

THE POST GLOABLIZATION UNDERSTANDING OF CONCEPT OF SOVEREIGNTY

Kiran Sami Memon*
Dr Aslam Pervez Memon†

Abstract

The present scenario of a globalized world is defined on the basis of sharing of powers amongst various kinds of actors. This sharing of power challenges the traditional concept of sovereignty and affects the power of state in different realms. Traditionally the concept of power is attached with the nation-state as its legitimate use, but after the inception of globalization institutions of various kinds now possess the authority to interfere into the business of state. The main difference between state and other institutions is that nation-state possesses sovereignty.

It is the sovereignty which makes nation-state distinct from other institutions. The concept of sovereignty is also affected from the changes of a global world. The article attempts to review the transformations emerging in the form of sovereign power of nation-state as a response to conceptional change in global politics.

Introduction

Authority or power of a state is particularly termed as sovereignty, which is an indispensable feature of state. Sovereignty has traditionally been associated with the institute of state as its legitimate user. The concept of sovereignty is a modern concept, born with the modern nation-state after the peace of Westphalia.

The hot debate regarding transformation in sovereign power of nation-state is being discussed widely. In present interdependent world, great economic and technological superiority of few states, political influence of transnational institutions and interference in state affairs has created a complex and sensitive scenario for the state. A nation-state has to survive amongst several powers in a

* Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Sindh, Jamshoro

† Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Sindh, Jamshoro

multi-polar world and define and secure its national interests on global level. In sum, the process of globalization has formed a very competitive environment for the states.

Nation-state is to be seen into a wide perspective operating amongst a variety of influential actors where state is part of a huge globalized entity rather than a locus of all activities as it was before onset of globalization.

The concept of sovereignty like any other theory cannot be the same in all ages. Changes like transformed concept of power, increased levels of technology and interactions amongst groups of people, multi-polar system, establishment of global institutions and their increased involvement in global politics have impacted the form and functions of state sovereignty.

“National governments are no longer the locus of power. Power is parceled out among different agents, national, regional, and international, public and private. The state now shares centre stage with other entities such as international organization like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, with non-governmental organizations like Green peace and Amnesty International, and with multinational corporations, or perhaps there is no longer a centre stage at all but rather multiplicity of sites, some real, some virtual, where global transactions are governed. Crises crossing structures of power and authority, conflicting interpretations of rights, interconnected legal structures have displaced “the nations of sovereignty as an illimitable, indivisible and exclusive form of public power”¹. (Held et.al.)

The world after globalization (since 1990) can be visualized as characterized by knowledge / information, scientific and technological advancements, liberalized economic system, strong democratic and liberal values, and influential global institutions. It has changed the concept of power and accordingly power centres of the world.

Globalization has brought two major changes in the concept of sovereignty:

Firstly, sovereignty that was specifically recognized with the institution of nation-state is now shared by various actors other than state. These actors are termed as non-state actors and are as influential as nation-state or even sometimes more than the state.

Secondly, the form of power has been changed. In Westphalia state system the concept of national power has always been recognized as military power. Superiority in armaments and military competence would decide the superpower of world. Now power of state is expressed in its economic strength and scientific / technological advancements.

In this regard Rosenau James. N his book *The Study of Global Interdependence* refers to two recent examples as indicative of profound changes coming in national power. First is the 'failure' of American 'power' in Vietnam. The other is the 'success' of Arab 'power' in the 1973-74 oil embargo.²

This depicts that concept of power is transforming from traditional military power to economic control. In every age abilities and techniques of power and control are different.

Before onset of globalization, the regulatory capacity of a nation-state depend on its military power. Globalization has changed the concept and parameters of power and so as the national power. The importance of military power as only solution to any problem amongst states has been decreased. In a world where problems and goals are common, and cooperation support and mutual assistance are the important organizing elements of the order then resorting to military action in all matters is not affordable. For example, the most advanced form of national power is nuclear power but it also cannot help in solving the problems rather it endangers the survival of humans on earth.

This does not mean that effectiveness of military power has become inept, but no state can use it freely since it will lead to mass destruction. Even though nuclear power is the most advanced form of military power possessed by any state. As far as the techniques of control and influence of a state are concerned, many other means to maintain even more effective control have been devised in this interdependent world. Military technique prove unable to solve the problems of a world having shared interests and relying on mutual assistance and support of all members. The contemporary highly interdependent world has new problems and issues other than only military expertise and requires new tactics of solution. Environmental problems, currency devaluation, dependency in technology cannot be resolved through war. Even super power states cannot take any military action against any state if their currency is devalued because of recession in world market; or environmental problems can only be solved through collective action strategies.

James Rosenau discusses the areas where national power is transforming and what new attributes are gaining importance in an interdependent world. He begins with the extensive use of 'nonmilitary techniques' in state craft. A range of non-military techniques are available for foreign policy officials for the solution of issues where armed action is not possible.

"Bargaining over differences, trade issues off against each other, promises of future support, threats of future opposition, persuasion through appeals to common values, persuasion through the presentation of scientific proof".³

Rosenau considers the last two techniques more viable for the management of state affairs specifically the foreign policy affairs in contemporary world: 'persuasion through appeals to common values, persuasion through the presentation of scientific proof'.

