Globalization, Neoliberalism, and the Imbalance of Global Public Policies: Impacts on the Arab Reality

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Abstract:

The end of the Cold War led to a reconsideration of key areas in political and economic thought, giving rise to numerous paradoxes- some at the systemic structural level and others at the national-regional level. The complexity of the current situation has been heightened by the synchronization of three fundamental shifts: the end of the Cold War on a strategic level, globalization on an economic level, and the end of Communism on an ideological level. This synchronization necessitated thinking about a world without fixed borders, yet also without a clear enemy. This new reality introduced international actors equipped with globalized tools and dominant global policies that cast a shadow over political and economic liberation- in its contemporary sense- within the Arab environment. The research problem centers on the mechanisms of political and economic liberation for the Arab world from the effects of neoliberal globalization and the constraints of global policies that accompanied the bipolarity of the Cold War, which poses a threat to Arab interests and leads toward fragmentation.

Keywords: *Globalization; Global Public Policy; Arab Reality; Western Liberalism.*

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Introduction:

Globalization is a complex process characterized by inherent cultural, technological, economic, social, and political components. It has evolved in close association with the development of liberal capitalism and Western influence across the national borders of colonized states over a long period.

The Arab environment is neither a stranger to globalization nor immune to its unequal effects. Its relationship with Western liberalism has spanned centuries, and the division of the Arab region among colonial powers serves as a defining milestone in the history of the Arab world. Historically, Arab countries did not appear as independent political or economic actors on the global stage because they were colonies of imperialist powers. International political literature reveals that the development of the Arab world in the 19th century determined its destiny and its relations- not only with Europe but also its current position within global economic and political structures. It is not surprising that 19th-century globalization was built on imperialist hegemony among members of a "closed club" of colonial superpowers that acted as its guarantors. (Saleh, 2003)

The research problem revolves around the mechanisms of political and economic liberation from the effects of neoliberal globalization and the constraints of the global policies that accompanied the Cold War's bipolarity, viewed as a threat to Arab interests.

The importance of this research paper lies in addressing this problem through specific themes, particularly those related to the cognitive and structural framework of globalization and its impacts on the Arab world. We have divided this into three main axes:

- The historical roots of globalization and the interpretation of its successive stages.

- The shift of global public policies toward a climate of new international division and regional reorganization.

- The influence of international actors on the Arab reality within the framework of a globalized economy.

1. Historical Roots of Globalization and Interpretation of Its Successive Stages:

Some researchers trace the historical roots of globalization back to the Crusades, mapping its stages from those eras. For instance, Nabudere argues that the foundations of capitalist development were laid during the Crusades, which sought to spread the Christian faith worldwide by displacing the influence of Islam from the centers of civilization at that time (Halliday, 1997). This involved seizing trade routes to the Far East and the New World. He suggests that the primary driver was "Papal Bulls" that granted Spanish and Portuguese Christian merchants

charters to spread Christianity. He explains this religious-economic relationship (Al-Tuwaiji, 2000) through the following transformations:

The trade resulting from these Papal Bulls was characterized by transformations that Marx describes as the "primitive accumulation of capital." These transformations affected Europe both internally and externally.

According to Nabudere, other stages of globalization include the era of scientific discoveries and the Industrial Revolution, which stimulated the capitalist revolution in other fields. This was followed by the political revolution that brought radical changes to feudal society, the era of monopoly capitalism- resulting in colonialism- and finally, internationalization, which led to the dismantling of the imperial system.

From the perspective of the 1999 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, globalization means more than just the free flow of capital across borders; it signifies the integration of the economy alongside culture, technology, and governance systems. Its main features are manifested in the "shrinking of space, shrinking of time, and the disappearance of borders."

By its very nature, globalization does not distribute its benefits equally to everyone; rather, it achieves gains for the strong at the expense of the weak. The inequality between actors and the disparity in power leads to inequality in opportunities and constraints. Alongside the unfair distribution of wealth and power, the poor and weak find themselves unable to influence global affairs, as the powerful usually monopolize decision-making power. As Thucydides once said, "The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must." Furthermore, globalization creates dialectic of resistance regarding vital issues such as religion, cultural independence, the environment, security, and individual and collective rights- resistance that transcends national borders.

