Globalization: The Normalization of Forcing Through

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Abstract: The present paper is an attempt to explore what all goes in the name of globalization and how all this has come to be taken as normal by the international community, especially by those powerful forces that impose it on the other nations; they consider it as their right to the world and its resources. These global powers, the transnational corporations or MNC’s, push in their agenda whether any country likes it or not. The countries do not have any other option but to surrender to this penetration into their markets and economies. Along with the foreign products come the culture and meaning inherent in these products, an idea one monolithic culture. The other nation-states cannot prevent this; if there is resistance from their side, they are warned of the consequences by the capitalist forces. Even wars and disasters, today, are seen as opportunities by these big international corporations who want to privatize everything and seize the control of everything into their hands through various institutions.

Key words: capitalist, control, culture, economy, globalization, market, monolithic, penetration, transnational corporations,

Globalization is basically the expansion of economic, political and social relationship in space and time. For instance ‘a manufacturer assembling a product for a distant market, a country submitting to international law and a language adopting a foreign loanword are all examples of globalization. Not only this, it is also the seeping of each other’s cultures i.e. new addition to celebrating and observing those festivities and values which were at our time unknown to a nation-state which was satisfied with its own culture and values. And it is often the one which is richer economically and militarily which calls the shots or pushes its things onto the comparatively weaker economies and less equipped militarily.

This is all the more where a country looks up towards these powerful nations as the role models. Especially those countries which have been former colonies of the imperialist forces. In these areas, emulating the erstwhile rulers is still considered as token of belonging to the elite class.

For example, in countries like India the competence in English language is considered a status symbol. And just as it was in the past, so it is in the present. What started as trade in 1601 turned into company rule in 1758 after the battle of Plassey, but following the Indian rebellion of 1857, the Government of India Act 1858 led to the union crown assuming the direct rule of India is the form of new British Raj.

In the present times, globalization is process of converting the entire world into an American ‘global village’, where people speak American Variety of English, follow American way of life: wear Levis jeans, drink Coca Cola, eat at McDonald’s, watch CNN and Hollywood movies. This system equates economic success with cultural imposition which means placing its products in all the markets of the world; this way of putting its products around the globe is seen as production of American global capitalist culture. It can be seen today that dominant groups can impose ‘commodities with inherent values and singular meanings on passive consumers.’ While some people hail globalization for opening up of new global ‘routes’, others resist globalization as it affects the local ‘roots’. As a result there is reassertion of the local against the global which pops up in the form of increase in religious fundamentalism and nationalism, which is seen as snip in the plans of global corporations because the more the locals hold on to the local and national the more difficult it gets for the foreign companies to place their products as they do not want the active and thinking consumers, but passive ones. Today, ‘business firms, especially the transnational corporations, wield immense economic power and have the capacity to influence political policies in their home bases and elsewhere. The biggest transnational companies today have budgets larger than those all but a few nations. In the 1980s, free trade came into existence as a means to manage worldwide economic crisis. Foreign debt in many countries grew to a verge of economic crisis and the framing of ‘structural adjustment policies of the IMF and the World Bank under US tutelage’.

Consequently both institutions became missionaries that imposed free trade and structural programs on poor countries that had no choice but to assent… In this context, free trade means deregulation, that is the elimination of barriers (tariffs) to trade but also the curtailment of state support of industry (never fully achieved in developed countries), and most significant, the forsaking of labor protection (more easily achieved), resulting in lower wages and benefits, the reduction of welfare and social services (healthcare, education), and the rollback of environmental safeguards. These changes not only ensure greater profits for corporations, particularly multinational enterprises, but guarantee that there will be little interference with the conduct of business because the organizations that manage trade (those that negotiate tariffs and regulations on production and distribution) are not subject to oversight by any electorate. In effect, GATT, its successor the WTO, NAFTA, the World Bank, the IMF, and others have not been empowered by voters and yet impose their policies virtually unchecked, although there is an emerging antiglobalization movement at the irresponsibility of these institutions. (Connell and Marsh 69-70)

November 11, 1991. In response, the World Bank President Mr Lewis T Preston laid down 25 conditions, on November 12, which the Government of India was supposed to meet April-May that year. Prabhu Chawla and Bharat Bhushan had this to say in their article in that edition of Indian Express:

Never before in the history of Independent India has any multilateral lending agency to as blatant as interference in the policy making processes of the country as the World Bank is doing now for structural adjustment loan. Considered with the commitments made to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) earlier, it is clear that the Finance Ministry has thrown economic sovereignty by the wayside.

