

STATE VULNERABILITY – A BABYLON OF GLOBALIZATION¹

Andreea TRANDAFIR²
Anda TAROPA-IACOB³

ABSTRACT:

THIS PAPER SEEKS TO CONTRIBUTE TO UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEX PHENOMENON OF GLOBALIZATION AND ITS EFFECTS OVER THE VULNERABLE STATES. ONE USED AN AMPLE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF DOCUMENTS RELATED TO GLOBALIZATION AND STATE VULNERABILITY AS TWO EXPANSIVE PHENOMENA AND MULTIFACETED CONCEPTS. THE ARTICLE ATTEMPTS TO MAKE A GENUINELY DISTINCTIVE ARGUMENT GROUNDED IN ACADEMIC LITERATURE BY BRINGING CONCEPTUAL CLARITY TO THESE TWO TOPICAL ISSUES AND ASSESSING THE THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF GLOBALIZATION OVER VULNERABLE STATES. THE APPROACH OF THESE ISSUES GIVES A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE TO GLOBALIZATION, BY REVEALING ITS NEGATIVE EFFECTS, AND IT CONTRIBUTES TO EMPHASIZING THE NATURE OF VULNERABLE STATES UNDER LACK OF SECURITY AND SOCIAL UNREST.

KEYWORDS: GLOBALIZATION, STATE VULNERABILITY, CONCEPTS,
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² Doctorand și Cadru didactic asociat, Facultatea de Filosofie și Științe Social-Politice, Universitatea “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iași, tandreea@gmail.com

³ Doctorand și Cadru didactic asociat, Facultatea de Filosofie și Științe Social-Politice, Universitatea “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iași, anda.taropa@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

In the first instance, globalization is an objective process and a contemporary world developing phenomenon, a process based upon a series of impersonal reasons and with a high potential of changing the world. From this point, one may draw some different perspectives. As the assimilation in global society, maintaining the capacity and the possibility of implication in the decision-making process is challenged at a local, community and social level. The globalization's effects are discreet and consequent, shaping extraordinary opportunities and bringing a huge progress in certain fields. This progress is far from being uniformed, sometimes, globalization getting to induce powerful tensions among social and economic structures, which cannot adjust to the fast pace. The substantial growth from developing world, has got millions people out of poverty, but the same globalization has led to more complex and interconnected threats, accelerating the power shifts and emphasizing the uneven values.

Due to the polyvalent globalization phenomenon, one has chosen the approach of this issue, from a state vulnerability perspective, the latter being an old but not obsolete problem. Starting from the assumption according to which globalization strongly induces state performance, this study has overdrawn this idea, at last, one observing that vulnerable states have different ideologies, histories and forms of governments. From conceptual approaches to practical implications, both globalization and vulnerable states go through different filters of analysis, and the result of this process is the sum of a significant number of theories, collocated with factual arguments related to the forms of expression of the two phenomena. The multifaceted state vulnerability is a result of globalization, the dispersion of power being an effect of the latter, as well as a determiner agent of state fragility.

GLOBALIZATION – CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES AND SIGNIFICANCE OF A GLOBAL (IZED) CONCEPT

Globalization, this poorly defined term and concept, but which defines and redefines itself during its own ascension, imposes an economic and political reality that comes to metamorphose mentalities, cultural and human relations, the lifestyle of individuals, everything in a time that no longer has patience for those necessary explorations and precautions that allowed so far in the history, the appeasement and selective adaptations in a

framework of homogeneous and stable socio-cultural identities. Globalization involves a significant challenge and, in the belief of many visions, it represents a sort of Trojan horse that will not only bring economic prosperity and the possibility of developing projects on an international scale, but it will also bring many negative-to-detestable issues. Beyond a general view, the phenomenon seems to pose itself as a unit impossible to include and explain, with parts, components and microelements, whose classification could hardly elucidate the ambiguous nature of the huge process in which they are integrated. Ulrich Beck was certainly right seeing globalization as the “*word most commonly used and abused, the least often defined and perhaps the most misunderstood, nebulous and politically spectacularly, of the past and future years*”⁴.

At least over the last 5000 years, globalization has accompanied the written and unwritten history of human civilization, nonetheless, the contemporary globalization's matrix is the result of a social, economic, political, cultural and technological context, characterized by a faster assimilation of the overall condition of humanity. In an implicit manner, Anton Carpinski noticed in his work, *Culture Recognition*, that space-time compression has led to the consciousness of over-territoriality and past, future and present thrills, in a continuous over-space and over-time being. Therefore, from an ontological perspective, globalization is the awareness of “*becoming into being*” of human existences' diversity⁵.

