

DEMOCRACY, STATE AND DEMOS IN THE AGE OF ACCELERATED GLOBALIZATION

Revealing the Hidden Tensions within the Triad

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Abstract

This paper tries to clarify the mechanisms through which the process of globalization affects the state and democracy, the latter seen as a political system. Starting from the argument presented by Michael Goodhart, regarding the necessity of clearly distinguishing between globalization's effects on the state, and its effects on democracy, this paper will argue that the forces which impact democracy are secondary effects of those that come to bear on the state. Introducing the additional concept of the demos, this paper identifies the ways in which changes in the ability of the state to ensure the security of its populace, as well as cultural and demographic transformations in society, distort the image we have traditionally had about democracy. Finally, it will sketch a possible way in which democracy could successfully tackle the challenge mounted against it by globalization: creating the mechanisms through which the former can operate at the same level as the latter – the supranational one.

Introduction

There has not been in recent past a term as contested as “globalization”; testaments to this are the numerous analyses that have tried to dissect it in the tiniest of parts. A search performed by Nayan Chanda (2007) in the electronic database Factiva (that aggregates news articles from the Reuters archives and the Dow Jones News Retrieval system) shows the increased interest in the phenomenon. If in 1979 the term appears just once, in a report of the European Economic Community, in 1981 it makes two appearances, only to rise exponentially to 57.235 times in 2001, 49.722 in 2005, and 43.448 in 2006. Despite the obvious surge in interest, the term remains difficult to grasp, elusive to even the most skilled analysts: the reality which it denotes seems to transform faster than our endeavors to describe it can keep up.

From the multitude of, at times, competing hypotheses and explanations there have appeared, as is common, patterns; in this particular case, they refer to categories of opinions regarding the origins of the phenomenon, as well as its future evolution. Different dates of birth have been proposed (the dawn of human civilization, the fifteenth century, the Industrial

Revolution, the 70s), accompanied by more or less bleak predictions regarding the social transformations which globalization induces. The common thread that runs through all these explanations is the realization that it represents a critical juncture in the process of societal development. No matter how we choose to look at the phenomenon, the challenge it poses is direct and requires a revision of established concepts that we hold about economy, society, information, technology, state, democracy or demos.

The last three concepts also constitute the focus of this paper; it presents some of the effects of globalization on the state and democracy. Unlike other studies with a similar aim (see Rudra 2002, Li and Reuveny 2003, Rudra 2005, Cerny 1999 etc.), this argues that there are no direct effects of globalization on democracy – just on the state and the demos. Only through modifications that the latter two are undergoing can we perceive how democracy is affected by the forces of globalization. This dynamic seems to strengthen the perception entertained by the collective public opinion around the globe: globalization is the “intruder”; the “newcomer” that tries to shake the stability of the current system based on national-states and clearly delimited spheres of authority¹. Although I will argue below that globalization in its sixteenth century strand has maintained some shared traits with its twenty-first century counterpart, my analysis will focus more on the second half of the twentieth century, when the changes brought about by it have been the most visible.

I consider it important to try to reveal the causal path of these effects, given that the mainstream literature on the topic of globalization’s influences on democracy and/or the state either attempts to clearly separate the effects of globalization of democracy from those exerted on the state², or to discuss these effects in the context of viewing the state as the natural *locus* of democracy³. Although I share the general thrust of Goodhart’s argument regarding the importance of distinguishing between “effects on democracy” and “effects on the state”, I do not see any value in a

¹ It almost goes without saying that, upon closer scrutiny, this much idealized “stability” has never really existed; at the same time, we can nonetheless observe that the frequency, intensity and velocity of transformations at the international level has certainly increased, somewhat warranting the alarmists’ views.

² A notable proponent of this view is Goodhart (2001).

³ As Goodhart (2001, 528) correctly identifies, much of the analysis that tries to describe and evaluate the effects of globalization on democracy ends up gradually discussing the effects of globalization on the state.

discussion that takes place *in vacuo*, focusing on only one category without drawing connections to the other. Even more to the point, I believe it difficult to conduct a discussion regarding the impact of globalization on democracy as such, without taking into consideration its “indirect” nature.

The method I employ throughout this paper is historical analysis⁴ of the processes that fuel globalization and how these have influenced democracy and the state. I will be trying, over the course of the next pages, to outline changes that are common to most contemporary political systems. After making a conceptual foray into the main concepts with which this paper concerns itself (globalization, state, democracy, demos), I will proceed to illustrate how the latter three are joined into a political system which the first disturbs. I will divide the actual discussion of the processes through which democracy is affected into two distinct parts: globalization’s impact on the state, and on the demos. Each will show some of the changes with which democratic mechanisms are grappling; finally, I hope to illustrate in the conclusion a way out of this strained system – altering democracy with the purpose of saving it.

A conceptual detour

Before proceeding to the analysis, I will present the manner in which the interconnections between state, democracy, and that last element of the system, the demos, can be understood, as well as define in a clearer manner the core concepts with which I will operate.

Globalization is a term that cannot be defined without simultaneously losing certain aspects of it; because it is a phenomenon with multiple facets and a global impact, any definition that tries to fully reveal one of its traits automatically ends up ignoring the others. At the same time, a definition that would try to be exhaustive would invariably be cumbersome and incapable of bringing clarity⁵. Globalization is considered by some authors (and, as an institution, particularly by the World Bank) as being a predominantly positive phenomenon, the unimpeded movement of goods, capital, people and information, across territorial, spatial and even temporal borders⁶. Equally large and vociferous is the group (the largest part of which consists of leftist authors) that considers it to be negative; in

⁴ See Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (2003).

⁵ This, in the end, being the purpose of any good definition.

⁶ This is the general thrust of the argument made by Friedman (2005).

their opinion, if the process is not slowed down⁷, it can lead to a dangerous cultural homogenization and the absence of any say in what affects our life⁸ (as well as a quasi-disappearance of the state as we know it⁹). Some authors emphasize the technological aspects of globalization, whereas others tend to view its commercial, financial, or cultural aspects as preeminent. Globalization signifies, at the same time, creation and multiplication (of social relationships), expansion and elongation (of the same relationships), intensification and acceleration (of exchanges and activities), compression and nearing (of space, time, people and places)¹⁰. With so many elements considered by various authors as being equally important it's rather difficult to create (or even choose) a definition which manages to shine light on the phenomenon under discussion.