The volume and nature of the activity performed by various actors depend on their unequal links to dominant organizations or bodies and processes inherent to the new global system. In a later stage, under the dominance of Britain and the United States, the ideal of the international free economy became a "religious" reference point, with the superpowers acting as the guarantors of this open system. (Al-Tawil, 2003)

A common feature of 20th-century globalization is the influence of colonial powers and their role as major players on the global stage. This is a product of industrial capitalism and manifests in four fields: Trade, Production, Finance, and Technology.

Unlike 19th-century globalization, these four fields are governed by a number of agreements and conventions. However, 20th-century globalization is not merely an extension of its 19th-century predecessor; rather, it possesses a

greater capacity to reshape the world in its own image (underdeveloped former colonies versus industrially advanced former colonizers).

Near the end of the 20th century, particularly after the end of the Cold War, globalization was moving under the influence of a "crusade" marching behind the banner of Neoliberalism. It exerted significant effort to dismantle the nation-state. This applies especially to developing countries that transitioned from colonial oppression to being the stage for superpower competition, and subsequently to the dominance of neoliberal globalization. Thus, advanced industrial capitalism emerged with a massive global financial and military reach (represented by the G7, NATO, and the widespread UN network). The security system in the globalized world economy is maintained by the following arms:

A- Military Unipolarity. (Awad, 2005)

B- Support from the strongest international financial institutions (Mashourab, 2006) (The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank).

C- Imposing economic protection for two regional trade blocs (The European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement).

Consequently, neoliberal globalization is a close ally to the interests of global corporations and financial institutions, as it works to protect the interests of major regional economic blocs. This globalization is built upon neoliberal ideology; for this reason, it has succeeded in achieving the results it imposed on developing countries. While the most widespread manifestations of neoliberal globalization are economic in nature, its primary result is social and cultural marginalization. Paradoxically, the engine of neoliberal globalization is the financial institutions and practices that still dominate the economic and political spheres, supplemented by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), which has become the ideological component and the cornerstone of globalization. (Misbah, 2016, pp. 81-82)

The triangular relationship between technological progress, corporate power, and financial dominance has turned human security into a hostage in the hands of influential global players. This relationship has defined the framework for setting the agenda in a way that makes it appear as the only institutional framework through which human security concerns can be addressed. As the cornerstone, financial and corporate interests have established models of marginalization that destroy human security in developing countries. The results are negative due to underdevelopment, poverty, and weak negotiating power, which prevents these countries from influencing financial institutions and corporate interests.

Furthermore, we find that globalization has pushed developing countries toward marginalization and poverty. It has created new threats; market fluctuations have threatened financial and economic security, while the

widespread diffusion of Western cultures via global communication media has threatened national cultures.

Thus, interpretations of post-Cold War globalization vary across academic disciplines. In Economics, globalization refers to the internationalization of the economy and the spread of market relations. In International Relations, the focus is on increasing interdependence and the sovereignty of globalization policies. In Sociology, the concern is with increasing social overlap and the emergence of a global society, while in Cultural Studies, the focus is on the global information network. (Al-Tawil, 2003)

This increase in global interactions has led to the growth of international trade and the exchange of ideas and cultural beliefs. Therefore, globalization has become primarily an economic process of interaction and integration linked to social and cultural aspects. It extends to be a process of control, dominance, and the establishment of laws and links that involve removing specific walls and barriers between states. This allows its economic borders to extend by linking a set of relations with developing countries. However, the undesirable aspect is that these countries- advanced at all intellectual, cultural, and scientific levels- have penetrated the identity of other nations while maintaining their own cultural identity, especially since globalization is not limited to the economic dimension but extends to a vital cultural dimension manifested in a set of beliefs and values.