The lack of a definition that would coagulate an extended agreement on the phenomenon, lies in the fact that globalization sub-includes in an organic manner, many complex processes, with a variable and inconsistent dynamic. The frequency and wide use have resulted in placing the concept in a form of obsolescence, to which are consequently allocated every motion and change from the reference fields of human activity.

Lato sensu, globalization describes a social trend, which strongly enhances relations between societies and nations, a process whereby decisions, events and activities in the world carry much weight on other distant parts of the world, involving “*increased social relations around the world, linking distant localities in such a way that local events are*

⁴ Ulrich Beck, *Ce este globalizarea? Erori ale globalismului – răspunsuri la globalizare*, (București: Trei, 2003), 37.

⁵ Anton Carpinski „Globalization and Multiculturalism. Towards a New Paradigm: The Comprehensive Politics”, în *The Challenges of Multiculturalism in Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. Sandu Frunză, Nicu Gavriluță, Michael S. Jones (Cluj Napoca: Provopress, 2005), 22-23.

shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa"⁶. Globalization determines the multiplication of interactions between states and the creation of common standards, enabling them an acceleration of the process of modernization. It is a complex phenomenon that encompasses the entire spectrum of human activities, geographical distance being compressed and no longer an impediment for economic, political, military, or cultural relations between states. Globalization is an irreversible process as well, which essentially changes the means of communication and trade between states, union states, regional and international organizations, or individuals, as members of social groups.

Legitimized by the objective need of development and democracy, and also by the need of justification of "desired change to political and economic levels" and "staging of political transformation"⁷, globalization systematizes a process in which interdependence leads to enormous implications, forcing states to cooperate in order to achieve their goals and serve its interests⁸. For example, different analysts define the phenomenon as a "stage of capitalism", as a "late modernism" or "new thinking", without specifying their meaning. Many of the proposed definitions sin thus and so, either by the minimalist approach - reducing the phenomenon only to its economic manifestations, either by excessive generalizations - invariably attaching it to all modern changes occurred in human society.

GLOBALIZATION AND THE DISPERSION OF THE POWER

The effects of globalization are multiple, asymmetrical and often difficult to identify, which may lead to a full integration and assimilation, unconditioned by the societies of several countries or to certain reluctance, even hostility, in their acceptance by others. The economic effects interfere the political, military, cultural, religious, social, demographic and /or environmental sphere. The consequences are both positive and negative, such as the very process that generates them can unite or divide humanity. Analysts come into notice the fact that the intense progress that globalization generates in various areas is patchy and with strong fluctuations. Moreover, globalization makes hardly adjusting economic and social structures, to reach extreme tension and thus, causing major conflicts. Those economically

⁶ Anthony Giddens, *Runaway world: how globalization is reshaping our lives* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 345.

⁷ Ernst-Otto Czempiel, *Regionalisierung und Globalisierung – Herausforderungen der deutschen Außenpolitik*, accessed Mai, 12, 2010, www.dadalos.org/globalisierungrom/grundkurs-2/regionalisierung.htm

⁸ Robert Gilpin, *Economia mondială în secolul XXI. Provocarea capitalismului global* (Iași: Polirom, 2004), 24.

and socially frustrated may resort to various means of protest, benefiting from the support of modern technologies. In this sense, the great challenge for the humanity in the era of globalization is given by the attempt to reduce social cohesion weakening sources, the sense of frustration of groups and communities and misunderstandings arising between civilizations⁹.

The current security environment is characterized by the emergence of new types of threats and risks. Globalization has facilitated the "intimate contact" of different cultures, this cross generating for them, dangerous phenomena such as organized crime, religious fundamentalism or terrorism. The regional and global security can be exposed to unconventional asymmetric risks that may arise from all forms of political and international terrorism (nuclear, chemical, biological and informatics), from imagological actions designed to deliberately damage a country's external image and form deliberate provocation of actions that may cause ecological disasters. Besides the risk factors, security may be affected by domestic vulnerabilities that can take different forms. The main vulnerabilities can be represented by phenomena such as lack of resources allocated to public institutions, deepening social inequalities, proliferation of black economy and increased corruption, economic crime, disturbing public order, the possibility of environmental disasters and natural disasters, low maintenance information infrastructure or/and the potential high mass emigration in case of uncontrolled socio-economic phenomena and processes¹⁰.

