

# Globalization and nation-states. The roots of conflict between the two concepts



## What is a Nation-State?

- Constantly changing over the course of history
- Nation not an administrative term: collective social identity based on common language, culture, traditions
- State – administrative structure.
- Leaders of states have relied on the nation for their legitimacy: This can be positive (i.e: progressive reforms of the 20<sup>th</sup>. c.) and negative: nationalism → obstacle to international cooperation
- For years politicians and ideologists have been trying to find solutions that go beyond the nation-state
- What happens to the legitimacy of leaders when nations no longer „rule the world“?

## What is Globalization?

- Ongoing process: no universal definition – very complex term: affects national and international laws.
- Term appeared in the 1980s: replaced interdependence
- Meant mainly a commercial process → rapid increase in the exchange of goods, capital and services across national borders
- Focused primarily on multinational organizations
- Benefits: provided jobs, increased efficiency, lowered costs, increased product spectrum
- Many people thought that the interconnectedness achieved through improved technology and transport would promote peace and wellbeing (i. e.: war against economic interests)

## What is Globalization? 2

„Globalization is a journey. But it is a journey toward an unreachable destination -- "the globalized world." A "globalized" economy could be defined as one in which neither distance nor national borders impede economic transactions. This would be a world where the costs of transport and communications were zero and the barriers created by differing national jurisdictions had vanished. Needless to say, we do not live in anything even close to such a world. And since many of the things we transport (including ourselves) are physical, we never will.”

Martin Wolf

Will the Nation-State Survive Globalization?  
(Foreign Affairs, Jan. 2001)

## Risks of Globalization

- Growing inequality both within and amongst nations
  - not just financial, digital divide as well
- Potential to make (armed) conflict more devastating
- Cross-border negative externalities: environmental pollution, risk of international pandemic (i. e. Zika virus, avian flu, COVID), black-market for weapons, drugs, people, hazardous waste
- No longer just economic and technological concept: cultural change as well – risk for language as well as traditions
- Did not bring world peace but globalized conflict in many ways
- Do omnipotent markets mean impotent politicians? Who leads?

## What Links Globalization and Nation-States?

- Sovereignty: a legal quality that places the state beyond the authority of external laws
- Term dates back before the concept of nation-states
- Definition has changed
- When a state signs an international treaty it voluntarily limits its sovereignty – undertakes a legal obligation
- National sovereignty: printing money, collecting taxes, foreign policy, commerce, maintaining domestic order → EU challenges these (not just the EU though: i. e. informal organizations, capital etc.)

## Globalization vs. Nation-States: Good or Bad?

Market forces diminish national politicians power vs. Market forces prevent predatory governments from deceiving their citizens?

Global governance solves world problems or creates them?

Globalization needs to be redefined, but the concept of nation-states as well.

People can have several layers of loyalty

Globalization presupposes global governance, but this has become a term of conspiracy theories. Even the EU has difficulties in achieving „loyalty” and the transfer of sovereignty from its member states

## Reconciling the Two Terms

The idea is not to surpass or replace nations but for them to be more responsive to global issues. The primary agent remains the state.

Yuval Noah Harari: The major problems of the world are global, they cannot be solved without global cooperation. i.e: nationalism has no solution for climate change. In order to solve it nations need additional loyalties and commitments to a level beyond the nation. This does not decrease patriotism or loyalty though.

Patrick Steward: Sovereignty: 2017: No country can successfully manage globalization on its own – „sovereignty bargains” must be made.

- Sovereignty has at least three dimensions: authority, autonomy and influence: voluntary trade-offs of autonomy, not authority to gain influence and advance interests. Global challenges can better be met in this way.