Nonetheless, as Wilhelm of Orange once said, there is no need to hope in order to attempt, nor to succeed in order to persevere¹¹; I have opted for a minimal definition in this paper, which, despite its obvious flaws, has the benefit of focusing explicitly on what the phenomenon is, without being burdened with details about how it manifests itself. I consider globalization to be a quasi-global process of extension of trans-territorial mobility of people, goods, services, capital and information, at a higher intensity than in previous times, making traditional spatial or temporal barriers increasingly irrelevant. I use the term "quasi-global" because globalization cannot be considered yet a process that touches *all* areas of the world; there are regions that have, so far, managed to stay isolated (Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia), due to weak commercial and communication links with the

⁷ The only authors that seem to suggest that globalization can be stopped are O'Loughlin, Staeheli and Greenberg (2004, 17) and Steinmetz (2003), an opinion with which I do not personally agree. The authors point to September 11th as the moment in which the world was shown that globalization can be fought against; this ignores the fact that the methods through which the terrorists managed to coordinate their actions in order to attack the World Trade Center towers were made possible by globalization.

⁸ Joseph Stiglitz argues that globalization replaces "the old dictatorships of national elites with the new dictatorships of international finance" (2002, 247). From this point of view, people lose a significant part of their power to decide on the course of their lives (humanity has discovered a way to control national elites - democracy -, but has yet to find one to control international capital).

⁹ Although the author does not use the exact term "disappearance", Jorge Nef (2002) seems to be arguing this.

¹⁰ For a few definitions which are somewhat complementary to the one which will be offered in the next paragraph, given by Anthony Giddens, David Held, Roland Robertson or Frederic Jameson, see Steger (2003, 10).

¹¹ The original quote, taken from Sartori (2006, 13), is: "point n'est besoin d'espérer pour entreprendre, ni de réussir pour persévérer".

rest of the nations. Although the transformations that these regions undergo are occurring with an increasing frequency, suggesting that a “tipping point” (Gladwell 2000) is near, the current state of affairs still has them forming the periphery of a system in which advanced industrial democracies, connected through trade, transportation, financial and information links, represent the core. Another term that deserves a closer look is “trans-territorial”; I have preferred this one over “trans-border” because it encompasses a slightly larger array of forces that operate. Taking the example of labor migration, although this is increasingly occurring between two countries, the largest number of migrants is still of the internal type. To mention just one case, in China, the creation of special economic zones has transformed Shenzhen from a village to a metropolis with a population of about 10 million people in approximately two decades; these workers are internal migrants, flocking from all underdeveloped corners of China, in search of a higher wage (if not always a better life).

A characteristic that is immediately visible from the definition I have just offered is that by no means do I consider globalization to be a modern phenomenon; neither do I believe it to be one that has begun at the same time as human civilization. I would set the moment of inception¹² as being the first time in which all five major continents (North America, South America, Europe, Africa and Asia) were tied by commercial links, which allowed the mobility of not only goods, but also people, capital, and ideas (practically establishing connections at a global scale); I consider this moment to be the discovery of America by Columbus in 1492¹³. One could notice similar traits when comparing between globalization with its sixteenth century face and its more recent embodiment, of the twentieth century: there are both winners and losers (in the first case, the indigenous peoples in the swiftly conquered territories discovered by the European nations), ideas and information are being transmitted (e.g., Christianity), and one could register even a slight encroachment on the ability of the state to decide its own “destiny” (when, for example, a natural disaster or a civil war in a far away colony would have influenced the economic prosperity of the home-country)¹⁴. Globalization has existed, under different guises,

¹² The first moment in which the forces which carry and “feed” the phenomenon have made their presence felt.

¹³ Friedman (2005, 10) calls this moment “Globalization 1.0”.

¹⁴ At the same time, some differences persist: there is no reciprocity in the infancy of globalization (the colonies were only a source of raw materials and labor, not of capital or ideas; they were recipients only of capital and ideas), as well as no integration or real interdependence between the five continents.

starting with the sixteenth century (although it has been “baptized” only recently), and is very likely of continuing this existence well into the future¹⁵.

The moment I’ve chosen as a “date of birth” is similar to that preferred by other authors (Nayan Chanda chooses 1519, the year when Magellan conducts the first circumnavigation of the Earth) and, at the same time, contradicts other opinions. Some prefer to consider globalization as having no real beginning, others as originating in the sixteenth century in Western Europe, with the first seeds of modern capitalism; yet others see the 70s (the oil crises, the rejection of the Bretton Woods system) as the defining moment. Finally, there is also the singular opinion of James Mittelman (2000, 19), which designates all three moments as being the beginning of globalization, albeit different strands: incipient, bridging, and accelerated. The differences between these types center around the speed of the transformations, their magnitude, diversity, and their visibility (Chanda 2007, xiii).

However, to say “different guises” masks the true dynamic of the phenomenon: the intensity has grown as time has passed. Humanity has needed hundreds (or maybe even thousands) of years to domesticate horses and use them as a means of transportation; in the time span of about 200 years, the locomotive has completely replaced the horse-driven cart, only to find itself (partially) superseded by the car, and then by the airplane. The telegraph was invented in the 1840s, and was continuously used until about the 1920s as the primary means of fast communication; in the next 80 years though, the telegraph has been replaced by the telephone, then radio and television gained predominance, and now fiber-optic cable is (partially) replacing them¹⁶. One can notice the constantly higher frequency at which inventions which have considerably altered the human life have been made, and can use this as an indicator of the ever more alert rhythm with which the forces of globalization act; the same dynamic is noticeable when analyzing financial transactions, international trade, cross-border mobility etc.

¹⁵ For a similar opinion, that we can identify different forms of globalization which vary in terms of how wide the networks of interaction are, the intensity of exchanges and the extent of overlap, as well as the impact of these phenomena on particular communities, see Held (1996, 340) and Goldblatt et al (1998).

¹⁶ Susan Strange, “The declining authority of states”, in Lechner and Boli (2003, 222).

The definition that I have offered may appear, at first glance, as lacking in specificity; it does not include the elements which Held and McGrew (2003, 3) consider to be undeniably attached to globalization (action from a distance, time-space compression, ever-increasing interdependency, a shrinking world, global integration, awareness of this global condition)¹⁷. I choose to leave them out because I feel it better only to hint at their existence; clearly mentioning them might appear as setting “limits” or “criteria” according to which we could identify whether we are dealing with globalization or not. In my opinion, this would do more harm than good – these “criteria” are flexible and very contextualized; so too should be a definition that makes use of them.

The second term which demands defining is “democracy”; I find myself in more or less the same situation as before, with “globalization”. This time, one is dealing with a term that has roots in the work of Aristotle, and which has had a bad reputation since birth; it has reversed this only starting with the first half of the nineteenth century, around the time that de Tocqueville’s writings emerge. Since its genesis, the term has changed meaning numerous times in the process of being used to describe new realities (democracy in the political realm, in the economic, or in the social one). Because of this, finding a definition for “democracy” is a difficult and ultimately vulnerable task (given the number of alternative descriptions which can be offered)¹⁸.