THE MULTIFACETED STATE VULNERABILITY

The globalization generates unification and disunion forces alike. For some, the processes subsumed to globalization represent an extraordinary opportunity for prosperity, peace and consolidation of democracy, while the others rather see a prodigious potential of conflict, derived from the unleashed corporate power, which does not take account for whole civilizations. These conflicting forces operate to both interstate level and within states. Globalization does not allow the states to live by themselves. On the one hand, the populations consider the need of being represented and administered on the international

⁹ Daniel Dăianu, „Globalizarea: între elogi și respingere”, în *Dilema*, 462/2002

¹⁰ Eugen Bădălan, „România în noul mediu de securitate după Summit-ul de la Istanbul”, in *Surse de instabilitate la nivel regional și global. Implicații pentru România*, Coord. Constantin Moștofleu, (București: Edit. Universității Naționale de Apărare, 2004), 15.

scene. On the other hand, the evolutions from one side of the world have a speedy unexpected impact on the other side.

One of these challenges is determined by the multifaceted state vulnerability and by its dual nature. On the one hand, the vulnerability is a state peculiarity, a pejorative appropriation which localizes that given entity into a regressive hierarchy. On the other hand, state vulnerability is an association of terms, a conceptual construction which bounds to explain at a theoretical level, the concern of a state under decline. The multifaceted fragility is explained by two issues: at a global level, it is a broadcast phenomenon– including in developing states – and it pathologically expands itself over the economy, political class and society of a state. Like theorizing the globalization phenomenon, the state vulnerability concept is frequently approached either through a trifled perspective, being constantly associated to the economic status of a country, or through an excessive generalization – any state assessment indicator may encompass a source of fragility.

In the scientific research universe, the weak condition of a state is approached as a problem. Thus, there is a series of problematic states which negatively bear upon their belonging regions, being unable to gear to the international community. In particular, states from Africa (as Sudan, Somalia, Egypt) are marked by intense inter-ethnic conflicts and repercussive upon their border regions, states from the Middle East (Syria, Yemen, Iraq) manage to extend their actions in bordering territories, due to the encouragement and proliferation of terrorism, or Kosovo, which generates powerful tensions in Western Balkans. Likewise, in Central America, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua are problematic states, encouraging the transboundary crime through its high level of illicit substances.

Regarding the seriousness and rise of vulnerable states, there are different opinions, being identified different placements in terms of space and time, according to the association of various circumstances which have marked the political world history. Francis Fukuyama claims the rise of weak states during the Cold War¹¹. During that period, the bipolarity actors have sustained the other states in order to gain their trust, but maintaining them on the same hierarchy scale. Excepting the United States and Soviet Union, no other state has detained a strong military structure. Western states' allies have tasted a considerable ascension after the end of the Cold War, while Soviet Union's allies have stagnated or they have met a decline,

¹¹ Francis Fukuyama, *Construcția statelor - ordine mondială în secolul XXI* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), 92.

thus, a major imbalance has been created among international relations. The sovereignty, unity and integrity were ‚Fata Morgana’ type values, for that matter, the states dominated by those two powers have later learnt that precursory mutual rivalry of bloody conflicts will be a burden in their political future¹². Jeffrey Herbst associates fragile states with the decline of imperialism and colonialism¹³. Most of postcolonial states used to mismanage a multicultural society, where religious and ethnic identities were not negotiable. The lack of negotiations has generated for states as Sudan, Nigeria, South Africa etc., a series of civil wars and intense inter-ethnic conflicts¹⁴. Another circumstance associated with state vulnerability is the well-known event from September 11, 2001. According to Sebastain von Einsendel, the terrorist attack has again brought the problem of fragile states and insecurity generators, on the international scene. A double relation of causality may be identified in this case. On the one hand, terrorist manifestations may often encompass a vulnerable element of a state by weakening the society and the interpersonal relations. On the other hand, vulnerable states are often perceived as sources of terrorist-like manifestations. The justification of violence is typical of societies and communities incapable in managing the various encountered challenges.

Vulnerable states confront themselves with economic and political incoherence¹⁵. On the one side, these states must deal with a high level of corruption, a limited capital accumulation and low incomes for a level of subsistence. In terms of political sphere, all vulnerable states deal with a political crisis, several successful or controlled attempts of violating the rule of law, political rivalries which may lead to political violence and/or a lethargic attitude of government in fulfilling statehood duties.

