

GLOBALIZATION FROM A REALISTIC VIEWPOINT

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**ABSTRACT**

Globalization is a pervasive phenomenon that encompasses all aspects of human social life and leaves a profound impact on the political actors, roles and social structures. In the field of international relations, it has affected broadly both actors and their relations, so that most approaches to international relations have studied this phenomenon and its consequences. In this paper, we investigate the globalization phenomenon from a realistic point of view. This study aims to provide an answer to this question whether the realism is an appropriate instrument to theorize the globalization or not. A hypothesis suggested for answering this question is that as the globalization is something new and different from power relations proposed in the past, the realistic approach could not be a useful instrument for explaining the phenomenon of globalization. It can be even stated that this theory has created some obstacles to the globalization. In this study, the data of which are collected by an analytical-descriptive method, we arrived at a conclusion that the realistic approach ignores many economic, cultural, ideological and normative factors in its analysis of the globalization, considers many issues as superficial and simple, and leaves them easily. Therefore, it could not be an appropriate theoretical framework for examining and explaining the globalization phenomenon.

**KEYWORDS:** Globalization, Neorealist, Realism.

**INTRODUCTION**

The globalization is a great and growing phenomenon in the world today, which has encompasses all aspects of human social life and has left a profound impact on the political actors, roles and social structures. In the field of international relations, it has many effects on the actors and their relations. In such circumstances, it is natural that most of viewpoints and theories about international relations have focused on this phenomenon as well as its consequences and aspects. One of the oldest and most important theories of international relations and yet the most influential one despite all the occurrences as well as ups and downs happened in the field of international relations and the related theories is realism theory which has its own viewpoints about globalization like all other theories of international relations. Today, we are not living anymore in a limited world in the form of national governments with certain and limited relations between them like the past; development of science, technology, communication tools and has undermined the borders, connected the people to the cultures and different nationalities, changed the world to a global village and has caused many other issues which play very important roles in our past, current and future life. This study aims to investigate the globalization from a realistic viewpoint. It includes four sections; the realism is briefly discussed as a theoretical framework in section one. In section two, the concept of globalization is defined and examined. The third section as the main section of our research analyzes the globalization from a realistic standpoint and finally in section four, the conclusion is suggested.

**Section 1: Realism**

The realism has been actually the most important and enduring theory of international relations. Once the mainstream of international relations is suggested, the names of realist authors come into the mind. The unmatched attraction of the realism has been due to its similarity to politicians' performance in the international area and conventional understanding of international politics (Moshirzadeh, 2005).

The realism has long been a dominant theory in the field of international relations, because it addresses directly the main problems of the international relations as the power and fight. The realists know the international politics as the power politics; it is due to their attitude about human nature. As suggested by many realists, hunger for power is rooted in human nature (Linklater, 2007). The realists consider the human as inherently evil and hegemonic which seeks to

dominate and overcome others; that is a basis for fights. Human's ambition, anarchism in the area of international relations as well as the acting of the governments is the main intellectual cores of realism.

The realism in its classic form has been reflected in the work of Thucydides called as "Peloponnesian War". This tradition was followed at the modern age in Europe by Clausewitz in his work as "On War", Leopolderenk as "Foreign policy priorities" and Fredrick Mayank as "A reason for the presence of the government". In the United States, some scholars and politicians including Hans Morgenthau, Kissinger and George Kennan proposed theories and discussed about it (Ghavam, 2006: 56-57). The realism has been academically studied since the decades 1920s-1930s. This approach analyzed truly many events between the two wars and dominated the international relations after World War II.

The realist considers the governments as the actors, the game environment as anarchic and the rule of the game as zero-sum and self-help. In general, the assumptions of realistic viewpoint mainly focus on the pessimistic philosophical theory of the theorists about the human. Edward Carr summarizes realism assumptions as follows:

- Human is inherently evil.
- Human wickedness is sustainable.
- Humans are power-hungry and greedy.
- Under the present limitations, humans are anxious.
- War and conflict are a fact political life.
- Human is a rational being.
- Existence is somehow involved in the struggle for survival.
- Different countries have conflicting interests with each other that cannot be gathered together.
- Any international unit is seeking to provide security and its survival (Seifzadeh, 2007: 241).