Starting with Plato’s attack upon it in the writings of Aristotle, as being simply (as the Greek name suggests it) “mob rule”, democracy has gradually evolved into its multifaceted shape today. Starting from the meaning, the next step was obvious: introduce checks on the mob, ensure that it will not be easily swayed by any demagogue with a loud voice. Roman republicanism was thus born (later praised so thoroughly by Machiavelli), joining together rule by the few and rule by the many as a way of ensuring that none could ultimately become dominant. A third meaning is born from the ashes of the French Revolution, in the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in which democracy implies the right to make one’s

¹⁷ John Dryzek (2006, 97) offers an opposite opinion: we should not consider the existence of globalization as being conditioned upon the acceptance of a global integration; it should be considered real when we recognize the set of forces which, if taken to their conclusion, would produce such integration. I tend to agree with Dryzek.

¹⁸ One indicator of this is that even the political philosophers more intimately involved in the study of democracy (Aristotle, J. S. Mill, Robert Dahl, Giovanni Sartori – to name just a few) have failed in reaching some consensus on what democracy is.

opinion known, and the obligation by elected representatives to obey the public will. Finally, a fourth strand comes from the American Constitution, equating democracy with mass participation by a citizenry enjoying political equality and other rights, "within a regulatory legal order that defines, protects, and limits those rights" (see Crick 2002, 13). Beetham (2005, 1) offers a list of what people over the course of the past 50 years have understood by democracy:

rule of the people, rule of the people's representatives, rule of the people's party, the well-being of the people, majority rule, dictatorship of the proletariat, maximum political participation, elite competition for the people's vote, multi-partyism, political and social pluralism, equal citizenship rights, civil and political liberties, a free or open society, a civil society, a free market economy, whatever we do in the UK or USA, the 'end of history', all things bright and beautiful.

My definition strips away most of the characteristics that have been added along the centuries and tries to capture what democracy has always been: a relationship between the people and their rulers based on two-way communication. I consider democracy to be an institutional arrangement¹⁹ through which the demos participate in the decision-making process and in choosing the leaders that will ultimately govern the political community. This arrangement is based on principles such as accountability, freedom of choice, (political) equality between members of the political community etc.; in order to survive it requires a constant flow of communication between leaders and followers. I believe this definition to be quite useful because it presents the essence of the phenomenon, that which has remained unchanged as time passed: an interaction between rulers and ruled²⁰ based on a set of rules (the *periodic* selection of leaders by the people, the accountability of the former to the latter, rights and obligations belonging to both sides taking part in this "dialogue" etc.) - of which some are amenable to change (only if it takes place in the general framework of rules already in place) as time passes.

The last term that I would need to define is *state*. Starting with Machiavelli, Bodin and Hobbes, the analyses performed by the theorists of the state have resulted in a "broad agreement" regarding what the main features of

¹⁹ I use the term "institution" in its sociological meaning, as a recurring and structured pattern of behavior.

²⁰ To use a metaphor, a *discussion* regarding the future of the political community, concerning the problems that affect it and how they should be tackled.

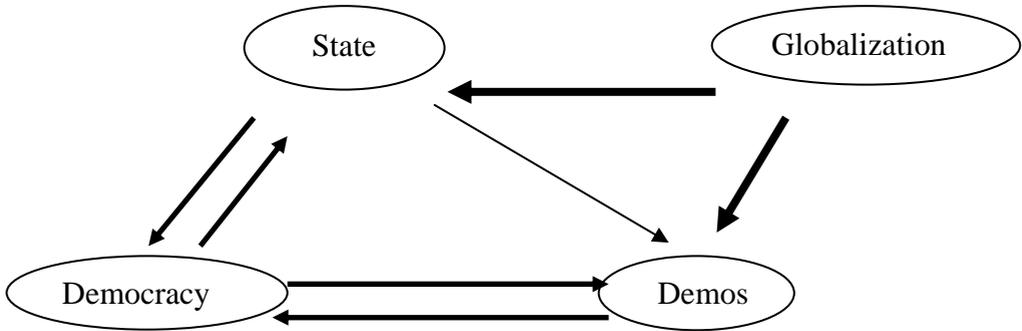
any state are: a population, a territory, a single government, legal and political independence from other states (Green 1988, MacCallum 1987, Vincent 1987). Nevertheless, a broad agreement does not a definition make, and even this is revealed to hide significant disagreement if we were to go beneath the surface and address questions such as how large the population or the territory should be, how many citizens may reject the authority of the government (Craig 1998, 8274), how broad (Rawls 1971) or how limited (Nozick 1974) its scope should be. The most that political theory has managed to achieve is to group different conceptions and definitions under six categories: the state as might, as law, as legitimacy, as a reflection of a hierarchical social order, as a reflection of an individualistic social order, or as the embodiment of community in society (Kenneth Dyson in Bogdanor 1991, 592). With such tremendous diversity in opinions regarding what the state is defined by, I have chosen to focus more on what the state does as opposed to what it is made up of.

For the purposes of this paper I have chose to conceptualize the state as the sovereign entity, contained within clearly defined spatial borders, whose primary function is to administer the respective territory and to provide security²¹ to its citizens. In this view, the state can be perceived to be a collection of institutions²² entrusted with the security of the population within the borders of its territory (an imprecise approximation would be the term *government*). Although the description I have offered is imprecise, leaving ample room for speculation as to what precisely can be called a state and what not (what does “clearly defined” mean?, how many states should offer official recognition to a territorial entity before it too becomes a “state”?, what other functions does a state perform?, etc.), I consider it to be the most suitable in the context of a discussion about how globalization impacts the state. Numerous authors which address the phenomenon do so in terms of speaking about the ways in which globalization affects the ability of the state to preserve this security and to properly administer its territory. This is the main reason why my definition only chooses to emphasize this function of the state.

²¹ In its three aspects: physical security, economic and social security, and psychological security (see Kofi Annan, “The role of the state in the age of globalization”, in Lechner and Boli 2003, 241).

²² In the administrative sense of the word, although throughout history these “institutions” could have just meant a single person constrained by very few official sets of rules and regulations.

Figure 1: Interconnections in the system



Finally, I will present the way in which I see these elements (democracy, the demos, and the state) interconnected as part of the same system, and what impact globalization has on how this system operates. As is evident in Figure 1, democracy can be seen as an intermediary between the state and the people; it represents the set of rules according to which the interaction between these two entities is structured. Over time, this set of rules has varied (although, in some cases, they have strived to achieve similar aims, such as equality, liberty, prosperity), bearing names such as monarchy, socialism, totalitarianism etc. The rules (regarding what the state can or cannot do in its relationship with the citizenry, the responsibilities of the latter to the former) represent the guidelines according to which the dialogue is carried out; sometimes, this dialogue is focused precisely on modifying the rules which govern it, thus becoming auto-reflexive. The state is the arena in which democracy functions; at the same time, it aids the state in performing its basic function of offering security to the citizens. Given that this security must be provided according to the needs of the people, the demos use democracy as a decision mechanism regarding what priorities must be tackled first. The relationship between these two runs in both directions: democracy can also impact on who the demos is, how inclusive it becomes.