Although, it is also said that these institutions are not exactly like the nation-states which have power of sovereignty on all the areas/regions of the earth. One or the other country has control over these regions, which are the territories of these countries. So, even if economically these corporations or multinational companies are strong and powerful, they are not so in terms of military, unlike the East India Company which was during the colonial times, and they cannot establish themselves as political/legal entities which rule given territorial area. However, they have immense clout by which they can make any government yield to their demands. So while the nation-states are in control of the political order, these MNCs dominate the world economy. In the name of globalizations and same ness, there is more inequality than it was there in the past. The country which is wealthy and has a strong military is the one which wields the power in the global arena. In this arena, there is an ongoing struggle between the capitalist forces who indulge in pushing their products, services, culture etc into and pulling out profits from those nation-states who try to resist safeguarding their economy, sovereignty, and culture to be completely dominated by the much-stronger competitors. But the moot question is can these nation-states really resist effectively so as to avoid being penetrated by these capitalist forces. Can they prevent their female body of nation-state being ravished by the male body of capitalism? The answer is a big no. They are not allowed to do so because the capitalist body has framed narratives, laws which tell how these other female bodies are to behave in order to be considered as sane, normal within the framework constituted by the capitalism. For survival, these others female bodies must comply with the rules and surrender to the demands of capitalism which laid down the rules where -rape became globalization, men became capitalism or its agent the multinational corporation (MNC) and woman became capitalism’s other ... (Connell and Marsh 38).

According to this theory ‘rape is one of the real, clear facts of women’s lives ... language of rape assumes that rape has always already occurred and women are always either already raped or already ‘rapable’. How this globalization and capital flight has created an environment of fear and subjection is evident when Marcus made a reference:

... to the ways women limit their activities for example, avoiding or thinking twice about being out in public spaces alone or in the evening for fear of being accused of ‘asking for rape - every mind turned to the way in which workers have limited their demands for higher wages or improved working conditions, given the knowledge about capital mobility and the operations of MNCs, for fear that they might be asking for capital abandonment. (Connell and Marsh 39)

And it is an unstated axiom that the capital flow will continue only as long as the rest or others toe the line drawn by the capitalist powers. Just as society has set a frame for a good woman to fit in so also they have charted rules and regulations which the nation-state must abide by to be in the good books of these global powers. A woman who follows the womanly norms will be hailed as a modern/good woman, but if she deviates from these norms, she may be branded as mad or abnormal fit to be damned by the society, and isolated. Likewise, a nation-state that goes against the established rules set by the capitalist powers is likely to be declared a rogue state and may invite economic sanctions, and if things get worse may even be attacked by the global powers. All this has resulted in, like religious fundamentalism, a new concept called the ‘Market fundamentalism’ which does more harm than good transcending all national, cultural, geographic, and other religious boundaries.

Noncompliance with intellectual property laws advanced particularly by the United States has already brought threats of punitive trade sanctions. … Mexico was virtually forced to change its intellectual property laws and to enforce them as of 1994, and China was threatened with a $ 30 billion sanction to discourage the piracy of trademarked products… The United States and other Postindustrial countries have recourse to international law and the sanctions they can bring to bear on transgressor countries. Developing countries and fourth world indigenous people do not have the same clout despite the drafting of international covenants by their own representatives … The difference ensures that the asymmetry in capital accumulation between the developed and developing countries and native peoples will become greater. The hegemonic redefinition of culture raises problems for the legal protection of community and other collective practices that generate marketable knowledge (folk remedies, seed varieties) and products (music, craft) that are not recognized as such by states and transnational corporations, the major brokers in the arena of international law. (Connell and Marsh 72)