The realists underlined the followings:

- Power and security are key concepts in this approach.
- They consider the government as the most important actor in the international scene and other actors act within the framework of the governments' relations.
- The international system has no central authority contrary to the internal system.
- Under the present limitations, humans are anxious.
- War and conflict are a fact political life.
- Human is a rational being.
- Existence is somehow involved in the struggle for survival.
- Different countries have conflicting interests with each other that cannot be gathered together.
- The domestic politics is different from foreign policy.
- To achieve such goals, we should rely on ourselves (Billis and Smith, 2007: 334-339).

Many philosophers of international relations are divided into four groups:

- 1- The structural realism type 1 or the human nature: based on which the international politics is operated through struggling for power and it rooted in the human's nature. Tocydide is known as a prominent scholar in this type of realism.
- 2- Historical or practical realism: according to this type, the principles are subject to policies and the main skills of the leaders is to accept formation and changes of power in international politics and conform themselves to it. Among the thinkers of this type of realism, we may suggest to Machiavelli and Morgenthau.
- 3- Second type structural realism or international system: they believe it is not the human nature that jealousy causes pessimism and insecurity, but that is chaotic global system. Rousseau and Waltz can be considered as experts of this type of realism.
- 4- Liberal realism: the advocates of this type have an opinion that the governments, which are capable to establish basic rules of coexistence and to stop violence in other states, may prevent international anarchy.

Despite such classification, all types of realism are common in the following issues:

- They know the government as the main actor of international relations (Ghavam, 2005: 79).
- They emphasize the national power and interests.

- They underline the independence of the countries (Ghavam, 2002).
- They consider the international system as anarchic where the governments fight over power in this environment, which lacks central authority.
- They distinguish internal and external environment and accordingly, between domestic and foreign policies and propose Dalton's Billiard Ball model.
- In the field of the realists' security, they address the issues including international security, insecurity, military-based security issues, self-reliance in gaining security and state-orientation in security authorities (Abdollahkhani, 2004: 62).
- They do not believe to find peace through international rights and organizations and think that the peace can be achieved through arrangements such as balance of powers and deference.
- All realists are conservative and stand for maintaining the present situation.

In general, the following three bases can be considered for realism:

- 1- Statism: they know the government as the only actor in the international arena, which has the monopoly in the legitimate use of force.
- 2- Conservation law: this principle is considered as a prerequisite to achieve all the goals and it is believed that security is provided through military.
- 3- Self-help principle: according to this principle, the governments can no longer rely on other governments' guarantees for maintaining their survival, because the structure of this system does not allow the friendship and trust, where the international system lacks ethical rules and principles (Bayliss & Smith, 2004:340-349).

Though we are examining realism in this paper from a general realistic point of view, it is necessary to explain the neorealism in further details due to significance and dominance of this theory in the international arena. Waltz embraces many concepts applied in the classic realism such as anarchy, the power of national interests, distinction between domestic policy and foreign policy, rationality of the countries and statism, but the most important criticism he expresses about this theory is being reductive. As stated by Waltz, a theory should be developed which could provide a holistic analysis of the structure of international system. Waltz claims that reduction of international politics to nation-state level and thereby the reduction in the level of decision-making process is insufficient, as it does not consider the effect of systematic level on the behavior of the governments (haji Yousefi, 2005). For neorealists, the reason why realism could not conceptualize international system is their behavioral methodology, as this approach investigated political data by analyzing constituents of political systems (Ghavam, 2005). The neorealists consider power and security as the most important issues from ontological standpoint and they believe form an epistemological perspective that the governments carry out policy-making disregarding domestic issues and adjust their behavior within the framework of a structure, while they examined the foreign policies based on bargaining and negotiation that is involved in domestic policy. Furthermore, they pay attention in this case to other actors like international organizations (Ghavam: 97). The neorealism focus mainly on the structural characteristics of the governments' international system. The structure means regularizing or ordering the elements of a system. According to Waltz, this is the structural pressures of global system, but not the characteristics of its particular constituent units, which explain the behavior of governments in a large scale.