The argument I will make throughout this paper is that, in the operation of this system, globalization can only intervene through directly influencing two of its elements: the demos and the state; democracy is influenced in an indirect fashion, through the secondary effects caused by modifications in the two elements mentioned above. To the extent to which who the people are, or their ability to formulate demands on the state, or the ability of the state to transform the *input* of demands concerning various issues into an

output of decisions generally applicable, are affected by globalization, so will the way in which the interaction between the state and the people is conducted (democracy). Thus, I offer an alternate view regarding the effects of globalization on the state and democracy to those already put forth; my point of view is that the discussion should not be centered on trying to separate the two types of effects (on democracy and on the state²³), but on the recognition that the former are a consequence of the latter²⁴. At a higher level of analysis, by using this model, we can observe how many of the problems that have been identified in the interaction between globalization, state, demos, and democracy, are mainly due to changes experienced by the state or the demos; democracy is affected only because the state is the “arena” in which it currently functions, and the demos is the one that shaping it.

Despite being indirect, these effects on democracy should be understood as anything but trivial – they question fundamental principles of democracy, such as the nature of the body politic (the meaning of “citizenship”), the nature of “representation”, the type and extent of political participation, and whether the democratic nation-state can still be considered to be an effective trustee of the rights and welfare of its subjects²⁵.

The erosion of authority: the impact of globalization on the state

The effects of globalization on our traditional notion of the state can all be placed in one category, albeit a multifaceted one: globalization prevents the state from governing effectively over a territory and the population inhabiting it; it “attacks” the main function for which the state is responsible²⁶.

At the root of the problem we can find one of the main attributes of a traditional state: its ability to control its frontiers, to define its sphere of influence/competence by uniting all found within its borders and addressing their specific problems, and excluding everyone else (Figure 2). Through this control, the state manages to ensure a certain level of

²³ Despite this, I still consider Goodhart’s argument somewhat useful – there is a need to make a distinction between the two, but at the same time, to recognize and we are dealing with main influences and side-effects.

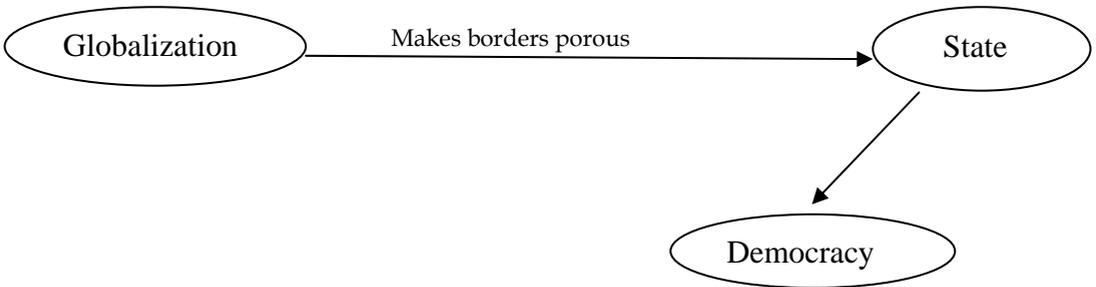
²⁴ It is important to specify – a consequence which can be addressed. A theoretical project proposed by (among others) David Held, of “cosmopolitan democracy”, would remove these effects, transferring the democratic mechanism at the supranational level.

²⁵ *Apud* Held 1996, 338.

²⁶ „Globalization reduces the capacity of states to exercise political power over the territory in which private-sector actors operate” (Kegley and Wittkopf 2001, 325).

predictability regarding the interactions within its territory; this predictability is essential to devise policies which can anticipate problems that may appear within its borders, or to isolate problems that have already appeared. For example, by strictly controlling its borders²⁷, a state can prevent the appearance of sufficiently large immigrant communities which can create social tensions (even more so if they are also racially different from the majority of the population), or can maintain economic stability by enforcing strict controls against capital flight²⁸.

Figure 2: The main path through which globalization impacts democracy



It is this very ability of the state to control the inflow and outflow of people, capital, technology and information that is significantly affected by globalization²⁹; paradoxically, this erosion of its power has had its roots in the very desire of each state to become more powerful. The first exploratory voyages in search of colonies were supported by European states due to their need for raw materials, cheap labor, and wealth, with the ultimate purpose of strengthening the state’s domestic authority and its position in relation to other states. Although in more recent times this has been replaced with promoting free trade, the reasons behind this have been equally self-interested: to achieve internal prosperity and economic development. Despite that authors such as Nayan Chanda consider globalization as having been shaped and carried forth by traders, preachers, adventurers and warriors, I consider this argument to be wrong

²⁷ Or, generally, any means through which people, technology, capital or ideas can enter or leave a society.

²⁸ Much more complicated is the attempt to control the dispersion of ideas or technology (as the history of the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages certainly proves); throughout most of history, this slow pace with which novel ideas or breakthrough technology “infiltrated” a state depended less on the nation itself and more on the limitations placed on the speed with which they dispersed (even inside the state).

²⁹ Dryzek (2006, 97) describes globalization as implying the integration of economic, social, political and cultural transactions in a single system, increasingly making traditional borders irrelevant.

given that it ignores the influence of the state on these “carriers”. Magellan and Columbus were supported by the Kingdom of Spain, which wanted new sources of power, conferred by potential colonies; the crusades and the missionaries were, of course, “projects” belonging to the Church, but in a time when the connections between it and the state were very powerful³⁰.

One would not be too far off in describing the modern state as partially succeeding in its desired aim: as European states became more prosperous and rose to a higher level of socio-economic development, the number of functions they began to perform increased, and these became more complex: from managing a national system of social security to environmental protection and creating a healthcare system which citizens could easily access. I say “partially” because this extension of the functions performed by the state did not completely bring about a higher level of control over the livelihood of its citizens (Stalker 2000, 9). The state did manage in “infiltrating” new areas, offering new services and tackling new issues; however, at the same time, a host of services that had been traditionally offered by the state moved to the private sphere (pensions, electricity, transportation), or were outsourced to other nations. From this point of view, the control of the state over its citizens, and the services these have access to, has been considerably weakened³¹.