Therefore, Manfred Steger, Professor of Global Studies, identified four basic empirical dimensions of globalization: Economic, Political, Cultural, and Environmental, along with a fifth dimension- Ideological- that permeates the others. In their entirety, they signify a process of transforming all regional states into a global state through which communication between all countries of the world is supported. The main goal is to unite and direct energies across all economic, political, technological, social, and cultural fields, as illustrated below:

A- The Economic and Financial Field:

Globalization in the economic and financial field (Ali, 2003) refers to making the world a single open market by eliminating all restrictions that hinder the movement of goods, services, and capital. It involves abolishing customs duties between countries to enable capital mobility and the liberalization of financial and securities markets from any restrictions. While this form ostensibly appears as a growing cooperation between states necessitated by the increasing volume and diversity of cross-border trade and the global spread of state capital, the hidden reality of economic globalization is different. Rubens Ricupero, former Secretary-General of UNCTAD, views it as a global economy in production and marketing that replaces national economies.

He sees globalization as the process that dictates to producers and investors to act as if the world economy consists of a single market and a single production area divided into economic zones rather than national economies linked by trade and investment relations. This leads to the penetration of national borders and a significant retreat of state sovereignty. The key element in this phenomenon is massive transnational capitalist corporations. Thus, globalization focuses on opening international borders to the movement of products without customs restrictions or protectionist policies, which harms the economies of weak states because they cannot compete with capitalist economies. In this sense, the concept of economic globalization becomes "the era of profound capitalist transformation for all of humanity under the hegemony, leadership, and control of capitalist states, and under a global system of unequal exchange."

B- The Political and Military Field:

While economic globalization leads to the control of capital over the governments of weak- and even strong- states, it also results in the loss of the "nation-state" and the erosion of internal sovereignty. This diminishes the role of state institutions, allowing civil society organizations to take their place, often serving the interests of foreign capital.

Regarding internal politics, this is the reality; as for foreign policy, the Second Gulf War worked to engineer a "New World Order," the features of which became clear in subsequent events. The most significant feature was the United States being left alone on the stage after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the loss of international balance. It moved toward imposing its control over the world, using the United Nations apparatus to grant legitimacy to actions driven by its own interests toward establishing a unipolar American system. The world became governed by the decisions of the White House and Congress until international balance began to return due to the entry of other powers- such as China, Japan, and Europe- into the international political arena, calling for a reform of the global system to ensure greater effectiveness, international democracy, and justice.

C- The Socio-Cultural Field:

Globalization in the social field aims to promote the standards of Western culture (Amlil, 2005) and Western civilization, deepening them throughout the world according to Western criteria. This has become clearly evident in United Nations conferences on population, women, and human rights.

What distinguishes globalization is that while it works to dismantle traditional social actors, such as the nation-state, it simultaneously pushes them toward becoming part of a global project.

The "secularization of democracy" (Said, 2002) and human rights has occurred alongside a retreat of the national state’s territorial sovereignty in favor of global sovereignty. This is a clear indication of the declining status of the state

due to the rise of new international actors, and a prominent sign of the "end of the nation-state" idea amid the growing role of economies. An example of this is the transition of Western aid agencies toward supporting humanitarian civil associations in Third World countries, exploiting their resource scarcity. This points to the exploitative nature of these institutions, which mask their cultural objectives behind a facade of funding. In reality, the assistance provided by international financial institutions is conditional upon the adoption of a specific cultural pattern, even at the expense of national cultural constants- a flagrant violation of the UN General Assembly resolution dated December 16, 1966.

After reviewing the definitions and various dimensions of globalization, it can be described as an ideological formulation of Western civilization- encompassing thought, culture, economy, and politics- to control the entire global system. It utilizes Western institutions and major capitalist corporations to impose this civilization in a new form, one that hinders the building of the nation-state and keeps it hostage to the will of influential imperialist global powers.

2. The Shift of Global Public Policies toward a Climate of New International Division and Regional Reorganization:

The Arab world in general, and the Middle East in particular, occupies an important strategic position due to its oil reserves, which are the backbone of modern industry, along with the strategic importance of the Suez Canal. Consequently, as an inevitable result of this significance, a struggle emerged among colonial powers to control this region of the Arab world.

Following the division of the Arab world by Western powers, each part became subject to a specific influence and a particular global policy, assuming a status significantly different from other parts. Therefore, when liberation revolutions arose, they were confined to a narrow national (state-centric) scope and failed to embrace the broader pan-Arab call. As a result, Arab countries gained independence at varying times, leading to the formation of political entities with borders drawn by colonialism, which in turn spread divisions among those of the same Arab nation.