…globalization is such a convenient strategy to revert to the brutal capitalism of Marx’s day when industry engaged in wage slavery paying barely enough to live on… Globalization poses a threat to the aims of those artists who wish to affect how people see the world and should respond to if in ways that have collective significance. Quite conspicuous is that the globalization of culture has promoted a one size fits all consumer culture of luxury goods. (Rapaport 59-60)

What is most interesting in this process of globalization is the question: Who is the boss or rather who calls the shots? Because “the colonial populations are being dictated to or having their circumstances determined by historical actors (former masters) who exist
outside their national boundaries and whose interests are largely exploitative’. The powers who promote globalization for their profits view the entire operation as progressive and beneficial to all because it is they who control everything; on the other hand are those not so powerful nation-states or developing countries who have to comply with all the directions from these powers in the name of improving of trade relations. These lesser nations see this through the lens of domination and subjection. They have no other option but to agree to the terms and conditions set by the these capitalist powers. They have created a situation where all these nations are very much dependent on the foreign aid, bail-out packages from the monetary institutions like the IMF and the World Bank, which are again controlled by the powerful capitalist lobby, who ensure that no transaction takes place without a green signal from them. It is they who decide which country should be given how much, and which country should not be given anything at all. Indirectly, they are in control of everything; by controlling the world’s capital and maintaining powerful military and nuclear arms, they impose things on the other nation-states, which includes not only their products and services, but also their cultures and the way of life - always projected as superior. America is projected as the land of opportunities, the ultimate destination for every progressive human being. They devise strategies and frame narratives which project them, their products, their culture as the best, and that of the developing countries as obsolete or outdated. People who do not opt for their ideas and their way of life are termed as backward. So it is normal if people choose foreign goods and clothes; it is abnormal if they pick any local item or clothing. And Ania Loomba says in her book, Colonialism/Postcolonialism about an argument posed by an Indian research group:

The great range of actual measures carried on under the label of globalization… were not those of integration and development. Rather they were the processes of imposition, disintegration, underdevelopment, and appropriation. They were of continued extraction of debt servicing payments of the third world; depression of prices of raw materials exported by the same countries; removal of tariff protection for their vulnerable productive sectors; removal of restraints on foreign direct investment, allowing giant foreign corporations to grab larger sectors of third world’s economies; removal of the restraints of the entry and exit of massive flows of speculative international capital allowing their movements to dictate economic life; reduction of State spending on productive activity, development and welfare; privatization of activities, assets, and natural resources, sharp increases in the cost of essential services and goods such as electricity, fuel, health care, education, transport, and food (accompanied by the harsher depression of women’s consumption within each family’s declining consumption); withdrawal of subsidized credit earlier directed to starved sectors; dismantling workers’ security of employment; reduction of the share of wages in the social product; suppression of domestic industry in the third world and closures of manufacturing firms on a massive scale; ruination of independent small industries; ruination of the handicrafts/handloom sector; replacement of subsistence crops with cash crops; destruction of food security. (219)

The capitalist powers have profited a great deal by outsourcing menial work to the developing countries because of cheap labour over there. They are paying in rupees, which is cheap, but they have a very high buying-power as one dollar is more than eighty rupees. What they are paying as wages in these countries is approximately one-third of what they have to pay if they get the goods manufactured in their own country. It is precisely for this reason that all the international brands like Levis, Tommy Hilfiger, Polo etc. are either made in china, made in India, made in Pakistan/Bangladesh etc. So, in a way foreign things have not only penetrated these markets but have also managed to intrude into homes and the minds of the populace of these countries, making people prefer a foreign culture and stuff over their own local goods. fractions and adopt new things promoted by there. The smaller developing nations have to give in to their demands, or else there may be ‘consequences’ as spoken often by diplomats of these powerful countries. This strategy of profitereing by destroying other nations is not new; in the past imperial powers have forced in unwanted stuff into countries and attacked them when they resisted against their sinister designs:

The most notorious example of how governments did the bidding of big money was the First Opium War fought between Britain and China (1840-1842). In the first half of the nineteenth century, the British East India Company and sundry British business people made fortunes by exporting drugs, particularly opium, to China. Millions of Chinese became addicts, debilitating the country both economically and socially. In the late 1830s the Chinese government issued a ban on drug trafficking, but the British drug merchants simply ignored the law. Chinese authorities began to confiscate and destroy drug cargoes. The drug cartels had close connections in Westminster and Downing Street - many MPs and cabinet ministers in fact held stock in the drug companies - so they pressured the government to take action. In 1840 Britain duly declared war on China in the name of ‘free trade’. It was a walkover. The overconfident Chinese were no match for Britain’s wonder weapons - steamboats, heavy artillery, rockets, and rapid-fire rifles. Under the subsequent treaty, China agreed to not to constrain the activities of British drug merchants and to compensate them for damages inflicted by the Chinese police. Furthermore, the British demanded and received control of Hong Kong, which they proceeded to use as a secure base for drug trafficking (Hong Kong remained in British hands until 1997). In the late nineteenth century, about 40 million Chinese, a tenth of country’s population, were Opium addicts. Egypt too learnt to respect the long arm of British capitalism. During the nineteenth century, French and British investors lent huge sums to the rulers of Egypt, first in order to finance the Suez Canal project, and later to fund far less successful enterprises. Egyptian debt swelled, and European creditors increasingly meddled in the Egyptian affairs. In 1881 Egyptian nationalists had had enough and rebelled. They declared a unilateral abrogation of all foreign debt. Queen Victoria was not amused. A year later she dispatched her army and navy to the Nile, and Egypt remained a British protectorate until after the second World War. (Harari 364-65)

These are just a couple of examples of the wars waged by the governments in the interest of the investors. Another thing is that these capitalist forces always keep the developing countries under pressure through smartly devised strategies. Just as women are forced into giving in to the men’s demands because these ‘men’ pressurize them by claiming to be in possession
of some secret which if revealed would damage their reputation, or perhaps even ruin them permanently; similar is the case with these nation-states where one or the problem is always kept active because that serves as a trump card through which the capitalist forces can twist the arm of the capitalist’s ‘other’. It has always been observed that the international media and international organizations deliberately take a jaundiced view of any untoward incident in these nation-states, and take an anti-government stand. Day by day it has become difficult for the government and the law in these developing countries to take any severe action against any anti-social elements, terrorists, hardcore criminals, so-called activists etc for the fear that the world media will twist the things to suit the capitalist lobby. So, a black person killed by police or an army personnel is hushed down, but a terrorist or criminal killed in an encounter in India is raised up as a violation of human rights. There are two standards for the same thing. It’s not that the government cannot deal with these criminal activities and suppress them forever, but there are inhibitions regarding how these so-called international monitors will blow the whole thing up and lecture them on democracy and human rights.

The concept of human rights has now become a pressurizing tool in this process of globalization; the Western powers wield it to critically evaluate the developing countries, making them accept their terms and conditions in the name of economic and trade relations; only then, they grant them the economic package for development etc. Simultaneously, globalization aggravates poverty, breeds insecurity, fragmentation of society and thus ‘violates human rights and human dignity of millions of people.’

It is a great irony that the government of a developing country cannot use its full capacity and power to eliminate crime and terror out of fear of the global powers. If any country dares to go ahead, they are of diplomatically warned of the consequences: there may be sanctions, calling off some pre-signed trade deal, so on and so forth. In a way, the capitalist forces in the name of globalization have ensured that they even the sovereign governments do not take any action which does not suit them, their business interests, or disturb their bliss of being in control of the world. Creating disturbances, uprisings, wars etc is business for the capitalist powers.

War profiteering is an even bigger business than war itself. It is a means by which companies can make money by taking advantage of the conflict and chaos. Armed conflict is a breeding ground for risk, which is why investors often flock to the industries that fuel it… War profiteering is not a new concept, even in 2006 when the Iraq war was at its height, an analysis of the CEOs of the thirty-four corporations that were at the time top military contractors showed a considerable jump in their pay… Pentagon funding and revenues of weapon contractors increased after the 9/11 attack. Between the years 2001 and 2005 the pay of the CEOs of military contractors jumped by 108 percent in comparison to the 6 percent increase witnessed by their counterparts at other large US companies. (War Profiteering: Global Challenges and Conflicts Involved)