This development has been pointed out very early on. In October 1995, speaking at a joint meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the president of the United States, Bill Clinton, had this to say about the influence of globalization on the state:

But, these forces have also made all our societies more vulnerable to disturbances that once may have seemed distant but which now directly affect the jobs and livelihoods in every nation in the world, from the richest to the poorest. [...] interdependence among nations has grown so deep that literally it is now meaningless to speak of a sharp dividing line between foreign and domestic policy (in Chanda 2007, 258).

³⁰ The Church received “believers”, and the state used religion as a way to quell social tensions in the colonies by a process of religious homogenization.

³¹ “The expansion of governmental control over states’ spending notwithstanding, globalization has arguably reduced the sovereign control of states over activities within their borders and their relations with other states and nonstate actors” (Kegley and Wittkopf 2001, 325). Also see Munck (2002, 5). For an opposite opinion, that the forces of globalization have, in fact, done little to the ability of the state to act in the interest of its citizens, see Vanberg (2000).

The first element that I will deal with is people. The ability to easily cross over the borders of one's own state has been the first significant distortion caused by the forces of globalization to fundamental principles of democracy. The principles I am referring to are representation (a more recent trait of democracy, but one that has managed to become a *sine qua non* one for any new democratic state) and participation. The principle of representation dictates to elected public officials that they act as representatives and guardians of the interests of the community which has chosen them. This principle certainly works well in a political community in which the body politic can be easily determined and tends to converge with the population of that community (a very large part of the persons inhabiting a state are also citizens, and therefore are part of the body politic). However, who can state to represent the population of immigrants in various countries given that they do not enjoy voting rights? In fact, not even women are properly represented given the low proportion of women members of parliament in most democratic states!

This "ideal" situation is increasingly changed by the significant number of immigrants who, in more recent times, can easily cross state borders to work in a country other than the one they are citizens of³²; this number will certainly rise as advanced industrial states are experiencing, due to higher standards of living, lower birth rates, and higher life expectancy, a drop in the proportion of the population that makes up the labor force³³. It is very likely that the number of immigrants will increase as states relax legal barriers to entry and realize the economic benefits that can accrue to them by having sufficient cheap labor. Unfortunately, it is doubtful whether this increase will be accompanied by the introduction of policies to mitigate some of its side-effects: insufficient integration of immigrants into society, and lack of political powers for them in the host-country.

The democratic inclusion³⁴ in countries with considerable numbers of immigrants that lack even the most basic political powers has suffered. Because in most cases they are not given the power to vote in the country in which they work, they are neglected in the course of the "democratic" process of offering electoral promises in exchange for votes: their voice is

³² Mansoor and Quillin (2006).

³³ The report mentioned in the previous footnote estimates that in order to keep the same proportion of the labor force that currently exists at the level of the European Union, by 2050 the EU should allow about 79 million immigrants to cross borders (p. 55); during this period, immigration is estimated at about 13.9 million.

³⁴ See Young (2000) and Wolbrecht et al (2005).

not heard, and their needs (assuming that this group does have specific needs, partially different from those of other social groups) are unheard by the political elites. Although social rights are “more expandable, both in scope and content, and are less exclusive than political rights” (Soysal 1994, 131), even they are only incompletely granted to immigrants³⁵. For an ever-increasing proportion of the population of advanced industrialized nations, “democracy” becomes a hollow word, referring more to the ability of making a better income than expressing a political opinion.

A second element that takes advantage of the state’s inability to efficiently control its “borders” is international capital. If in previous times financial transactions between countries were limited by the need to transport sufficient currency (most of the times under the form of a universally accepted standard, such as gold bullion)³⁶, in more recent times these have registered a frequency and quantity that would have been inconceivable a mere 50 years ago. Due to progresses made in the electronic transfer of funds, enormous sums of money can leave a country based on suspicions regarding its future economic performance, or can enter on the basis of nothing more than a few positive “omens”. This situation also shows how behavior on the part of the states caused both the expected positive results, as well as negative effects. The desire to benefit from the gains that come about as a result of attracting foreign capital under the shape of investment in national industries, and the preference of investors for markets that have as little state control over them as possible (which, in the opinion of neo-liberal economists³⁷, only translates into an interference in the self-regulating mechanisms of the market) have led to a gradual removal of barriers against the unrestricted movement of capital. Starting with the 1980s (birth-decade of the Washington Consensus), the regulatory framework has gradually gone down (“simplified procedures, enhanced incentives, reduced taxes and greater openness to foreign investors” - UN 2006, xviii), spurring higher levels of FDI. Under the Washington Consensus, virtually the whole of Latin America has been opened up to

³⁵ Nora V. Demleitner, “Power, perceptions, and the politics of immigration and welfare”, in Kurthen, Fijalkowski and Wagner (1998, 11).

³⁶ These transactions did occur nonetheless with a certain regularity, although at a higher frequency only in the case of links between a colony and its imperial master, as the example of the numerous companies “of the Indies” in Great Britain of the Netherlands amply shows (Goodhart 2001, 530).

³⁷ Famous for spreading this argument is the Chicago School, and it’s most popular member, Milton Friedman (with worthy contributions also made by George Stigler); other sources of economic liberalism can be found in the work of Friedrich von Hayek and Ludwig von Mises (the Austrian School).

foreign investment, as a pre-condition to receiving loans from the IMF; in other parts, it has been voluntary. The interest of each state to be the beneficiary of as much foreign investment as possible, combined with the desire to be as free as possible to invest in other countries and collect the earnings as fast as legally permitted, has led to a collective game in which each country has lowered its barriers in order to make capital flow freely.

The result has not only been an accelerated economic development of the states that have done so, but also a preeminence of capital over the state. It's ability to move without restrictions, combined with the communication revolution³⁸, have led states to conclude that the only way to prevent a highly damaging economic contraction is to prevent capital from swiftly leaving. Given that this could no longer be done by placing restrictions, the only alternative left was to make the regulatory climate even more favorable (or, at the least, no tighten it the slightest bit). Basically, states have given up part of the control they exercised over their own economies in favor of investors; these decide which industry will succeed and which will lose employees, which regions will have a higher standard of living because of the investments which generate tax revenues and which don't³⁹, decisions which impact not only employees of those industries, or consumers, but the entire population.

This state of affairs has important consequences on how democracy functions in a state, given another crucial democratic principle which suffers as a result: accountability. According to it, elected officials and the public institutions which they represent are accountable to the demos for the decisions they make and the effects that these have. Sadly, globalization has brought about the conditions which make this easy to ignore. It has become increasingly difficult to blame the domestic political class for a decision made by an investor, e.g. to move operations in another country, thereby increasing the level of unemployment in the region from where he is leaving. Unlike the elected official, an investor does not hold the responsibility conferred upon by an electoral process; he cannot be made accountable for the decisions made regarding the wealth he administers. Similarly, it is difficult to consider the government as unable to ensure a rate of growth for the economy which matches the expectations of the

³⁸ Which made possible the dispersion of information regarding new opportunities for gain or new potential sources of losses with increasing speed.

