

Original Paper

Multipolarism and Neoliberal Globalization

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Abstract

In this article, I argue that in the age of neoliberal (postindustrial) globalization identity politics, the reification and commodification of (serial) identity practices, cultures, and “all of the accoutrements of the economy of spectacle and the manufacturing of images and fetish desires,” on the one hand, and the continuous atomization of the human subject in (neo) liberalism on the other are mechanisms for creating surplus-value and continuing capitalism’s domination over the world in the era of climate change. These two dialectical practices are offset by an emerging call for a multipolar world order undergirded by a nationalism grounded in Karl Polanyi’s double movement.

Keywords

ideological domination, intersectionality, embourgeoisement, black Underclass, black bourgeoisie, social class language game, dialectic, antidialectic

1. Introduction

Neoliberalism represents a resurgence of political economic liberalism in the Western world following the fall of global communism in the 1990s. Globalization (1970s-2000s) is the imperial attempt of the West, under American hegemony, to integrate and colonize the world around the juridical framework of liberalism, which emanates out of the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism, at the expense of all other forms of system and social integration. Hence, contemporary globalization represents a Durkheimian mechanicalization of the world via the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism under American (neoliberal) hegemony. The power elites, the upper-class of owners and high-level executives, rentier oligarchs, of the latter (American hegemon) serves as an imperial agent seeking to interpellate and embourgeois the masses or multitudes of the world to the juridical framework of the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism, and in the age of (neoliberal) capitalist globalization and climate change this is done within the dialectical processes of two forms of fascism or system/social integration: 1) right-wing neoliberalism; and 2) (neo) liberal identity politics masquerading as cosmopolitanism or hybridization “enframed” by a cashlessness pegged to the US dollar backed by Saudi Arabian oil

(Mocombe, 2023). Both forms of system and social integration represent two sides of the same fascistic coin in the age of (neoliberal) globalization and climate change even though proponents of the latter position view the former antagonistically. In fact, the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) nations' attempt to institute a multipolar world against American hegemony, under Russian and Chinese tutelage, is not a counterhegemonic move, in the socialist/economic sense, to challenge the constitution of neoliberal capitalism on a global scale; instead, it is a right-wing response, at the global level, to exercise national capitalism, traditionalism, economic autarky, against the identity politics and free-trade mantra of the left promulgated by American hegemonic forces under neoliberal globalization and identity politics. In the latter sense, it is culturally counterhegemonic but not economically.

On the one hand, in other words, (neo)liberal globalization represents the right-wing (reactionary) attempt to homogenize (converge) the nations of the globe into the overall market-orientation, i.e., private property, individual liberties, and entrepreneurial freedoms, of the capitalist world-system through the retrenchment of the nation-state system, right-wing nationalism, austerity, privatization, and protectionism. This (neo) liberalization process is usually juxtaposed, on the other hand, against the free-trade mantra, narcissistic exploration of self, sexuality, and identity of the left, which converges with the (neo) liberalizing process via the diversified consumerism of the latter groups as they seek equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution with white agents of the former within their market (finance) logic. Both positions, the convergence of the right and the hybridization of the left, are (antagonistically) dialectically related in the age of neoliberal globalization under American hegemony. Private property, individual liberties, diversified consumerism, and the entrepreneurial freedoms of the so-called marketplace become the mechanisms of system and social integration for both groups even though the logic of the marketplace is exploitative, environmentally hazardous, and impacting the climate of the material resource framework, i.e., the earth, which often requires the protectionist fascists of the right of the dialectic to intervene, in keeping with the "double movement" thesis of Karl Polanyi (2001 [1944]), against the radical (neo) liberalism of the so-called left representing freedoms to and identity politics.

In this work, I posit that the call by Russia and other BRICS nations for Multipolarism undergirded by nationalism and traditionalism is a Polanyian (cultural) counter movement against the liberal push coming out of the West for neoliberal globalization and identity politics, and not an international socialist (economic) movement necessary to offset its exploitative and climate change problematics. This global Polanyian response by the BRICS nations promotes traditionalism, state-nationalism, and economic autarky backed by a multipolar world order with different states dominating different regions of the world against the exploitation and iconoclasm of the neoliberalism and identity politics of the West and America serving as the hegemon of the globalist order. In this sense, the Polanyian movement is culturally hegemonic but not economically. On top of the cultural movement, there is a need to push for an economic move towards what Mocombe (2020) calls "libertarian communism" with an emphasis on subsistence living and balance and harmony between the social and environmental world in order to

avert the exploitation and climate change problematics of neoliberal globalization.