It has become clear that Arab society (Al-Ansari, 2002), despite the independence of its states, still faces challenges imposed by colonialism in various forms. These are compounded by challenges dictated by scientific, technological, and economic backwardness, leading to an inability to keep pace with contemporary global developments. Worse still is the loss of Arab national consciousness due to the conditions left by colonial ambitions. These combined factors resulted in the political fragmentation of the Arab world and the rise of regional disputes that reached the level of military conflict. Much of the region's energy and resources have been exhausted in facing these armed border conflicts rather than being utilized to eliminate backwardness and catch up with civilized nations. (Deghbar, 2008)

Undoubtedly, the nation-state was one of the distinguishing marks in the history of international relations until multi-national units began to dominate the economic and political structure of the international community. Technological progress and the shortage of global energy resources have greatly affected the form and meaning of the nation-state (Al-Ansari, 1994) in current international relations, regardless of the ideology of various governments. After World War II, problems emerged regarding expectations that could not be met due to resource scarcity, unemployment, inflation, and deficiencies in political leadership capable of enacting required changes. The terrifying development in communication, technological advancement, and sudden shifts in loyalty and belonging placed a heavy burden on states worldwide, particularly in the Third World. (Al-Badawi, n. d.)

The development of these states significantly impacted tribal and ethnic disputes. Upon gaining independence, these countries had no choice but to accept the artificial political borders and infrastructure imposed by colonialism, which also dictated their educational systems, political institutions, and economic administrations.

The growing policy of escalating international tension by imperialist powers and the militarization of national entities has impacted the causes of various peoples. While the achievements of the scientific revolution opened horizons beyond space and time, international monopolies and their imperialist governments turned these achievements into tools for exploitation. Within a few decades of the imperialist era, colonized peoples were subjected as subordinate units within relations of division, hegemony, and exploitation. With the disappearance of traditional colonialism following the struggle of the peoples, neo-imperialism took the form of controlling state economies while pretending to respect political sovereignty. In reality, imperialist powers strive for military superiority to exercise pressure as a means of control, forcing states to abandon economic liberation. Thus, policies of aggression and war became a primary pillar of imperialist strategy.

This strategy aims to transform all old international and national systems- political, economic, cultural, and moral- into weak systems incapable of absorbing the dynamics of ongoing transformations. This was reflected in the Arab world, which became a prime example of a "negative response," making it the region least likely to benefit from the historical opportunities opened by globalization. In fact, the Arab world appears to be outside or on the margins of globalization, possessing no distinguished position strategically, economically, politically, socially, technically, scientifically, or even in the symbolic cultural sense related to identity.

This long delay in perceiving the reality of globalization in the Arab world reflects the absence of a conscious strategy for a positive response to its challenges. It also reflects a passive integration and a persistent failure to build a

regional Arab market capable of providing the conditions for an effective response. Therefore, it is necessary to address the socio-economic, cultural, and political background of the globalization of the Arab world and the failure of the pan-Arab project. To understand the nature of the response that led the Arab world to its current state, one must analyze the context governing the strategy of engagement with globalization. This is closely linked to how societies faced the "post-national" era and the solutions provided for its accompanying problems- chief among them being the reconstruction of the political and social system to align with global production requirements. This missing element is manifested in the lack of national incentives and the corruption of political and social elites in Arab countries, which explains the aversion to- or failure of- projects for economic unity.

The issue of war and peace cannot be isolated from the struggle against imperialism, as security at all international and regional levels cannot be achieved unless efforts converge to eliminate imperialist hegemony in both its old and new forms. It is imperative that economic liberation movements adopt a collective stance toward these factors, which are deeply rooted in Western imperialism. (Jalal, 1985, p. 115)

The time has come for the Arab nation to gather its strength and hold fast to the elements of its national identity (Qawmiya) to unite its ranks and coordinate its economic, political, social, and military plans. This is necessary to liquidate colonialism in both its direct and indirect forms and to raise the standard of living for the Arab citizen. This can only be achieved by deepening the roots of these vital objectives of Arab nationalism and instilling national consciousness in the hearts of the Arab people. Doing so will enable them to resolve border disputes between Arab political entities on a national basis, thereby liberating the Arab world from foreign control and achieving comprehensive unity. This is especially critical as such unity constitutes the primary driver shaping a state's foreign policy, defining its interests, and consequently influencing its relations with neighbors, which in turn allows it to outline its role in the international community.

