Review

Information technology led globalization and transformation of polity from local to global

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Polity refers to a social formation, of which state is but a part. The nation-state based polity is undergoing a transformation due to the imposing nature of ICTs led globalization. The states as a collective entity have no escape from the pushing impacts of digital technologies that have converted the world population into a single community with opportunities of instant connectivity, and dissemination of information through bullet-theory of injecting facts and figures into the mind of every member of global civil society. Several causes of this transformation of polity can be extracted from the intellectual discourses available in the existing research, predicting the consequences with tangible and explicit demonstrations of the same in the real world settings. The objective of this article is to juxtapose the diversity of research-findings into a compact piece of knowledge and present a theoretical model to comprehend this transformation and emergence of global polity.

Keywords: Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), New Public Sphere (NPS), Globalization, Polity.

INTRODUCTION

Polity is defined as a 'form of politically organized unit'. The term is used as synonymous for 'state' and 'government' in particular contexts. However, Aristotle used the term 'polity' to refer to a regime or rule. Regime primarily refers to norms, principles and procedures (Kranser, 1983), meant to form a socio-political whole, having various components, the relationship among these components and the fundamental norms governing these relationships. 'Power' remains the major concern in this relationship. The norms and principles of a polity guarantee responsible exercise of power (Bruyn, 2005). Thus 'polity' does not necessarily mean 'state', rather it

refers to a social formation, a larger whole in which 'state' is but a part, joined by other actors in this power structure. The 'state' denotes a political society/sphere (Gramsci, 1971), separate from market and family- the realm of private. Between the two lies 'civil society' which mediates on behalf of the citizens with 'state' and 'market'. Market, though part of the private sphere has the potential to exploit the public by aligning with the state (Lipschutz, 2007). 'Public sphere' enables civil society for this mediation by supplying a powerful medium (Habermas, 1974) and completes the social whole. So the three overlapping structures of power construct the whole that may be called as nation-state polity. These three institutions are 'state', 'civil society' and 'public sphere'.

Historically, the 'state' emerged because it then offered the best remedies for then existing problems (Beaulac,

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2004). Travelling back into the history, the temporal and spatial dynamics for the rise of state becomes clear (Ferguson, 2006; Ebo, 2007). The state restored peace both internally and externally, facilitated growing market, established a consistent system of law and justice, and provided an alternative loyalty to the ethnic and religious split in Europe at that time (Mossberger et al., 2007).

Undoubtedly, the public sphere is an unavoidable component of a sociopolitical organization. It is the space where people come together as citizens and pronounce their autonomous views to influence the political theories and practices in the society (Habermas, 1974). Civil society is the organized manifestation of these views and the relationship between the state and civil society is the basis of democracy (O'Brien, 1999). Society emerges as a correlate of the state, meaning that it appears as a limit to state/government and as something to which the public authorities have to attend (Foucault, 2007:349). Civil society keeps state attached with its subject by shaping and channeling public debates over diverse ideas and conflicting interests (Castells, 2008).

The state has remained the most powerful component of polity at both domestic and international levels for almost two centuries (Waltz, 1979). This typical Western polity model was superimposed in other civilizations over other kinds of polities, identities, as well as loyalties (Ferguson, 2006). However, the contemporary wave of ICTs led globalization has profound impact on the nation-state based polity (Khan et al., 2012).

Communication tools have always been significant for the evolution of civilization and globalization, for these facilitated exchanges across nations (McNeil, 1998; Denemark, 2000; Fernandez-Armesto, 2002). International exchanges in science, technology and culture have generally furthered the cause of civilization and globalization for certain material and cultural ends. Technologies, aspirations and communications-the stimulants for exchanges have been the significant determinants of global history in the past and are expected to continue this role in future as well (Tehranian, 2004).

An information-based civilization has emerged from the traditional industrial societies (Tehranian, 1990). Different labels have been used to identify it like 'Post-Industrial', 'Information', 'Knowledge', 'Postmodern' and 'Network' society. Modern ICTs offer variety of powerful and inexpensive communication tools and services. Over the last decade, social media have become an inevitable instrument for civil society worldwide (Hovland, 2005). Since the advent of the Internet in early 1990s, the world's networked population has risen from the low millions to the low billions (Crack, 2007). These high speed communication technologies have rendered the world virtually borderless (Chanda, 2008: 123). The users of these technologies include: regular citizens, activists, nongovernmental organizations, telecommunications firms, software providers, governments etc (Shirky,

2011).