Not only in the developing countries, but even in the US where there are so many cases of random shooting of the innocents, the government cannot bring a law to ban the acquisition and carrying of guns to stop the killing of its citizens. It makes one wonder how such powerful government are helpless, and against whom. Almost everyday there is news about one or the other teenager who comes to school or college and opens fire on whoever he comes across, and for no reason at that. Everywhere around the world there are incidents of terrorist activities and the governments fail to take tough action against the perpetrators of violence and terrorism. This only raises the question that if it is not the governments, then who are the powers who are actually in control? What are those powers against which even the strongest of the governments are helpless. Whoever are these powers, one thing is clear: they want such disruptive activities to continue because it is beneficial to and profitable for this lobby not only money-wise but also power-wise. In the days of colonialism, the British adopted the policy of ‘divide and rule’ in India; there were communal riots, mass killings, and rapes; the hatred between two communities increased to such an extent that it led to partition of the country. The British departed after fleecing all the wealth from India and ruining it completely, but they made sure that their way of life, their language, and their rules-regulations were taken as word of God by the people of their former colony, their ex-subjects, even today. The Indians have not yet come out of the mindset where ‘whites’ and everything connected with them are considered superior; eloquence in English language is seen as a status symbol. Celebrating Valentine's day, Halloween etc is considered progressive and liberal, whereas celebrating the traditional customs and rituals is considered backward or even communal. It's not that the government cannot stop all this; It's not that the government cannot put an end to all types of terrorist activities and communal hatred spread by the fanatics, but there are powers, perhaps more powerful than the governments who want all this to continue for various reasons.

Social movements - including environmentalism, human rights, indigenous rights and feminist causes - extended themselves through NGOs; they sought to work around the restrictions of nation-states by forging transnational lines of financial, scientific and political support. Activities put pressure on their respective governments with these resources; national policies were also pressed to respond to international agreements… globalization came to mean an endorsement of international free trade and the outlawing of protected or public domestic economy. (Connell and Marsh 51)

So, no nation state can act in isolation or on its own because of the increased interconnection and interdependence towards each other. Whatever happens is one part of the world has an impact on this whole world. This has given the capitalist powers the rationale to interfere in the internal matters of a nation-states, especially those which have been former colonies falling into the category of developing nations; policies and laws are framed according to the global interest rather than the national ones because -

Interconnection to everything in the new globalism. And interconnection is created through circulation. Many through are said to circulate, ranging from people to money, cultures to information, and television program to international protocols to the process called globalization itself. 'Circulation' is in global rhetoric what the 'penetration' of capitalism was in certain kinds of marxist world systems theory... the way powerful institutions and ideas spread geographically and come to have an influence on distant places (Connell and Marsh 54).
The principle is the same; only the terminology has been changed to make the entire thing look like not rape. The capitalist powers have made effective use of the language to down tone the negative-ness that runs beneath the lucrative system of globalization:

The difference is significant; where ‘penetration’ always evolves a kind of rape, a forcing of some people’s powerful interests onto others people, ‘circulation’ calls forth images of healthy how of blood in the body and the stimulating, even-handed exchange of market place. (Ibid. 54)

In her book, The Algebra of Infinite Injustice Arundhati Roy demonstrates the ‘ritualistic slaughter of language’ used by these pro-penetration global powers: she shares her experience at the World Water Forum at The Hague in Holland, where the so-called experts were discussing privatization of the world’s water. One such over-enlightened soul said that though God had given them the rivers, He hadn’t put in the delivery systems, which was why they needed private enterprise. Roy says that, “ at The Hague I stumbled on a denomination, a sub-world, whose life’s endeavor was to mask intent… They breed and prosper in the space that lies between what they say and what they sell.”

The name of a military attack or operation of vengeance was given the name, ‘Enduring Freedom’, which only described what the population of Afghanistan (categorized as the last world) suffered and endured what the White House and Pentagon called ‘Freedom’. Likewise the word human casualties during such operations has conveniently been termed as ‘Collateral damage’. They will call the person who attacks the American people and property as terrorist, but the one who drives the Hindu Pundits out of their homes in Kashmir as Freedom fighters or militants, just because they are not affected by the killings of people in developing countries.