³⁹ Very telling is the example offered by Cluj County, in Romania, which in 2008 became an important industrial and financial centre because of decisions made by investors and less because of purposeful efforts by the state to fashion it into such a centre (see Escritt 2008).

population, or unable to protect citizens from the effects on international economic crises⁴⁰, and punish him electorally as a result of this, if the causes of these originate in other countries⁴¹. Due to the economic interdependence created by the forces of globalization and a global dynamic of economic forces which so far have gone largely untamed (with the notable and partial exception of the IMF), such crises have had a tendency to spread ever faster and cause increasing damage, as the course of economic integration and interdependence advances.

This is bound to generate frustration among the population, combined with the feeling that one is not in control of his personal financial security; more so, the same lack of control can be observed in the ones that have been entrusted with guaranteeing this security, elected officials. Despite the resilience of affective support for democracy in more established democratic nations (much stronger and resistant to erosion than evaluative support⁴²), even this tends to weaken in the face of evidence that the political system is not able to safeguard citizen security. This lack of control affects how citizens relate to the state (in organizations such as the WTO, negotiations happen behind closed doors, with minimal influence from the communities most affected by the future agreements, and maximum influence from global corporations), but also how states relate to each other (in the same organization, important agreements are often negotiated mainly by representatives of a few important nations, the rest of the countries being forced to accept terms that have been decided on for them)⁴³.

The last element that manages to easily transgress state borders, aided by the forces of globalization, is information. Helped by the communications revolution which made McLuhan (1962) speak about the *global village*, information now manages to move across great distances in only a matter of seconds. The Internet is but one embodiment of this revolution, as well

⁴⁰ Such as the credit crisis, begun in 2007, which affected the US and EU economies the most; similar crises have occurred in Latin America with a certain regularity, the last being in 2001, and in Southeast Asia, in 1997/1998.

⁴¹ In reality, it is very difficult to argue that a single economy, even that of the US or China, has sufficient influence so as to cause a crisis of the magnitude of those presented above; they tend to be the result of the self-interested and uncoordinated action of numerous actors, among which are transnational corporations, investment funds etc.

⁴² The distinction was first made by Almond and Verba (1963). Similar attempts have been made by Easton (1965) (diffuse and specific support). For a summary and an analysis on the different types of popular support in democratic systems, see Dalton (1998).

⁴³ Chanda (2007, 286).

as one of its carrier agents; through it, many of the traditional barriers of class and income, which tended to differentiate those with easy access to information from those without, are erased⁴⁴. In this case, we can notice how its effects on the state are ambivalent, both strengthening its ability to control and undermining it. By having access to an increased flow of information transmitted in real time, the state manages to track problems that could affect its security and act on them before they become major. Issues such as epidemics, ecological accidents that have occurred in other countries, can be acted upon before they turn into a serious hazard for populations hundreds of miles away. But this flow of information also poses significant problems in terms of the state's ability to process it, analyze and summarize it in a set of viable options. As interdependence advances and the connections between cause and effect become more complex, so too does the information that needs to be analyzed in order to formulate a policy; usually, this has resulted in a more superficial examination of information.

A second problem is the gradual inability of the state to control the information that is generated inside its territory when the situation demands it. An eloquent example is the Burma anti-government protests of 2007, where the violence with which these were met by government forces generated a public outcry in western democracies; to control this reaction, the junta restricted Internet access (Drash 2007). A similar decision was made in Iran, in the aftermath of the 2009 presidential elections⁴⁵; the converse, limiting the access of the population to foreign media, is regularly taking place in North Korea: "If half the people of North Korea saw twenty minutes of CNN (or of Al Jazeera for that matter), they would realize how egregiously their government lies to them about life beyond the walls. That realization could provoke widespread social upheaval" (Bremmer 2006, 4).

Although the most notable cases can be discovered in countries that are not democratic, examples such as these can be discovered even in established democracies: the Pentagon Papers, the Watergate Scandal, the Iran-Contra Scandal, the human rights violations which took place at Abu-Ghraib

⁴⁴ The Internet is not yet a completely egalitarian realm yet. Its frequent users have a tendency to be more affluent and younger than the population average. Also, there are different patterns of usage which vary according to a user's level of education (more online news, streaming videos, instant messaging etc).

⁴⁵ Limited information and images of violence still manage to find their way out of the countries, mainly through mobile telephones or other devices.

prison etc. Up to a certain point, it is common practice for states to restrict access to information regarding the decision-making procedures in the case of certain “delicate” situations; government transparency was, and always will be, a chimera. However, it is not difficult to observe that in more recent times, the ability of the state to control this information has been severely restricted by technological developments enabling a faster, more secure, communication, while bypassing traditional channels such as television, newspapers, or radio. Although weakening the state, I believe this has strengthened democracy.

The interdependence mentioned above has created a set of problems which have accompanied the benefits: among them are the international financial crises such as the ones discussed previously, the possibility of easily setting off multinational conflicts, unlawful practices of corporations etc. An interdependent global economy created the possibility of major gains, but at the same time planted the seeds of problems which could hardly be solved by a single state. Such problems demanded cooperation, and most of all coordination, in tackling them. This was the moment when organizations such as the WTO or the UN were created, to ensure a forum for discussion regarding global problems and the act as a center for coordination among nations. In order for this coordination to be functional, states needed to cede to these bodies their right to unilaterally take action in handling the problems, and abide by the decision of the supranational organization. Such a voluntary renunciation, although managing to achieve the coordination desired by the states, has also extended to numerous other fields, gradually eroding their sovereignty⁴⁶.

These international organizations⁴⁷ have gradually built a set of rules that the newcomers⁴⁸ on the international scene have been forced to accept. They have practically restricted the viable options available to new states (David Held, *apud* Goodhart 2001, 531); a plethora of new communities receive statehood in this manner – autonomy becomes only a status conferred upon them by the other states, and not a real power to decide their future⁴⁹. Democracy is certainly impacted upon in those states where

⁴⁶ The process has been an incremental one: initial successes have created the hope that other areas could also be effectively handled by supranational coordination.

⁴⁷ Which are not governed by democratic mechanisms, as Holton (1998, 91) points out.

⁴⁸ A considerable number, given that the two organizations mentioned above (in the case of the WTO, it was the GATT) were created immediately after World War II, before the decolonization process started.

