

Lewes Topical Seminar – Globalization

Instructions

After reviewing the introduction, reading and videos below, please write a response of at least 200 words. I also have embedded hyperlinks to some materials that you may find helpful. The questions at the end are intended as writing prompts, but feel free to respond as you wish. Email your written responses to lewesseminar@gmail.com by Monday, March 10. All responses will be posted on this website. Please review others' responses in advance of our session on Wednesday, March 12.

Introduction

The Peterson Institute defines [globalization](#), as “the growing interdependence of the world’s economies, cultures, and populations, brought about by cross-border trade in goods and services, technology, and flows of investment, people, and information.” This definition easily could apply to several historical periods of empire or economic development, a point that Tom Friedman makes in his 2005 book, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the 21st Century*. In the video of his Yale talk on the book, he spells out how he thinks our current globalization differs from previous episodes; while Friedman is not an unabashed evangelist for what he calls “globalization 3.0,” he does present it as exhilarating and overwhelmingly positive for humanity.

In this same optimistic vein, Harvard’s Kennedy School at Harvard hosted a 2014 event, *Improving the State of the World: A Conversation with Klaus Schwab*. Schwab founded the [World Economic Forum](#) (WEF), and the following exchange is excerpted from his dialog with the moderator, David Gergen:

Gergen: You’ve devoted your life to making the world a better place. Something which goes to the heart of what the Kennedy School is all about. It’s been striking to us...that you brought the [WEF] Young Global Leaders Program here...for executive education and then the Schwab fellows, but there are two countries in the world now in which the Young Global Leaders have emerged...

Schwab: Yes, actually, there’s this notion to integrate young leaders as part of the World Economic Forum since many years. And I have to say, when I mentioned now names like Mrs. [Angela] Merkel, even Vladimir Putin, and so on, they all have been Young Global Leaders of the World Economic Forum. But what we are very proud of now, the young generation like Prime Minister Trudeau, president of Argentina [Mauricio Macri], and so on, that we penetrate the cabinets. So, yesterday, I was at a reception for Prime Minister Trudeau, and I know that half of his cabinet or even more than half of his cabinet are actually Young Global Leaders of the World Economic Form.”

It may be tempting (see Jon Stewart or Bill Maher) to chortle at Schwab as a Strangelovian character, complete with Germanic verbiage and syntax, cultivating a “Davoisie” that can manage a new world order. Indeed, a look at the WEF’s [current crop of young leaders](#) shows that the organization connects not only emerging governmental leaders, but also up and comers in business, cultural, and NGO spaces. However, Schwab’s response points to an intriguing aspect of post-Cold War globalization, a conscious effort at supranational collaboration.

In contrast, Michael Lind takes a more critical view of globalization, characterizing it as the handiwork of out-of-touch “technocratic neoliberalism.” In his essay, “Three Big Questions the American Establishment Got Wrong,” he reprises themes from his best seller, *The New Class War: Saving Democracy from the Managerial Elite* (Spoiler alert: Friedman and Schwab are members in good standing of the managerial elite). Lind’s view resonates with a provocative analysis by University of Chicago historian, Tara Zahra, who argues that the intense globalization of the late 19th-early 20th centuries spawned a catastrophic nationalist reaction. As Lind puts it, “Demagogic populism is the

symptom. Technocratic neoliberalism [& globalization] is the disease.” One might even speculate that the WEF represents an effort to head off another catastrophic anti-globalist reaction. However, the perception that the organization is “penetrating” political, economic, social, and cultural institutions across the globe may feed exactly the type of reaction Zahra and Lind fear.

Yuval Harari presents third perspective on globalization. He contends, in a TED Talk conversation, that we face a tension between nationalism and globalism and this tension, while not new, is heightened because we now confront challenges that can only be addressed globally rather than nationally. Specifically, Harari points to climate change and the rise of algorithmic authority (decisions being ceded to algorithms); both pose collective action problems which require cooperation and/or coercion to make policy. While it is difficult to object to his logic, his suggestion that citizens of nation-states need to develop a “loyalty” to humankind alongside their loyalty to their nations seems more like wish casting than an action program of globalism, the belief in the global v. national institutions. Indeed, the rise of populist/nationalist leaders (demagogues?) like Trump, Bolsonaro, Orban, Farage, Meloni, Le Pen, and others may represent a conformation of the Lind and Zahra hypothesis.

Resources

Yale Talk (Minutes 5:00 – 40:00): Thomas Friedman discusses his book *The World is Flat*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53vLQnuV9FY>

“Three Big Questions that the American Establishment Got Wrong,” Michael Lind, *Tablet*

The Long, Bitter History of Globalism: The Nation Interview with Tara Zahra :
<https://www.thenation.com/article/culture/tara-zahra-against-world-globalism/>

“Nationalism v. Globalism” (Minutes 0:00 – 20:00): TED Conversation with Yuval Harari
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szt7f5NmE9E>

Questions

1. How would you evaluate the benefits and costs of what Friedman terms “globalization 3.0”?
2. Is it possible to avoid or at least mitigate the kind of negative reaction to globalization that Lind and Zahra fear? If so, how? If not, what might that look like?
3. What are the impediments to developing the kind of globalist perspective and layered loyalties Harari advocates? Are there opportunities or approaches to develop that perspective and those loyalties?
4. Is it possible to establish legitimate (i.e., liberal democratic) governing institutions above the level of the nation-state? Can the WEF establish a legitimate supranational collaboration to address the global issues Harari identifies?