2. Background of the Problem

Theoretically, “culture of globalization” and the “globalization as culture” metaphors represent two sociological approaches to understanding this contemporary dialectical postmodern struggle between convergence and hybridization within neoliberal globalization (1970s-2000s) amidst its exploitative and climate-change problematics. These two sociopolitical understandings regarding the origins and nature of globalization, as Kevin Archer et al (2007) points out, have “set off a vigorous and at times rancorous debate within the social sciences” (2007, p. 2). On one side of the debate you have theorists who emphasize the “culture of globalization,” its convergence, and argue the idea that “the constitutive role of culture is critical for grasping the continued hegemony of capitalism in the form of globalization...Culture, they assert is increasingly being co-opted and deployed as a new accumulation strategy to broaden and deepen the frontiers of capitalism and to displace its inherent crisis tendencies” (Archer, 2007, pp. 2-3). In a word, in the continual hegemonic quest of capitalism to homogenize the conditions of the world to serve capital, globalization, in the eyes of “culture of globalization” theorists, represents a stage of capitalism’s development highlighted by the commodification of culture, diversified consumerism, as a means for accumulating profits from the purchasing and consuming power of a multiethnic, multiracial, and multigender transnational class of administrative bourgeoisies and professional cosmopolitan elites in core, semi-periphery, and periphery nation-states who subscribe to the social integrative (agential) norms of (neo)liberal bourgeois Protestantism (hard work, economic gain, political and economic liberalism, consumption, etc.). This “culture-of-globalization” understanding of globalization or the postmodern condition in late capitalist development is a well-supported position, which highlights, in the twenty-first century, the continued hegemony of capitalism in the form of globalization (Giddens, 1990; Harvey, 2015; Jameson, 1991).

“Globalization-as-culture” theorists, who emphasize hybridization, outrightly reject this socioeconomic position or interpretation underlying the emergence and processes of globalization. They believe “that globalization is marked by the hollowing out of national cultural spaces either consequent upon the retrenchment of the nation state or because culture continues to be a relatively autonomous sphere” (Archer et al., 2007, p. 2). That is, “[f]or the “globalization-as-culture” group...culture is not that easily enjoined due to its inherent counter-hegemonic properties vis-à-vis neo-liberal globalization. Rather, for this group..., contemporary globalization is not merely economic, but a system of multiple cultural articulations which are shaped by disjunctive space-time coordinates. In other words, globalization is as much if not more the product of inexorable and accelerated migratory cultural flows and electronic mass mediations beyond the space-time envelopes of the nation-state system and the successive socio-spatial fixes of global capitalism” (Archer et al., 2007, p. 4). In fact, culture, in many instances, serves as a counter-hegemonic movement to (neo) liberal capitalism as a governing “rational” system. This line of thinking is best exemplified in the works of Stuart Hall (1992), John Tomlinson (1999),

Homi Bhabha (1994), and Edward Said (1993) among many others (Mocombe, 2023). For these theorists, cultural exchanges are never one-dimensional, and hybridization of culture in many instances serves as a counter-hegemonic force to the homogenization processes of global capital. That is, as postcolonial hybrids in their encounter with their former colonizers negative dialectically convict the former colonial powers for not identifying with the lexicons of signification of their enlightenment ethos, the hybrid identity is counter-hegemonic as they seek equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution with their white counterparts as an ethnic *other* (Bhabha, 1994).

3. Theory and Method

Building on Mocombe's (2019) structuration theory, phenomenological structuralism, which views human social action as a duality and dualism tied to social structure the (reified) contents or social facts (the mode of production, language, ideology, ideological apparatuses, and communicative discourse) of which human actors internalize and recursively organize and reproduce as their practical consciousness for their ontological security, I view this debate between the advocates of the "globalization-as-culture" and the "culture-of-globalization" hypotheses as a fruitless debate grounded in a false ontological and epistemological understanding regarding the origins and nature of the fascist (neo) liberal capitalist system that gives rise to the processes of globalization under American hegemony. Both groups ontologically and epistemologically assume that the origins of capitalism and its discursive practice are grounded in the dialectic of reason and rationality, thus drawing on the liberal distinction between capitalism as a public and neutral system of rationality, arrived at through ego-centered communicative discourse, which stands apart from the understanding of it as a private sphere or lifeworld cultural form grounded in the ontology of the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism as argued by Max Weber (1905). The latter metaphysical position, if assumed by both schools, is a point of convergence that resolves their opposition, and gives a better understanding regarding the origins and nature of the processes of globalization and counter movements to what are in fact metaphysical cultural forces, which ought to be changed for the salvage of humanity and all life on earth (Mocombe, 2012). That is to say, both schools of thought are putting forth the same convergence argument within a Polanyian "double movement," the culture of globalization position from a Marxian systems integration perspective and the globalization as culture position from a Weberian social integration perspective.

