

BOOK REVIEW

The Globalization Syndrome: Transformation and Resistance by James h. Mittelman, 2000, Princeton University Press.

The different genres of globalization studies - i.e., economic analysis, state-centric approach, area studies - fail to cover the entire gamut of the discourse. Mittelman in *The Globalization Syndrome* makes a point of departure by presenting a holistic and multilevel analysis of globalization, connecting the economic to the political and cultural, joining agents and multiple structures, and interrelating different local, regional and global arenas. His focus is on the interplay between globalizing market forces, in some instances guided by the state, and the needs of society. His work is distinctive in treating globalization from the standpoint of those who are affected by it, including those who resist it and who are hurt by it.

In an effort to develop a globalization framework, the book starts with the broad question as to why globalization enhances the lives of some people and diminishes those of others. The author finds that globalization is hardly a unified phenomenon but rather a syndrome of processes and activities - a set of ideas and a policy framework. Given the uneven process of globalization, an attempt has been made to highlight the variation that occurs when globalizing structures meet local conditions. In contrast to most of the globalization literature, based on the experiences of the West, Mittelman draws his findings mainly from the non-Western worlds. The method does not entail a systematic sub-regional comparison of many different national experiences, but empirical explorations of varied duration and intensity in Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and

Vietnam, as well as Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. The evidence shows that while offering many benefits to some, globalization has become an uneasy correlation of deep tensions, giving rise to a range of alternative scenarios.

Mittelman sees globalization being propelled by a changing division of labor, manifested in a new regionalism and challenged by fledgling resistance movements. He examines the global division of labor in relation to a series of interrelated processes - migration, poverty, gender and marginalization - considered to be the matrix of globalization. The second dimension, new regionalism, is seen as both a component of and a response to globalization. Mittelman complements the geo-economics in globalization studies by rethinking the concepts of regionalism, hegemony and sub-regional responses of globalization. He probes resistance to globalization by looking at environmental counter-movements and organized crime groups that are also playing key roles in setting new rules. It is interesting to note movement from not only below but also from above against globalization from above and that resistance from not only above but also from below to globalization from below.

According to Mittelman, globalization is a product of changes in market relations. Its effects are decidedly manifested in terms of cultural integration and disintegration as well as environmental degradation. However, great the benefits of technological advancement, productivity gains, spread of information, there is a price to be paid for globalization, he concedes. The price is suppression or repression, distinctive to culture, the reduction of political and economic control, the increasing polarization of the rich and the poor. In terms of the contradictory forces of integration and disintegration, the author finds the geo-politics of globalization to be centered on macro-regions: EU, NAFTA, APEC; sub-regions-Eastern Asia and Southern Africa; and micro-regions within states-

EPZs. The state is seen not dwindling, but rather restructuring in its role as an agent in, not merely the object of, globalization process.

Mittelman's thesis is that resistance movements shape and are constitutive of cultural processes. He reconceptualizes resistance to globalization by revisiting Antonio Gramsci's concept of counter-hegemony, Karl Polanyi's notion of counter-movements and James C. Scott's idea of infra-politics. Implicitly and explicitly, these theories acknowledge resistance to arise from and be constitutive of specific ways of life. But Mittelman shows how the main targets and modes of resistance differ from one theorist to another. While Gramsci and Polanyi focused on the collective level, Scott drew attention more to the level of the individual and in everyday life. Contemporary transformations in social life in general, and state-society relations in particular, imply that all 3 major targets and modes of resistance coexist and are modified in the globalizing processes. Power, argues Mittelman, is a critical component of resistance efforts. He provides examples of resistance, which may be the result of a wide variety of conditions, including but not limited to globalization. It also might have a negligible impact on globalization or its effect.

To Mittelman, globalization has become an uneasy coexistence of disjuncture. He points to the contradictory nature of the process. On the one hand, it offers major benefits - gains in productivity, technological advances, higher standards of living, more jobs, broader access to consumer products at lower cost, wide spread dissemination of information and knowledge, reduction of poverty in some parts of the world. On the other hand, integration in this global framework diminishes political control and erodes cultural traditions, especially in the least powerful and poorest zones of the global political economy.

The case of Mozambique illustrates how it managed to attain the highest economic growth rate in Africa over the past few years by following a neo-liberal globalizing strategy even being at the low end of the GDLP. But this is something temporary in the absence of internalizing a self-sustaining dynamic. At the same time, this aggregate economic growth has been obtained not without losing control over its national economy, sacrificing former egalitarian ideals and forfeiting cultural dignity. Mittelman sees these deep tensions as engines of change, which might inaugurate a period of post-globalization. He is open to a range of options which include: first, modifications in globalization without challenging its underlying structures; second, counter-globalization: attacking the ideas and type of policies that form the bedrock of neo-liberalism; and third, greater diffusion of power: new avenues for experimentation and reinventing the relations among the market, state and society.

The author is well aware of his limitations. With a topic as broad as the globalization scenario, there are many other vital issues to consider, which is beyond the scope of this study. The book emphasizes the interactions between globalizing structures across different levels of analysis in highly dissimilar parts of the world, gauged on a continuum of economic dynamism and marginalization. To Mittelman, a normative way forward would be the quest for democratic globalization. The idea is to reterritorialize democracy, strengthen it both within and across state borders, as a method of governance for regions and for solving global problems. This is believed to help revise the contents of globalization to maintain its important achievements and relieve the discontents. Finally, he advocates for a revision of global governance that will allow civil society to have a fair participation in the globalization process, which in turn will offer economic gains, technological advances,

greater information, new knowledge not merely for the few, but for the many.

The Globalization Syndrome is an important contribution in the study of political economy. It is an outstanding piece of scholarship, comprehensive, clear, systematic and thoroughly researched. James Mittelman does a great job of explaining the systemic dynamics of globalization, the myriad consequences, and varied responses. A globalization framework interrelates multiple levels of analysis - economics, politics, society and culture. Given the broad scope of the subject, so single study by itself can be fully integrative. But this book is one step in that direction.

Rukhsana Ahmed

Lecturer, Department of International Relations
University of Dhaka