Combining citizenship with global governance involves recognizing and integrating the concept of global citizenship within the framework of international laws and policies. This can be achieved through inclusive policies, where global governance structures recognize multiple citizenships and facilitate the participation of all citizens in global decision-making processes. Notably, through the establishment of universal electoral rights, allowing global citizens to vote on issues that affect the international community, regardless of their country of residence, implementing participatory democracy at a global level, where citizen participation is effective and contributes to the democratic legitimization of decision-making. Ultimately, it is about creating a legal and political environment where the concept of citizenship is not limited by national borders but is expanded to include global responsibilities and rights.

It is also necessary to consider that public opinion plays a significant role in defining government decisions regarding global responsibilities. In this sense, civic education is essential for promoting a mindset of global citizenship, teaching individuals about global issues and their roles as part of a global community. In this global community, it is important to support and permanently strengthen global civil society organizations, as they are essential for providing a platform where citizens can express their concerns and influence international agendas. Not only can public opinion influence the direction of policy, especially when there is strong sentiment about global issues such as climate change or human rights, but national governments can align their actions with public opinion to maintain legitimacy and the support of

their constituents. To be effective and efficient, policies must often reflect citizens' preferences, making governments and international forums more responsive to public opinion, as this serves as a check on political elites, ensuring that decision-makers are accountable and responsive. Governments that respond to public opinion are likely to formulate policies that are more aligned with the values and priorities of their people.

It is globalization itself and the global flow of information that enables greater awareness of international issues and could empower citizens to make informed decisions and participate more actively in political governance. Ultimately, in this new civic order established by political globalization, it will be the global order itself that facilitates the elimination of its dangers.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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