3. The Influence of International Players on the Arab Reality within the Framework of a Globalized Economy:

Analyzing the role of international actors- rather than merely their legal status- is what allows us to determine their position and effectiveness on the international stage. Granting the status of an "actor" in international relations is linked to the extent of that actor’s influence and contribution to international flows. Global transformations have revealed that there are numerous powers, at least those linked to political and economic societies, pushing them to become increasingly immersed in the process of economic policy according to their orientations, goals, and interests. (Mustafa, 2008, p. 149)

The term "development" became popular following the World War. It was used to denote the problems faced by countries gaining political independence,

paving the way for Third World peoples to build their states or to simulate the capitalist West in the shortest time possible to bridge the gap between developed and underdeveloped nations. The primary reason for this sudden Western interest in Third World conditions (Said S. , 2016, pp. 3-4) stems from the change in international political conditions after the defeat of Nazism and Fascism by the Soviet Union and the Allied powers. The Soviet Union and the allied socialist bloc became fundamental powers on the international stage, and the forces of progress, liberation, and justice became competing global forces against colonial powers. Consequently, the West had to adopt a different policy toward newly independent states (Al-Rahman, 2012), even if only in form, to ensure that socialism did not prevail. (Mustafa, 2008)

A qualitative shift has occurred in the functional interests of states and the international community as a byproduct of globalization; which has diminished the effectiveness of political borders. This has led to an increased interconnectedness between domestic issues and the international framework across several strategic matters.

It is noted- perhaps with the exception of our Arab region- that the economic dimension has increasingly dominated the content of global policies, meaning that economic interests take precedence over all else within the framework of the so-called "globalized economy."

At the Arab level, there is a stark contrast between the content and objectives of Arab foreign policies, which have not yet reached the minimum level of coordination or the prioritization of the supreme national interest. This has resulted in the absence of coordinated Arab diplomacy to deal with various regional issues. This Arab division has also led to a noticeable political weakness within the Arab regional system. More dangerously, this fragmentation encouraged foreign powers to frame our Arab region as an area lacking a national identity.

Several foreign powers have exploited this situation to play fundamental roles in settling Arab positions and issues that should have been handled by the Arab states themselves. This Arab political and economic abdication of duty has allowed foreign powers with vital interests in the region- which have been successively internationalized- to intervene and resolve Arab world issues in a manner that does not necessarily align with Arab interests, but often comes at their expense. (Zaidani, 2002)

Indeed, the absence of an Arab agenda for the region means that any "opening up" to the outside or movement beyond national frameworks transforms into a project of re-establishing foreign hegemony. It renews projects for building semi-colonial or quasi-colonial regional systems that are strategically, economically, politically, and culturally tied to the interests and orientations of major powers. Naturally, such projects- even if built on new foundations- cannot offer significant opportunities to solve lingering colonial-era problems or find

solutions to new problems left by the technological revolution. Therefore, the progress of globalization in the region could only lead to the fragmentation of Arab societies, threatening the balance and stability of all their economic, social, political, and cultural institutions. This encourages intensified external pressures and interventions on one hand, and exacerbates the cultural, political, and military violence represented by the "reaction" on the other- a peak which Arab societies are experiencing today.

The era of globalization has not been a happy one for the Arab world, neither as a bloc nor as separate states. It can be said that while some countries individually achieved temporary economic gains, the Arab world has lost ground overall due to the current dynamics of globalization, whose primary effects have manifested in deepening gaps across several fields.