For the culture of globalization position cultural practices are homogenized to integrate within the rational rules or systemicity of capitalist relations of production and consumption at the world-system level so as to generate surplus-value from the financialization and consumption of cultural products as commodities in core nations (America, Western Europe, Australia, Canada, and Japan), industrial production in semi-periphery nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), and agricultural production in periphery nations (the rest of the world). Reactionary protectionist measures, i.e., nationalism, traditionalism, austerity, high tariffs, etc., from the right, in keeping with the countermovement thesis of Polanyi, are necessary when capitalist crises and iconoclasm jeopardize

the social relations of the empire or hegemon of the world-system and elsewhere.

The globalization as cultural group suggests that in the process of acculturating social actors to the organization of work within the capitalist world-system, homogenization or convergence does not take place. Instead, in the process of integration within the world-system, cultural groups, given the autonomous nature of the cultural sphere, intersubjectively defer meaning in ego-centered communicative discourse to hybridize the lexicons of significations coming out of the globalization process thereby maintaining their cultural forms not in a commodified form but as a class-for-itself seeking to partake in the global community, via the retrenchment of the nation-state, as hybrid social actors governed by the (neo) liberal rational logic of the marketplace without discrimination. Hence, there is no need for a Polanyian countermovement as culture, in this sense, is an autonomous sphere, and comes to serve as the counter-hegemonic force against the processes of (neo) liberal capitalism.

The two positions are not mutually exclusive, however, and when synthesized via Mocombe's (2019) theory of phenomenological structuralism—which combines system and social integration via the duality of structurationism and negates culture as an autonomous sphere—and Karl Polanyi's concept of double movement, highlight the same fascistic position, neoliberal globalization, under American hegemony, contemporarily, represents the homogenization, i.e., convergence, of social discourse and action via hybridization amidst its exploitation and climate change effects. This fascistic movement was and is countered, over time, by a reactionary and fascistic (Polanyian counter) protectionism in light of the crises, exploitation, displacement, migration, resource exhaustion, climate change, and identity politics, brought on by the free-trade and integrationist (identity politics or hybridization) movements of (neo) liberalism.

Following the Protestant Reformation and the rise of Protestants to positions of power within the Westphalian nation-state system all social actors were interpellated and socialized via Protestant churches to be obedient workers so as to obtain economic gain via the labor market. Be that as it may, the church and the labor market (via education) became the defining institutions or ideological apparatuses for socializing social actors as both Protestant agents and agents of and for capital. That is, individuals, Protestant agents, with a work ethic that would allow them to pursue economic gain via their labor in a market as either agents for capital, laborer, or agents of capital, administrative bourgeoisie. The relationship, therefore, between the Protestant ethic and the capitalization of labor or the constitution of the labor market are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they were and are necessary components for constituting a capitalist society under the metaphysical discourse of Protestantism, and its discursive practice, capitalism. The Protestant Ethic and God, in a word, legitimated the organization of social actors as laborers, and the labor market was constituted to ensure that workers were rewarded, accordingly, to ensure that the discursive practices of the labor market were in line with the metaphysical discourse of the Protestant ethic.

What the two sociological approaches to understanding globalization have done is to separate the dialectic and theorize their respective positions from opposite sides of the dialectic, the culture of

globalization scholars from the side of labor organization (forces of production) and practices; and the globalization as culture people from the side of social integration (social relations of production). The “culture of globalization” scholars identify the economic practices by which Protestant agents organized and organize social practices the world over to socialize individuals to become “agents of and for capital” for the purpose of generating surplus value or economic gain for capital. In a word, the organization of work and its relation to the desires of capital is the dominating factor in understanding the processes of globalization for the culture of globalization group. Given the mutual constitution of the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism this latter position is not inaccurate as the labor market also serves to integrate the social actor as not only an agent of capital but also a Protestant agent, i.e., a worker who gains, status, upward economic mobility, etc. by being obedient and working hard.

For the globalization as culture scholars the emphasis is on understanding how national cultures avoid being both an agent of capital and a Protestant agent to successfully carve out a national space for their cultural practices, which are autonomous, within the globalizing process so as to achieve equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution with the agents of the globalizing power, America since World War II, which is seeking to integrate the multitude into the capitalist processes of globalization. This position is not an alternative to the culture of globalization group but is saying and doing the same thing. That is, in globalization under American hegemony the attempt of capital, the upper-class of owners and high-level executives, rentier oligarchs, operating predominantly out of the US is to have national cultures carve out national spaces, nation-states, within a global marketplace enframed by a cashlessness pegged to the US dollar wherein every group can have a comparative advantage disseminating their natural, cultural, and identity resources so as to accumulate economic gain for themselves and national and global capital under the umbrella of identity politics and diversified consumerism. So, through the commodification and financialization of natural and cultural resources and identities (their comparative advantage) for sale and consumption, diversified consumerism, on the labor market, global elites hybridize and universalize national discourse and discursive practices to serve capital accumulation in postindustrial societies.