Since neorealists emphasize the structural characteristics of the international system, they believe that systematic pressures makes them to adopt similar and equal trends, despite current differences between the individuals, governments and approaches (Ghavam, 2004).

Waltz structural concept consists of three following components:

- 1- A principle based on which the system is ordered or organized (regularization principle): Waltz considers this feature as resulted from the lack of central authority. There is no rightful command authority to regulate behaviors, but this task is undertaken by major international units in the absence of it, or it is important just for them.
- 2- Distinction between the units of the system and description of their function: in such circumstances, all countries should equally seek common goals for survival in terms of function. Therefore, there is no functional difference between the countries except skill factor, which determines the position of units in the international arena.

- 3- Concentration or dispersion rate of internal capabilities of the system: it is related to the rate of concentration dispersion of the system's internal capabilities. For this purpose, it compares the development of economic trends from bipolar to multipolar and concludes that the number of leading actors inside any system will change the international results obtained by the actors. Thus, the system's structure is defined as a function of the under of existing countries in the international system; in addition to digital unit, the actors' skill will also affect the structure of international system. Two factors including the number of actors and their skills along with the overall composition of the international system will determine the position of this system. Just for the skill and the type of actor, it could not be expected that the actor's position in the system will change (Seifzadeh, 2007).

Anarchy is another concept emphasized by the neorealists. It has important consequences on the behavior of the countries and the international relations. In general, anarchy calls for three behavioral patterns for the countries in the international relations: first, the countries are distrustful in each other. Second, the most important goal of the countries in the international system is to guarantee and continue life. Third, the countries in the international system attempt to maximize their relative power for providing greater security (Dehghani Firoozabadi, 2003). Relative achievements: the neorealists emphasize the relative interests and evaluate what they obtain in comparison with others, unlike the liberalists who focus on absolute interests (Nasri, 2007).

Hegemonic necessity: the neorealists believe that the stability in the international system is possible only when there is an international hegemonic power to control the rebellious elements. The reason for the necessity of such factor is that these governments are essentially seeking competition and expansionism, and such imperialist interests make it difficult to preserve the current situation. Another hegemonic necessity is that under such stability, the international organizations and institutions find opportunity to be born (Nasri: 234). Balance of power: in the balance of power, one party is prevented from being powerful, because, the independence of the other party will be blemished if one party gets powerful. What is rejected in neorealism will be hierarchical distribution of power on one hand and extreme independence of the countries on the other hand. The neorealists defend the power distribution among the countries. Some authoritarian countries want to preserve the current situation and the others desire to destroy it. This understanding –conflict helps preserve the balance of power and accordingly the international security. The governments' efforts within the framework of this approach are divided into two groups: internal efforts to increase economic and military capabilities and to develop smart strategies, and the external efforts, which will to strengthen insider alliances and to weaken the alliances of the opposite party (Ghavam, 2005).

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Assessment**

As already mentioned the realism was a dominant and unchallenged theory in the international relations for a long time and could partly explain the issues and events during the Cold War. The realism perhaps more than any other theoretical interpretation, helped the public and the elites to understand the international politics. However, there are some criticisms over it including criticism of the realists that is raised rather by the liberalists, emphasizes four concepts suggested as lack of central authority, governments as the only actor, rationality and military force (Ghavam: 93). About the lack of central authority and anarchy, liberal internationalists believe that the realists exaggerated anarchy and its effect on the governments' behavior. About acting of the governments, it is criticized that such reductionism will cause to neglect the realities, for non-state individuals and actors play some roles in both international relations and governments' decision-makings. About rationality, which is the theoretical foundation of realism, it is said that all governments' behaviors are not rational. And finally about the military force and military-orientation in security, a criticism is raised that the use of military force in order to influence the others (diplomacy of ...) is very expensive compared to all other instruments and is usually associated with some unexpected consequences.