Thus, external pressures and interventions prevented the construction of any framework for Arab collective security (Al-Arabi, 2000); consequently, the Joint Arab Defense Treaty remained a "dead letter." Instead of utilizing the Arab League- which represents a ready platform for Arab action- to build a regional bloc capable of absorbing shifts in the international balance of power and ensuring a necessary margin for strategic maneuver, Arab governments since the 1980s have moved toward separate, individual actions. All attempts to reach a formula for developing the Arab regional system, including economic formulas for Arab development, have failed.

It is worth noting that since the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Arab world has lost control over its security affairs and has turned into an area of direct and permanent influence for Atlantic powers. These powers proposed the "Greater Middle East" project, which aims to consolidate this situation and rebuild the region according to the strategic and military needs of globalization- effectively aiming for the desired division of the Arab structure (Qatoush, 2015). Behind this lies the liquidation of the very idea of "Arabism" as a carrier of an independent regional project.

the extensive penetration of the Arab region by international strategies and the deprivation of states' sovereignty (Samir, 2017) and independent decision-making constitute a major challenge for Arab societies that aspire to establish a foundation for stability and achieve regional grouping for Arab integration, away from the internationalization of Arab security and politics.

Among these gaps is the "strategic gap," which refers to the decline of external security conditions in both the national/ regional sense and the individual state sense. There is no doubt that the Arab world has witnessed a serious deterioration in its margin of independence and its comprehensive national initiatives. This is embodied in the closing of horizons for building an Arab political bloc that ensures collective security and confirms Arab participation in determining their own policies and future. Ultimately, there is an absence of any prospect for

true clustering, whether based on Arab rapprochement or regional rapprochement between Arab countries.

The Arab world has also witnessed a serious deterioration in the field of national security specific to each country. This is reflected in the collapse of Arab understanding and the explosion of Arab-Arab conflicts and civil wars, which opened Arab countries to foreign interventions and expanded their scope, turning the Arab world into a single arena for war. Thus, the Arab world lost the two elements of security and stability that are indispensable for any human development, including economic development.

Today, the Arab world relies on foreign support, protection, or foreign guardianship for the continued security of its states, political systems, economic stability, and the provision of its needs. This is because Arab states were born within the lap of the old colonial system and sought to emerge from colonial control to join the regional organization of the Arab League. Despite this, the strategy of Arab unity has been unable to overcome the factors of external control over those states.

Conclusion:

The problem of the Arab world in the face of globalization stems from its experience of isolation and self-absorption for over half a century, and its subordination to global political systems that worked to consolidate this isolation-not only for the region as a whole but also for individuals and groups. This situation propagated a mode of thinking and practice largely detached from the world and its prevailing standards, leading to the multifaceted dismantling of the modern Arab world's systems: geostatistical, political, social, economic, and cultural. These factors continuously deepen the crisis. As this movement of disintegration persists via external drivers, the risk of generalizing the crisis experienced by Arab societies grows, accompanied by multifaceted loss. Consequently, the dependence of Arab societies on external interventions increases, while the prospects for reconstruction diminish proportionally.

The intensity of pressures resulting from structural adjustment programs (Akour, 2002) is rising due to the dictates of globalization. Globalization does not settle for weakening state sovereignty; it leads to the emergence of new crises in governance systems. Under globalization, international markets and global public opinion have become the primary actors and international players, as they are the key decision-makers. This growing tide of globalization restricts the freedom of the nation-state.

Furthermore, globalization has increased the importance of economic issues. Foreign policy decisions of states are now determined according to considerations falling under the pressure of structural adjustment programs, which force states to submit to the dictates of imperialist institutions and their control

over decision-making processes. Thus, the current wave of globalization poses a significant challenge to the Arab self and certainly widens the gap between Arab countries, obscuring a unified Arab stance against the asymmetric threats of globalization in all its dimensions.

Recommendations:

- Formulating a combined national (state-centric) and regional Arab agenda to keep pace with globalization.

- Reclaiming the Arab initiative to ensure that the transformation movement is internal, subject to the needs and requirements of Arab societies, linked to achieving the goals and demands of their peoples, and restoring the centrality of the Arab world.

- Rebuilding the state, redefining its role, and strengthening its political and legal framework.

- Enhancing the status of civil society and its role toward institutions, linking it to the Arab societal structure.

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