Hybridized national cultures in this process are not counter-hegemonic they are converging to meet the desires of global capital operating in postindustrial economies with emphasis on servicing the financial wealth of a transnational multicultural (phenotypically, sexually, etc.) capitalist class. Their overt discourse is not, however, the economic (neo) liberalism of the globalizing power seeking to fascistically homogenize their practical consciousness to benefit global capital. On the contrary, identity politics or cosmopolitanism, i.e., respect for human rights of “the other” to participate as agents seeking equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution in the fascism of the neoliberal processes of the hegemonic power, is the *modus operandi* of the multicultural “other” elites (a professional managerial class for capital) in control of the ideology, ideological apparatuses, and communicative discourses of their nation-states.

It is this incessant (neoliberal) claim for equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution of the

successful socialized hybrid liberal bourgeois Protestant “other” agent of capital the “globalization as culture” left-wing scholars identify as being counter-hegemonic. This counter-hegemony highlighted by the “globalization as culture” camp is grounded in the fact that the hybrid liberal bourgeois Protestant is allowed, and seeks to, compete in the global capitalist marketplace as a hybrid elite or Protestant agent and agent of and for capital against the gaze of their former colonial masters. This agential moment of hybrid others to participate in the global organization of labor is not counter-hegemonic—as the purposive-rationale of these hybrid agents is economic gain for themselves as an ethnic, sexual, gendered, etc., other at the expense of their poor—but, contemporarily, represents the means by which Protestant agents, rentier oligarchs, operating out of the US attempt to universalize, interpellate, and embourgeois their purposive-rationale among the others of the world so as to generate economic gain/surplus value (for its postindustrial service industries) or what amounts to the same thing reproduce the Protestant capitalist social system globally amidst its debilitating effects, i.e., climate change, pollution, overproduction, resource exhaustion, and exploitation. The global other, via the language of identity politics of its elites, seeks to integrate within the systemicity of (neoliberal) globalization as an embourgeois other not to offer an alternative to it in the face of climate change, pollution, etc., associated with capital organization, accumulation, and exploitation; instead, their aims are for equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution.

These dual processes of neoliberalism and identity politics lead to crises (of opportunity, recognition, distribution, pollution, and climate change) in the hegemon (America), and elsewhere, of the world-system, which fosters reactionary right-wing nationalism to protect its population from the exploitation and economic crises of the left neoliberal integrationist movement clamoring for economic growth and equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution, however. That is, as the global (cultural) left, fascistically, embrace the neoliberal project, i.e., privatization, deregulation, etc., of the right for equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution identity struggles emerge, and the exploitation, displacement, resource wars, famine related to climate change, and overall environmental degradation forces the other to seek refuge in America, the imperial hegemon of globalization, and the West (and elsewhere) where right-wing protectionist nationalism emerges (on racial, ethnic, and national lines as opposed to economic ones) to combat the influx of refugees from periphery and semi-periphery countries throughout the globe escaping the capitalist discursive practices, initially released by the right for capital accumulation, and subsequently promoted by the left, via identity politics, for equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution. In the periphery and semi-periphery countries, where agriculture and industrial production dominates, respectively, Polanyian protectionist nationalism and traditionalism also emerge against the neoliberalism and identity politics of the hegemon, America, and its vassal states.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The call to multipolarism by Russia, China, and the rest of the world is grounded in this Polanyian (cultural) counterhegemonic and countermovement to American neoliberalism and identity politics and is not a socialist movement or libertarian communist move towards subsistence living and homeostasis between the social and natural world to avert the exploitation and climate change problematics of global capitalism. The former two threatens the nationalism and traditionalism of their agricultural and industrial societies, and in the place of identity politics and neoliberal policies, multipolarism calls for nationalism, mix economies with state control of natural resources, social welfare programs, and anti-identity politics especially those focus on sexual orientations. Hence a retrenchment of the nation-state system around nationalism and traditional values under the economic processes of Russia, China, and some emerging country in Africa, possibly South Africa if it can ever remove itself from the stranglehold of America and the West, is the call to order of multipolarism in neoliberal globalization under American hegemony. In that sense, multipolarism is culturally (in a reactive sense) counterhegemonic, but it avoids the economic push towards Mocombeian libertarian communism, which calls for subsistence living and balance and harmony between the social and environmental worlds, necessary to avoid the exploitative and climate change problematics of neoliberal and identity global capitalism under American hegemony.

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