### **Section 2: Globalization**

The concept of globalization entered dictionary on 1960s and was applied after the end of cold war on a broad and various scale. Though globalization is observed in the form of a variety of religions, schools, approaches and ideologies during the history, the root of current globalization should be traced in the rise of capitalism and the related dramatic technological, economic and communication changes. The globalization is a paradoxical phenomenon; it means that as it extend friendships, affinities and common human elements, it also exacerbates tensions, disputes and inequalities and

increases the gap between the poor and the rich (Ghavam, 2003: 7). Therefore, the globalization can be likened to a double-edged sword, which is associated with both opportunities and threats.

Many studies have been carried out on the globalization since the globalization concept was offered. They have paid attention to it from different aspects. However, there are numerous obstacles and problems in providing one or several definitions for globalization:

- 1- Breadth of the subject: the globalization has affected and changed all aspects of human life.
- 2- Transition phase: the globalization is a transient phase and its definitions continue to be changed until they will be fixed.
- 3- Theoretical problem: existing theories and approaches cannot create a theoretical framework to analyze this phenomenon.
- 4- Coincidence of globalization with the collapse of the USSR: interconnectedness of developments impedes their evaluation and analysis (Akhavan Zanjani, 2004).

Among those investigations, the globalization has been used in the following five concepts:

- 1- Internationalization: it means to develop cross-border interactions and interdependence of the countries.
- 2- Liberalization: it means to remove government restrictions on transfers between the countries.
- 3- Globalization: it means to induce special goals and plans to the people around the world.
- 4- Westernization: globalizing the western culture and values that are raised further by the critics of cultural imperialism.
- 5- Deterritorialization: it means the developments by which the geographical regions, distances and borders lose their previous importance (Bayliss & Smith, 2004).

Among the above concepts, deterritorialization is more accepted. This concept of globalization suggests to processes in which the social relations are separated from the territory, so as the humans are living increasingly as a single location (Bayliss & Smith: 48). In this sense, the position of the countries especially the borders between them play in some ways a less important role in our life. The global politics is not also limited to territorial boundary of the countries.

As the globalization is accelerated and intensified, the governments' authority will break down, the borders will become permeable and their sovereignty will be limited, while dozens of non-governmental actors have been involved and participated in the governments' authority. The impact of globalization on the sovereignty of the governments is suggested in three general scopes including economy, politics and culture. In the economic field, the globalization weakens the governments' sovereignty through components including the performance of multinational corporations and World Trade Organization. In political field, it weakens decision-making and policy-making power of the governments by influencing the components such as national security and human rights and applying pressure in order to consider the demands of other groups and actors. In the field of culture, this phenomenon plays down the importance of national identities and propels ethnic, racial and religious groups toward independence and decomposition of some countries, in the light of a revolution in information and communication technologies. Therefore, the globalization has made the governments' national sovereignty permeable in three mentioned fields so that such sovereignty will be increasingly broken down by force. However, it should be noted that the globalization is a relative issue. People and communities are in different situations and periods of the history and show a variety of reflections to it. Some protect the globalization and some other fight with it (Akhavan Zanjani, 2004).

Thinkers like James Rosonna, Richard Falk, Joseph Nye and Cohen provided different interpretations of globalization, which are common in one point that a historical phase is approaching to end and a new stage is being launched. This process not only changes the fields where the governments act within its framework, but it alters the nature of many communities and governments. The researchers generally agree about the globalization for the following four issues:

- 1- What is globalized more than everything else is capitalist economy.
- 2- Technological developments are in a way that can be used globally and at the same time, they have created a driving factor for globalization.
- 3- Social and cultural phenomena are increasingly globalized and as a result, they go beyond limitations of geographical – political boundaries and they practically obscure the boundaries.
- 4- Communication technology has changed the world for the first time to a quite global system, the parts of which affects and influences each other (Akhavan Zanjani: 79).