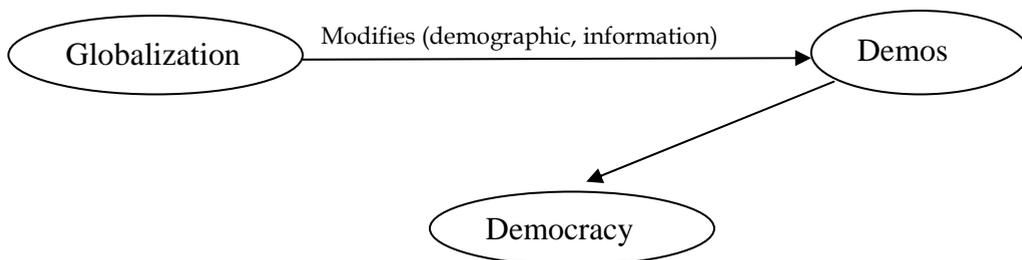
⁴⁹ Susan Strange, in Lechner and Noli (2003, 220-221).

the preferences of the electorate are contrary to the norms according to which these international organizations function. Globalization has created two types of problems that the traditional state was poorly equipped to address: international or global issues, in which case state action was inefficient (narcotics trade, human trafficking, HIV epidemic, environmental problems)⁵⁰, and specific regional problems with the potential to rapidly escalate (a refugee crisis such as the one in Sudan in 2008, floods, regional ethnic conflicts), which demand contextualized coordinated action. Because of this, we can observe a split in state authority, where increasingly more of it is directed toward supranational and sub-national organizations⁵¹.

The erosion of the political community: the influence of globalization on the demos

In the following paragraphs I would like to outline the way in which the forces of globalization are changing the patterns of behavior and the actions of members of the demos, and then proceed to establishing a connection between these changes and the effects on democracy (see Figure 3). In this area, it is much more difficult to establish the net effect of these forces on democracy; it will be shown that the effects of globalization can be both positive and negative, with opposite consequences on how democracy functions in a state.

Figure 3: The secondary path through which globalization impacts democracy



First of all, we can observe an effect already mentioned, of change in the demographic characteristics of the demos. As more and more people choose to take temporary residence in other countries, either for the purposes of work or study, a higher share of the demos will not enjoy full political rights and will not be represented in the decision-making process.

⁵⁰ James Rosenau, "Governance in a globalizing world", in Held and McGrew 2003, 186.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* For a similar argument, see Susan Strange, in Lechner and Boli (2003, 220).

Although the solution to this problem is not an easy one (after all, to allow a resident for one year to vote in an election which will choose a government of 4 years is an equally un-democratic action), it will become increasingly urgent as time passes. A second effect in regard to the free movement of people across state borders concerns individual members of the demos. With an increase in the ethnic diversity of the political community come the first signs of interethnic and intercultural tensions; examples vary from the Hispanic community in the United States, to the Turkish one in Germany, the Muslim one in the Netherlands, the Arab one in France etc. Given this cohabitation, distinctions are increasingly made according to social class, religion, race, which has a tendency to sharpen the conflict between groups of immigrants and the “adoptive” demos.

As this phenomenon intensifies, the traditional model of liberal democracy, which is based on an ethnically homogenous nation, will gradually break down. There will not be one single “people”, but fragmented political communities with different interests and identities which find they cannot really live together. Representation, as Rousseau first conceived of it (the representative does receive a mandate from his community, but acts in the interest of the state and not of that community), is rendered meaningless, since it would only cover the part of the demos which has the power to send members into parliament. The phenomenon does, nonetheless, have its silver lining - if the initial tensions are dealt with, a more diverse political community becomes a more tolerant one, which ultimately strengthens democracy (the citizens are exposed to a more diverse array of opinions, the public discourse is enriched, respect for the rights of the minority becomes more important).

Information and technology have a more subtle effect on democracy, but with a more powerful impact over the long term. The reason why I am discussing them together is the duality they have made up in the more recent periods of human development: technological progress (centered on communication) has led to an information revolution, while the dispersion of information across a wider portion of the planet has led to even more technological progress. The radio, television, Internet, satellite communications have all allowed the transmission of information; radio and television have long been used to educate the public (with documentaries or investigative reports on an issue). In more recent times, the trend has accelerated: if in the 80s the phone could be used to order a book from an international publisher, in the 90s this has been made infinitely easier by the Internet; since about 2005 books can also be read

over the Internet, and starting with 2007/2008 video lectures from top universities have been made available to anyone with an Internet connection. This has meant that there is no more concentration of knowledge in and around major universities; breakthroughs can reach the slums of New Delhi almost as fast as New York, offering the chance for ideas and inventions to appear from regions where there is barely a university. This quasi-global availability of skilled workers that are up-to-date with the newer development in their field due to the Internet has allowed technological progress to continue at even a faster pace. This has meant more information made available to citizens than at any other point in the course of history – from aspects of other countries’ political systems, to scientific breakthroughs and late-breaking international events; they have all been made available to anyone with a radio, a TV, or a dial-up connection.

Although such information is not exactly new (the radio used to offer it for over half a century), it is notable because of the global coverage of events, as well as the ability to send information almost instantaneously to the “consumer”. This revolution creates the potential for the members of the demos to become more informed; to take a firmer stand against many of the issues that until not long ago were considered to be too complicated for average citizens to decide upon. Better informed citizens vote differently than others (see Bartels 1996), and elections where citizens act as informed decision-makers strengthen democracy. We are currently experiencing a democratization of the means to transmit information; media conglomerates which until not long ago maintained a strict control on the process of information filtering (Viacom, News Corporation, Time Warner), have seen their grip weakened by new types of media (blogs, social networks such as Twitter). Through these, citizens participate in the process of news creation, offering it an even wider degree of dispersion in the population.

It does seem that under these conditions, the people have become more “restless”; given the ease with which one can be contacted and mobilized (radio, TV, email, instant messaging, social networks, phone, SMS, websites), protests have been made increasingly simple (although large scale ones still require the involvement of organizations). One example has been the 2008 US presidential campaign, in which the ability of the Obama campaign to use the internet as a fundraising tool, and email as a grassroots method of organizing supporters for rallies (particularly among the young), offered it an important advantage (Walker 2008). Coordination for political

action has been made easier, and has managed to bypass elites in the process; ordinary citizens can now assemble a reasonably sized interest group, which keeps in contact by email and phone, and uses the same means to pressure local or national authorities into handling a problem. The effects on the state cannot be easily labeled: it is true that citizen groups can sometimes place too many demands on public authorities and prevent them from prioritizing necessities; at the same time, they can also benefit state institutions by pointing very early on problems with which they are familiar and in regard to which they possess valuable expertise. The impact on democracy is another matter, particularly if we focus on the participatory strand of democracy⁵²: a more active citizenry, enabled by technological progress, strengthens democracy by making it more dynamic.