The term vulnerable state usually refers to states from Africa, Middle East and Central America. As yet, one has neglected the fact that fragility phenomenon does not limit itself around the aforementioned regions. Developing states also deal with various crises which gradually lead to a degradation of the state system. For instance, the financial crisis has determined many European Union states to impose austerity measures, unpopular enough for questioning their legitimacy. The same European states deal with a mismanaged

¹² Martin Doornbos et. al., “Fragile States or Failing Models? Accounting for the Incidence of State Collapse”, *Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior*, Working Paper 19, 5-6.

¹³ Jeffrey Herbst, “Let Them Fail: State Failure in Theory and Practice” in *When states fail: causes and consequences*, ed. Robert Rotberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 304.

¹⁴ Monty G. Marshall, “Major Episodes of Political Violence”, accessed April, 29, 2012, <http://www.systemicpeace.org/warlist.htm>

¹⁵ Daniel Bromley and Glen Anderson, *Vulnerable People, Vulnerable States* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 2.

multicultural society, given the separatist attempts from states as Spain, United Kingdom, Belgium, Romania etc. Another vulnerable states feature consists of violation of human rights. Although, democratic states promote the respect of human rights, none of which entirely guarantees this issue. Social movements from several European states have confirmed the assumption according to which democracy is not flawless and they have proved that economic and social rights may be violated under economic pressure, generating civil disobedience. Three myths have been removed in this context: vulnerable states are only constructs of imperialism and colonialism, state vulnerability is the result of dictatorship and vice-versa, and all vulnerable states are poor.

There are numerous criteria of classification of vulnerable states, fact that emphasizes the manifold valences and indicators of vulnerability. The first indicator is the government's performance of a given state. The vulnerable state is unable in maintaining both "soft" and "hard" infrastructure on ordinary grounds, being also limited in providing public goods. Under these considerations, Patrick Stewart advances a classification of weak states according to their 'capacity and will as dimensions of state weakness'¹⁶. There are relatively good performers, weak but willing states, unresponsive and repressive states and weak and not willing states. The first category involves first-stage vulnerability states (the financial crisis bringing several states under the sign of relativity in terms of development). The second category involves states lacking in capital resources, security and legitimacy, such as Mozambique, East Timor, South Soudan etc. Burma, Zimbabwe or Libya are examples of corrupt and repressive states and Sudan, Haiti or Somalia, are identified as being weak and unwilling in providing basic goods related to statehood.

Globalization's determinations detect the process *per se*, as a growing interdependence worldwide, as an expansion of domination and dependency as a global process of economic and social life homogenization, as a diversification of territorial communities' private framework, but also as a proliferation of insecurity and fragmentation sources. Within this context, Patrick Stewart advances another classification of vulnerable states, according to their insecurity factors. The basic indicators are related to terrorism, drugs and weapons trafficking, humanitarian crises, territorial conflicts, epidemic diseases, uncontrolled migrations etc. A particularity has been extracted from the category of states named "sites of

¹⁶ Patrick Stewart, "Weak States and Global Threats", *The Washington Quarterly*, 29 (2006): 30-31.

ongoing U.S. combat and reconstruction efforts”¹⁷, relevant examples being stated as Iraq or Afghanistan. All these aforementioned categories interconnect themselves. For instance, Sudan is a weak and not willing state, being in the same time, a generator of atrocities and humanitarian crises. And then along, Haiti shares the same issue as Sudan, but it is also a source of uncontrolled migrations.

According to World Bank, vulnerable states are called “Low-Income Countries Under Stress” (LICUS). Their assessment is based on several economic parameters, such as: economic management, fiscal policy, structural policies, social insertion/equity policies, public sector management and institutional system. The results of the assessments have given rise to another classification of states. Therefore, there are fragile states “in essence” (Angola, Burundi, Eritrea, Congo, Sudan), severely fragile states (Afghanistan, Central African Republic) and marginal states (Somalia, Zimbabwe).