In the name of globalization, the capitalist powers want to control everything, not just this planet but even space. On earth they are in control of money, the land, the weapons that could destroy this planet a number of times, and now they are working towards controlling the water, and perhaps even air. By outsourcing all kinds of industrial manufacturing to the developing countries, they enjoy the privilege of pure air; but, they keep lecturing the developing countries on how to keep pollution in control. Just three years back, the world witnessed the horror of pandemic. The world was almost on the verge of having to buy oxygen to breathe. Though nobody knows for sure the real reason behind the spread of Covid 19, but there have been theories that the virus was manmade, and it leaked out of a laboratory. Moreover, the same capitalists forces had been funding the research on this dangerous virus in that specific laboratory. Why there could be truth in this theory is the fact that scientists could not find the natural source of this new virus; its composition was such which went against that of a virus with a natural source. Now, the question that rises is why are such experiments which can wipe out the human race being carried out, and funded at that. Is this again a case of, as Roy says, masking the intent? On the one hand, there is a rhetoric about saving the planet Earth and Nature, but on the other hand there is no stopping on production of biological weapons.

And Dr Fauci said in 2021 that he was “not convinced” that the virus originated naturally… Added to this is the unsubstantiated conspiracy theory long pushed… and repeated by Mao Ning at the foreign briefing on 1 March 2023 - suggesting the coronavirus was made and leaked from Fort Detrick in Fredrick, Maryland, about 80 km (50 miles) north of Washington DC. Once the centre of the US biological weapons program; Fort Detrick currently houses biomedical labs researching viruses including Ebola and smallpox. (Covid Origin: Why the Wuhan Lab-Leak Theory is so Disputed)

How even such disasters and conflicts are seen as opportunities of money making rather than calamities claiming thousands of human lives is described with clarity and precision by Naomi Klein in her essay, “The Rise of Disaster Capitalism”, published in the Nation magazine where she notes:

the emergence of predatory forms of disaster capitalism that use destruction, desperation, and fear created by military and or natural catastrophe to engage in extreme make-over and push through privatization options for reconstruction of public infrastructure… such massive social and economic engineering under-girded by World Bank loans are a central figure of the new ‘militarization of economy’. Within the logic of this no-holds barred capitalism, military warfare and natural disasters present ‘opportunities’ [...] for the overthrowing of old barriers. All barriers (old infrastructure) are forcibly removed in order to turn space into ‘a blank slate on which neoliberals can design their dream economy: fully privatized, foreign-owned, and open for business. (11)

In view all this the nation-state’s role gets considerably reduced: instead of acting on its own according to the situation at hand, it works with the mega-corporations as a ‘manager’ doing ‘what it takes’ (whether it is conducting military warfare or using public resources or producing propaganda or introducing massive structural adjustment policies on a global scale or applying economic sanctions) to give US-based corporations market dominance. And George Ritzer in his book, The McDonaldization Thesis while there may continue to be global diversity, eventually all cultures will be affected by American exports: America will become virtually everyone’s “second culture”. (89)

Now a question that comes to mind is why are the global capitalist powers indirectly controlling even the countries where there are elected governments to take care of their issues? Capitalist powers have ensured that the economy can interfere in the politics of a country, but the politics should keep away from the economy and concept of ‘free trade’. British historian Lord Acton says that ‘power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.’ So, are these capitalists transnational corporations all that powerful
that they have that sense of superiority over others in the world; assuming this they have voluntarily taken it upon themselves to supervise the working and functioning of the world. Rutger Bregman rightly points out in his book *Humankind: A Hopeful History*:

One of the effects of power, myriad studies show, is that it makes you see others in a negative light. If you are powerful, you are more likely to think most people are lazy and unreliable. They need to be supervised and monitored, managed and regulated, censored and told what to do. And because power makes you feel superior to other people, you’ll believe that all this monitoring should be entrusted to you…Here we see a nocebo in action: treat people as if they are stupid and they’ll start to feel stupid, leading rulers to resign that the masses are too dim to think for themselves and hence they - with their vision and insight - should take charge. (229-30)

References