In present age, all societies of world are experiencing the problem of over emphasis on the separate identity and recognition of sub-national groups in a national stream. This situation is impacting the foreign policy matters negatively, since an effective and strong foreign policy is always based on domestic support. The emphasis on sub national identities divides the national opinion on important matters. In order to gain support from all sections of society, keeping the people united, and create conditions of harmony between external and internal spheres of action technique of calling for international values prevailing in whole world is useful. For example, appealing to democratic values, human rights and women rights, equality and justice. The slogan of 'human rights' erases all the differences of racial, ethnic, and sectarian nature and forms the favourable public opinion. When it comes to justice, ethnic groups, communities, and sects do not prefer their identities over supremacy of justice.

This technique has been used many times by many governments to handle the national crisis like by resorting the slogan based on human interest like saving democracy, human rights, terrorism, or any other appeal which catches the mass attention.

Resort to scientific proof is a second control technique in a globalized world. Contemporary world is characterized and shaped by technology, without machines, knowledge, data, tools, devices and methods present age cannot be imagined. All fields of life heavily rely on technological competence. The possession of updated information / knowledge, acquaintance with facts, ratios and data related to various important issues is the key to a successful diplomacy. No doubt that effective diplomacy has always been dependent on strong knowledge of facts but great scientific advancements has increased this reliance exceptionally. In the conduct of foreign policy, officials have to make their position strong enough to compete in global politics with their rivals and even friends. The lack of adequate scientific base can risk the protection of

national interest, and achievement of national goals. In modern era, where supremacy of knowledge specially scientific and technological advancements is affecting the socio-political and economic spheres of life, the reliance on knowledge and provision of scientific proof in any issue of foreign policy is viable than any other technique. Diplomatic officials have to rely more on scientific data than ever before. Diplomatic effectiveness of a state contributes greatly in defending interests, securing a successful position in global politics, building positive image globally, and obtaining important position in the region.

This technique can be considered the extension of national power. It has not replaced the traditional attributes of national power like geographical location, military competence, skilled population, minerals, soil and other resources. Technological competence provides solution to all the problems a state can experience in present age, like it helps in finding alternative forms of energy, increase in food production, safety of environment, reallocation of wealth and economic stability. The competence of scientific and social scientific knowledge provides a state the ability to establish control over external and internal spheres and strengthen its authority. In never issues of interdependent world like quest for resources, technology has shrunk the world and provided effective techniques of control better than traditional geographical occupation that needs physical presence of occupier. Controlling the economy and technological dependency has made the work easier. Wars are not any more to be fought only with the help of military rather battle fields are now scientific laboratories, space, and world markets.

The capacity to develop and apply scientific / technological knowledge for the solution of problems is arising increasingly and perhaps this attribute has gained greatest importance. The issues of an interdependent world are like depletion of energy resources, economic crises, food shortage, rising population ratios, environmental degradation and many more. In a hi-tech world

incompetence in technology makes a state dependent on others in various spheres even for utilization of its own resources. It weakens the state's ability to control the conditions outside and inside. (Rosenanu: 1980)

Governments that are not scientifically developed are left unsecured because they are not able to solve the problems independently and control the situation. Scientific competence helps in solving the problems, utilizing the resources effectively and generating more resources.

After technological advancement, societal cohesion is most important attribute of national power of a transformed world. The making of successful domestic and specifically foreign policy is dependent on the peoples' support and back up for its effective implementation. If any policy lacks of peoples' support government will be unable to obtain desired goals. This is termed as 'general will' which is based on public opinion by the people. It has always been important in national matters but its significance has increased greatly in the presence of greatest exposure towards global world. The people of a state are deeply connected with external world in almost all spheres. Their know how about issues and matters of national importance has advanced, and they know that how their decisions will impact themselves, society and government. Government has to mobilize support of all sections and groups of society at the time of implementation of any policy. The strong societies guide state and make it stronger, and weak societies are the reason of destruction of state.

The Leadership has always been a supreme attribute of national power, but its importance has become most important in an age where state boundaries are blurring, multiple influential actors are emerging and state is facing more and more non-state actors within its own boundaries.

In globalization, world is merging as a single place, and leaders are facing the most challenging situation with regard to protecting and furthering their national interest and keeping pace with the global world which is pursuing the same goals and interests and requires maximum cooperation. In this challenging scenario a leader has to make the best choices and devise an efficient course of action for gaining maximum benefits and minimum losses from it.

Leaders are the choosers and are supposed to make best choices for their nation and state and do not bargain their national interest in any case. Almost all domestic and foreign policy goals are to be obtained through strong and competent leadership.

Conclusion

The conclusion reaches on the point that in modern interdependent world, the sovereign power of a state heavily relies on its effective foreign policy skills, technological competence, social cohesion, and strong leadership.

All these attributes collectively participate to enhance the quality of a nation-state. It is the quality of nation-state not the size required in global world. Thomas Friedman describes it "in the Cold war, it was the *size* of the state that mattered. You needed a big state to fight the communists, maintain the walls around your country and sustain a generous welfare system to buy off your workers so they wouldn't go communist. In the era of globalization it is the *quality* of the state that matters. You need a smaller state, because you want the free market to allocate capital, not the slow, bloated government, but you need a better state, a smarter state and a faster state, with bureaucrats that can regulate a free market, without either choking it or letting it get out of control."⁴

Efficient state does not mean use of advanced technology only, rather it is the efficient political system which exploits in this regard where modern technology is available but there is lack of good

governance.

It is the quality of state in the age of globalization that matters not only size and military power due to which a nation-state can be considered sovereign and powerful.

References

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² Rosenau James, N. *The Study of Global Interdependence: Essays on the Transnationalization of World Affairs*, 1980, Francis Pinter publishers, London, U.K. p.35.

³ *Ibid.*, p.35

⁴ Friedman Thomas L., 2000, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Anchor Books: USA, p.158.