### **Section 3: Globalization from Realistic Viewpoint**

The realists like many schools of thought attempt to explain and justify globalization and the related phenomena through their intellectual principles. One of the realism components which challenges the globalization is the

government and its acting in the international arena. As the globalization is growing, the governments will appear vulnerable, the sovereignties will be more limited, the borders will be more permeable and the governments' authority has faced new challenges (Ghavam, 2003: 40). However, it could not be expected that the changes in the structure and function of governments will be in the same form. For example, while many underdeveloped units in Africa have not entered nation-state building process, European governments could comply themselves with the changing international conditions through new definitions for identity and government-related concepts, in order to increase efficiency and to meet the society needs. On the opposite side, having political views about globalization, the realists introduce such developments as "increasing expansion and development of communication" under the dominance of the government and for augmenting its power. As an example, Gilpin considered the globalization as dependent on a hegemonic state and its role in the international system for imposing political order. He believes that order and stability at the modern age and during globalization will be ensured by the military superiority of a hegemonic government. It should be noted that as the government's acting is changed and the non-governmental actors are accompanied by the governments, it cannot be assumed any more that the rule of game with zero-sum is usually dominant over the relations between the governmental and non-governmental actors (Ghavam: 56).

Among other issues caused by the globalization contrary to realistic views, we can suggest to increasing development of communications, dramatic increase in international cooperation and interdependence, while the realism with an emphasis on the power politics knows anarchy as a principle governing the international system and considers the conflict and cooperation possibility very limited. About interdependence, the realists from Rousseau to Waltz, have argued that an interdependence established through close relationship with the modernity, can create mutual vulnerability and equally the peace and development. While the realists doubt that the world has become "interdependent", they stress that the government is not overwhelmed by the global forces, which act lower or higher than nation-states (Bayliss and Smith, 2004).

However, as the dependencies and the circumstances arising from globalization increases in the developed areas such as Western Europe, the power will be possibly stratified and the sovereignty will preserve its existence at several levels. However, in less developed areas, weaker political units will confront many problems. Nevertheless, Hedley Ball believes that the globalization could not be defined as a phenomenon, which can rupture the Westphalian system or challenge the current structure of international system, but it is rather an instrument for the governments by which the can increase their power and raise their control over international implications. Meanwhile, Gilpin does not consider the globalization as a process, which changes the structure of the global system essentially. He believes that cohesion of national state to nationalism will lead to formation of a new classification of the national state. From this perspective, the realists generally believe that globalization does not imply the emergence of a global society, but we are still dealing with the community of governments.

From security aspect, the realists are state-oriented in security reference and military-oriented in security subject (Abdollahkahni, 2004: 84-86). However, the globalization and interconnectedness has proposed models that are less military (such as welfare, freedom, labor, training, environment...). What seems interesting about globalization for the realists is their belief in militarization of the international system and the development of the models for political controls beyond the borders.

However, it should be noted that all the realists have not similar viewpoints about the globalization. For example, the realist strategists generally are divided into two groups against globalization as follows:

- 1- The first group denies this concept and believes that as far as the strategy is concerned, nothing has changed and the government is essentially more sustainable than what the Universalists think.
- 2- The second group has a moderate standpoint about globalization and believes that despite the globalization has made developments in the scales; this issue cannot change the nature of international relations. In fact, they recognize new actors, but maintain their principles.

It could be generally said that the globalization has undermined many intellectual foundations of realism as follows:

- About the actors, the globalization discharged the hands of governments from the acting monopoly and offered some actors including transnational corporations, multinational banks, etc. and limited the government's freedom in different areas.

- In the field of the rules of the game, the globalization has converted the zero-sum game as emphasized by the realism to variable-sum game, through establishing interdependence as well as economic and informational cooperation.
- The globalization has brought out changes in the game environment, too. It has also substituted distrust, anarchy and instability with the extension of the spirit of cooperation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Considering such a brief discussion about the globalization phenomenon from a realistic point of view, it can be concluded that the realism approach overlooked many economic, cultural, ideological and normative components in its analysis of globalization and considered many issues as simple and superficial and left them easily. Therefore, it could not be an appropriate theoretical framework to study and explain the globalization phenomenon. However, it should be acknowledged that on the opposite, the theories agreeing with globalization, which neglected similarly many realities and promise with an extreme optimism a world without sovereignty have not the similar optimistic realism and show indeed many shortcomings of this theories and opens our eyes to the global obstacles.

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