Owing to these dynamics, the territory based polity is undergoing transformation. The structures of power are moving from domestic to transnational levels (Sassen, 1996). Given these revolutionary transformations, some of the scholars argue that power is slipping away from the state to a variety of non-state actors (Held et al., 1999).

Nation-state based polity and globalization

Without operating as a purely political process, globalization changes the political foundations of the world order (Clark, 1999). Globalization expedites political processes and sensitizes everybody to their outcomes. Accelerating communication, information flows, and exchange, the globalization structures a new environment for international to operate (Kapitonenko, 2009). Globalization professes the existence of a single sociopolitical space on a global scale, which is attributed to the gradual dissolution of boundaries due to intensified exchange across boundaries through increased interconnectedness between otherwise territorially bounded and distinct societies (Bartelson, 2009; Acosta and González, 2010).

The geography has now become a question of association and connectivity and not the space (Latour, 1993). Likewise, 'globalization' means more than just internationalization as it refers to a new quality of social arrangements (Held, 2003). Transnational movements of people, goods, information and capital have generated a qualitative shift from the systems of states to a new world that knows little about the difference between domestic and international spheres (Luke 1993; Ferguson and Mansbach, 1996, 2004). The bagginess of globalized world itself speeds-up the dissolution of both bounded and autonomous nation-states, territorial geopolitics and their identities (Khan et al., 2011b).

Contemporary global polity resembles an intricate texture in which decision making centers are dispersed between and concentrated on multiple layers of political order as they are dispersed and concentrated geographically where some regions play more significant role than others (Katzenstein, 2005). Nation-state capacities for collective decision making as its central function have partly detached from its institutional structures within and between nation-states, and have been relocated to the transnational level where they have been institutionally transformed or even restructured in new institutional designs (Albert, 2007).

Even on national issues, social movements and groups these days strive to go beyond the nation-state, to connect with like minded groups (Human Rights Watch or Amnesty International) in other countries, or their global umbrella organizations, to address demands not just to their own governments but also to foreign governments

and international institutions (Kaldor, 2007). Globalization is creating a platform for the transformations in the role of states in world politics. However, by influencing internal political and social systems, it weakens state's sovereignty in international relations (Kapitonenko, 2009). Thus the dominant character of 'state' in nation-state based polity has been challenged, giving way to redefinition of power players at all levels.

Dynamics of transformation

The 21st century is witnessing globalized human activities ranging from economic transactions, politics and culture, to warfare. These activities flow across the traditional barriers of state creating a new world entitled by Paul Friedman as a flat world (Friedman, 2005). Globalization is not superimposed on the society, individuals, networks and civil society, rather, it is created and shaped by individuals and groups every day (Drache, 2008). The transformation of polity has been brought about by a number of factors.

Globalization

Globalization is a dynamic process which characterizes a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions thereby generating trans-continental or interregional flows and networks of interaction and exercise of power (Held et al., 1999:16). The salient attributes of globalization are its social basis, economic and political dimensions, and its potential of integrating a range of so far nationally demarcated activities across state boundaries (Beeson, 2003). The transitions in the mode of production of hunting and

gathering societies to agrarian, commercial, manufacturing and information societies are rather well

known. Each transition involved substantial transformations in the political, economic, and social systems (Tehranian, 2004).

Contemporary transformations characterized by globalization do not refer to the end of politics rather its relocation somewhere else (Toffler, 1991). The national or international dualism no more determines the structure of opportunities for political activities instead it is now located in the 'global' platform. Global politics have turned into global domestic politics, which deprive national politics of their boundaries and foundations (Beck, 2006:249). This process shapes a social system with the functional capacity to work as a unit globally in real or chosen time. Capacity here refers to technological capacity, institutional capacity (i.e. deregulation, liberalization, privatization), and organizational capacity (Castells, 2008).

Eroding State Sovereignty

Apparently, the decline of state-power has driven the 'diffusion of authority away from national governments and created the problems of non-authority and un-governance (Strange, 1996:14). Erosion of state sovereignty is propelled by internal social developments, mushrooming of new ideologies and the rise of non-state actors at the national and transnational level (Kreijen, 2002). This erosion is generally considered as a consequence of globalization (Beeson, 2003). The issues of sovereignty and national security have emerged as serious problems for the whole world (Chanda, 2008). Globalization provides a new context for these developments thereby making the state-centered foreign policy subservient to global trends (Kapitonenko, 2009).