Thus far, this typology aggregation proves that state vulnerability delineate a complex and ambiguous phenomenon, being unlikely the existence of a universal definition. Susan Rice claims that “weak states differ significantly”¹⁸, by analyzing states according to their level of sustainability and governments’ commitment. The first indicator involves the postcolonial states’ evolution or those emerging totalitarianism (Rwanda, Nigeria, Sudan) and the situation of states involved in a civil war or intense conflict with other state (Israel, Somalia, Iraq). The second indicator refers to the doctrines promoted by governments, emphasizing the fragile democracies (Mali, Senegal) and autocracies (North Korea, Zimbabwe). This classification underlines the complexity of vulnerability as a phenomenon, with the intention of settling down the sources of weakness.

In terms of violence, there are also states emerging, involved or prone to a civil war or interstate conflict¹⁹. Peter Wallenstein suggests two interesting concepts in order to emphasize the type of states unable in providing basic public goods, calling them “under-consolidated” states, and those representing a danger for their citizens have been called ‘over-extended states’²⁰. At this rate, one have attempted to approach a different perspective, but in verity, this classification is similar to the one advanced by Patrick Stewart.

¹⁷ Stewart, “Weak States and Global Threats”, 32.

¹⁸ Susan Rice, “Poverty Breeds Insecurity” In *Too poor for peace? : global poverty, conflict, and security in the 21st century*”, eds. Lael Brainard și Derek Chollet (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2007), 37.

¹⁹ Larry Diamond, “Promoting Democracy in Post-Conflict and Failed States: Lessons and Challenges”, *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 2 (2006): 94-95.

²⁰ Peter Wallenstein, “State Failure, Ethnocracy and Democracy: New Conceptions of Governance” (paper presnted at *Failed States* Conference, Purdue University, West Lafayette February 25-27, 1998).

Vulnerable states are assessed, studied and examined, in order to find several solutions of recovery. Unless some states fail in removing the virus which keeps them down, they can reach collapse, as Somalia did. In theory, collapsed states are the signs of breaking law and order. The collapse is detected when a state does not fulfil its functions, becoming lethargic and effete²¹. Society is the inherent state element, but its vulnerability is not equivalent to state fragility. Societal collapse is a break of social coherence which occurs when society, as a generator of cohesion institutions and support, it is no longer able in creating, unifying and articulating the request on whose basis, the state has been consolidated²². Therefore, a failing society may induce a failing state, unless one does not detect it in a timely fashion.

Martin Doornbos confirms the peculiarity of complex display of state vulnerability, by advancing a set of theories related to problematic state, which covers economic, political and social issues. Thus, the first theory associates vulnerability to dictatorship occurred under the low-level living standard (Mobutu in Congo, Barre in Somalia, Amin in Uganda, Duvalier in Haiti). Another sign of state fragility is the political violence which determines the institutions' irrelevance and implicitly the lack of legitimacy. In terms of the economy, the living standard is low, leading to an institutional decline, as happened in Albania during the pyramidal games or in Rwanda before the genocide. Likewise, the general bankruptcy generated by the violation of economic and social rights²³, leads to a high level of vulnerability, affecting the population.

All these classifications configure the complex nature of globalization as a process, phenomenon and human activity, historically determined and generating new conceptual challenges for international relations.

CONCLUSIONS

Globalization and state vulnerability phenomenon are two soundly interconnected elements. Both theoretical constructions of these two concepts (both developing a strong ambiguity grade due to their different theorizing relations and crystallized definitions in

²¹ William Zartman, "Introduction: Posing the Problem of State Collapse", in *Collapsed states: the Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, ed. William Zartman (London: Lynne Rienner, 1995), 5-6.

²² Göran Hydén, *Beyond Ujamaa and Tanzania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 14.

²³ Martin Doornbos, "State collapse and fresh starts", In *State failure, collapse and reconstruction*", ed. Jennifer Milliken (Malden: Blackwell, 2003), 52.

different academic spheres and different spatial and temporal localizations) and their practical implications in different regions and fields, cause an intermission, developing a causality relation. Globalization is not directly responsible for the rise of vulnerable states, but it has a strong impact over the agents that determine the process of state fragility. The divergent evolution of social aggregates, which is at variance with the globalization's premises, may supply large confrontations on international arena. Especially in a world where information technologies enable us to interact directly in real time, to compare ourselves, and where different interests (usually antagonistic) lie, the dialog may be easily replaced by confrontation. Those economically, culturally and ideologically frustrated people, may use new means of protest against the effects of modern technology. For the nonce, the big challenge of globalization and for humankind is finding a solution in order to reduce these sources of fragmentation and weakening of social cohesion, of frustration among some groups and communities, and implementing several economic recovery strategies in the benefit of the poor states.

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