One last influence which technology has on the citizenry is essentially its democratizing and enabling nature. The barrier between haves and have-nots is still there, but its importance in determining political access has been reduced. Email and phones make it easier for people to contact their representatives, and websites and personal blogs popularize political opinions which otherwise would have only been known to a handful of people. More opinions have a chance to be heard, and there is the prospect of a public opinion that takes into consideration more of the interests of the populace. Although revolution is still far away (capital has a far larger influence on the decision making process than blogs), the change is evident over the past decade.

What should be emphasized is that the demos is experiencing a change; the political community, in its traditional sense, is being eroded. This is caused by the dynamics of the forces of globalization, and has the ability to alter the manner in which democracy functions in these societies. Given that the positive effects are so tightly connected to the negative ones, it is difficult to estimate the net result of these changes. One certainty does exist: the disparity between a political community undergoing changes and a liberal-traditional conception of democracy on which states are established will increasingly grow larger unless one of them is altered. It is tremendously difficult, if not impossible, to stop the changes that the demos is undergoing; the most sensible solution seems to be to modify our traditional view of democracy.

⁵² See Barber 1984, Barber 1988.

Conclusions

The situation in which the citizenry finds itself, incorporated in a political entity which it wants to direct toward the goals which it considers to be the most important, but impacted upon by forces over which it has very little control and that manage to constrain its viable options, can only be defined as “purgatory”.

The connection between citizens and their state is being gradually weakened: they can travel easier, can benefit from services offered by other states; even more, the trust they used to hold in the fact that the state can protect them from actions of outside actors (supranational organizations, corporations) is gradually undermined by the countless examples to the contrary. If before globalization control originated in the political sphere (accountable, to a certain extent, to the demos), now this originates more and more in the economic and social spheres, much more difficult to oversee⁵³. Neither can one foresee in the near future the formation of a “world government”, which could take over certain responsibilities from the state and guarantee the rights of citizens in a similar manner to that of the state.

Two solutions have been offered as a way out of this purgatory (the institutional void addressed by Haajer and Wagenaar 2003⁵⁴): the “statist” and the “cosmopolitan” one. The first believes that the state should be strengthened by consolidating its regulatory powers, thus making it better equipped to control the forces of globalization. The second solution considers “altering” democracy so that it can function and a supranational level, where globalization’s mechanisms operate⁵⁵.

Both have their costs and benefits; out of the two however, I believe the latter to be the most viable. The “statist” view is certainly the easiest to implement from the point of view of disruptions which it might cause: it simply involves reform by way of internal state processes. Despite this, making the state stronger does not necessarily mean making democracy stronger. It is practically impossible to do so without stopping the fundamental mechanisms of globalization (movement of people, capital, information, technology) or altering similarly basic characteristics of it (integration, interdependence). Even if such an internal consolidation of the

⁵³ James Rosenau, in Held and McGrew (2003, 185). He does state that a movement in the opposite direction can sometimes be noticed – a transfer of control from the economic and social sphere to the political one.

⁵⁴ *Apud* Dryzek (2006, 107).

⁵⁵ The most well-know advocate of this alternative is David Held.

state could be managed, the processes of globalization would continue to produce un-democratic effects: a justified decision by a community (such as using nuclear power, or exploiting natural resources) can have dire effects on a neighboring community (which was not consulted when the initial decision was made). As long as interdependence lasts, I consider the “statist” project as misguided.

This is a context which demands applying democratic mechanisms at the supranational level, to construct a globalization of “rights and responsibilities”⁵⁶. Such a project would offer citizens a larger control over what happens in their lives; it would involve the development of an administrative capacity and of “independent political resources”, at both the global and regional level, complementary to those already in existence at the national and local level⁵⁷. Specific measures would target the restructuring of the borders of systems of accountability, so that elements that currently fall outside of them would enter their purview, as well as a streamlining of supranational institutions, so that their efficiency and coordination increase⁵⁸. The project would involve offering citizens a series of rights, obligations and responsibilities which would function at the supra-state level, which could be protected and enforced by the above-mentioned institutions.

More importantly for the topic tackled by this paper, it would solve a series of problems that currently plague democracy at the state level. Eliminating the importance of state borders in determining the limits up to which principles such as representation or accountability extend can create a system where these principles limit the processes of globalization according to democratic mechanisms. Removing the necessity of being a member of a particular demos as a condition for receiving a set of political rights through which one’s political will can be expressed, as well as making sure that this will is also be heeded at the supranational level, can only result in a system which is more democratic.

⁵⁶ Mario Pianta, “Democracy vs. globalization: the growth of parallel summits and global movements”, in Archibugi (2003).

⁵⁷ Held (1996, 353).

⁵⁸ Held makes the point that this will not mean weakening the authority of the state; I fail to see how this is not the case, given that a coordinated action by these states implies “constraining” some actors (by procedures involving majority rule). My argument is that although it weakens the state, it will not do the same to democracy.

The argument made here purports significant consequences for the academic literature focusing on the mechanisms of globalization and how democratic systems are altered by them. This has tended to focus too much on either blurring the distinction between the two categories of effects I have discussed, or forcibly separating them for the sake of conceptual rigor. Seeing how the two are actually related, and acknowledging that democracy need not be affected by globalization (if we accept the "cosmopolitan" democratic project) can improve analyses focusing on the topic. The implications for policy-makers are even greater: in the national realm, democracy is almost indefensible from the forces of globalization, and continuing on this path will certainly result in even more popular discontent. Acknowledging that the fight must be carried on the same terrain, the supranational one, with the same weapons, will improve the ability of political leaders to propose sensible solutions in the course of tackling globalization.

The analysis I have performed is certainly flawed in some respects: it disregards the impact of certain regions which have so far escaped its influence (Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia - discussing them in the context of my topic, state, globalization and *democracy*, would have not been fruitful), or that of regions which have given globalization a unique flavor (China, the Middle East). It has also ventured into making predictions on the basis of historical trends, although there is no evidence that these trends should continue (as the example of September 11, or the credit crisis of 2008 shows). It can also, to some extent, be accused of reification: treating the forces of globalization as immutable as the laws of nature are, when in fact they are perpetuated by individual actions, and could be stopped the same way. To the last criticism, my argument is that stopping them would require the same coordinated global action as required for stopping poverty or discrimination; in theory, it is possible - in practice, less so. The value of this endeavor lies more in the path it has chosen to analyze, and less in the ultimate destination: by focusing on how the (up to now) natural *locus* of democracy is being altered and, along with it, democracy itself, it proposes both a framework of thought regarding the issue, and a pragmatic solution for it.

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