One of the side effects of globalization is that those states that own the most developed economies and are considered torchbearers of globalization are actually fostering a system that can be detrimental to the sovereignty of their own state (Strange, 1996). This is the most colossal change in the world order setting since the Peace of Westphalia that concluded the war of thirty years. According to its provisions, sovereign states became the core elements of the international system (Jackson and Owen, 2005). They substituted a variety of international actors like the Pope, the Emperor, dynasties, and the like. Thus, starting from the mid-17th century, international relations have been predominantly inter-state but this epoch of history seems to be over (Khan et al., 2012).

Information Technologies

ICT refers to computers, software, networks, satellite links and related systems that enable users to access, analyze, create, exchange and use data, information, and knowledge in unprecedented ways. The terms 'ICT' and the 'internet' though not synonymous but are almost interchangeably used (Beebe, 2004). It is better to comprehend ICT in perspective of creating a new set of relationships and spaces, an agora rather than as a high-tech tool. It is one more global field for competition over the distribution of resources and information and the most importantly, power (Van Dijk, 2006).

New technologies not only provide information but also tools that have the potential to extend the role of the citizens in the social and political space. The mushroom growth of online political groups and activism certainly depict political uses of the internet (Bowen, 1996; Browning, 1996). The internet and allied technologies by their nature can supplement opportunities for self expression and foster civic activities (Castells, 2008).

ICTs can easily merge into each other to raise connectivity and accessibility (Kleinberg, 2008). ICTs by enabling a horizontal network of global communication provide a variety of tools for organizing and conducting public debate and have the potential to raise collective decision making (Nawaz, 2012).

ICTs have opened new avenues for governance (i.e. e-governance) but on the contrary these have strengthened the capacities of civil society by facilitating vibrant and extensive public sphere (Dahlgren, 2005) and thus are facilitating transformation of polity (Crack, 2008; Castells, 2008). ICTs enable political actions with utter disregard to territory, and by fostering public spheres and fresh social movements (Min, 2010).

The Internet has evolved to become a major hub of entertainment, education, and community (Bartle, 2006:31) and it has a bright future in the field of business, research and politics (Balkin and Noveck, 2006). ICTs can help bridge the trust deficit among the nations by information exchange facilities and thus have the potential to ameliorate misperception and, ultimately bring more security, harmony and less violence (Kapitonenko, 2009).These features of ICTs show the social, political and economic ramifications of ICTs.

Emergence of Transnational Businesses

The developments in information technology along with the policies of deregulation and market liberalization across the globe have led to intense economic interdependence (Stopford, 1998), and the consequent externalities resulted in the sprouting of non-state actors of global character like TNCs. TNCs have steadily turned out to be the icons of new power structures in the global economy. These corporations work across state borders to pursue their own interests' and not of the state they officially belong to (Kapitonenko, 2009). Some see them as hardnosed exploiters, but others view them as torchbearers of prosperity (Mazlish, 2012).

TNCs have developed global networks of production and marketing that have transformed economic geography (Dicken, 2003). Traders, along with preachers, adventurers, and warriors have always connected dispersed human communities and civilizations, and paved the way for the emergence of the interconnected society we now label globalized (Chanda, 2008).

The emergence of TNCs poses a challenge to the conventional understanding that international politics is determined by states in the formal Westphalian state system (Deibert, 1997). Moreover they further blur the distinction between the domestic and the international, challenge the notion of 'state' as the ultimate authority at home, and reduce the significance of access to territory (Kobrin, 2001). TNCs are prime cause and result of globalization (Mazlish, 2012) and as a result major

stimulant for transformation of polity.

Rise of Mundane Issues

The intensified connectivity, interdependence and historically matchless production of commodities have resulted in variety of mundane issues, i.e. political, economic, social, biological and environmental (Crack, 2007). State seems incapable for dealing with such modern issues like climate change, global terrorism etc. The rising incapacities of state pave the way for the involvement of other actors for resolving these issues. Moreover this also reflects a gulf between the spaces where these mundane issues emerge (global) and the spheres of power where these issues are dealt with (nation-state). This also provides the rationale for the transformation of polity from nation-state (local) to global realm (Castells, 2008).

Emerging global polity

ICTs led globalization has profound impact on the nation-state based polity amounting to a transformation. This transformation has shifted the centers of power from local to global level, and has been compelling to redefine the conditions of interplay among the constituent components of the new polity. The argument in the above section refers to the fact that 'state' capacity to deal with the contemporary issues has decreased and that the new actors have come forth to fill the gap (Kobrin, 2001). Civil society and public sphere, comparatively weaker elements of nation-state based polity, have now become powerful and have extended beyond the nation-state boundaries (Kapitonenko, 2009; Khan et al., 2011b).

So the emergent political structure at global level reflects three major components. A new public sphere (NPS) which is transnational in nature and is anchored around global communication networks. The second component of this political structure is 'global' civil society which is an organized expression of the norms, values and interests of global society (Keane, 2003). A network state is the third component of the global polity which is reflected in the emerging global governance structures (Castells, 2008). Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical model of the transformation of polity.

Global civil society

Civil society is generally referred to as a domain of social belief and action separate from politics and economics, that is composed of individuals, families, groups, movements and organizations beyond the grasp of the state-authority and selfishness of the market (Lipschutz, 2007). Voluntary realm and the public sphere of
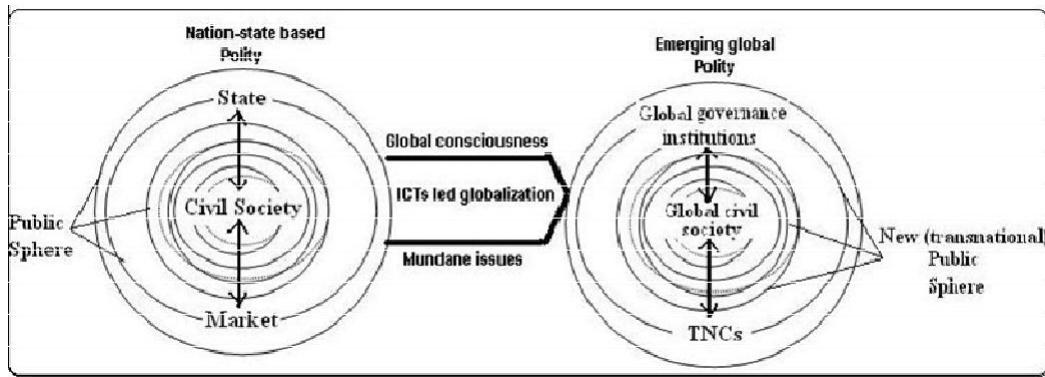
Figure 1. Theoretical model for transformation of polity

discourse are shifting from the mass-media to interactive web-sites (Castells, 2008). Most appropriate to the global setting, networks can shape social associations without the constraints of space or co-presence (Khan et al., 2011a).

Civil societies have generally been defined at the level of nation-state where group identity derives from citizenship in a territorial state (Schwartz, 2003). However, today, transnational networks are facilitating civic engagements across the borders of territorial state. This shows that shared interests can also play the role of binding agent like shared geography or identity (Khan et al., 2012).

The contemporary civil society is the arena where individual negotiates a social contract not only with the state but also with layers of institutions at the local, national, regional and global levels. Moreover, it is not just an arena made of progressive cosmopolitan ideas; it also includes national and religious militants, corporate lobby groups and a multiplicity of opinions (Keane, 2003). Many term this transnational version of civil society as global civil society which mediates with state, global governance structures and corporations for progressive ends (Kaldor, 2007).

Global Public Sphere

Prima facie, there seems a shift from a public sphere constituted around the national institutions of territory-based societies to a public sphere anchored around the transnational media system (El-Nawawy and Iskander, 2002; Paterson and Sreberny, 2004). The contemporary media comprises of traditional media like TV, radio, and the print media, as well as a diversity of modern multimedia and communication systems like the Internet and horizontal networks (Dahlgren, 2005; Tremayne, 2007; Bennett, 2008). The new public sphere is a multi-discursive political space, a global sphere of mediation, with no center or periphery. The agenda setting and

contexts are shaped and mediated by autonomously operating media systems (Castells, 2008) and the citizens themselves (Khan et al. 2012).

The international citizens due to their transnational activism facilitated by ICTs are shaping 'digital publics'. ICTs convert an ordinary citizen into international citizen by providing him/her the unlimited social possibility to innovate and form discursive communities of choice. Global activism is reflected in signing petitions, starting boycotts, creating art, breaking copyright laws, file-sharing, blogging, and engaging in elite challenging activities (Drache, 2008:63). These 'digital publics' are no longer confined to their self-constructed silos. Instead they are talking to one another, and unafraid to voice their opinions (Khan. et al., 2011a).

It is well recognized that everything affects everything else and different campaigns don't compete rather they reinforce each other (Neale, 2002:105). It is evident that informatic civilization is generating a new global consciousness, which is based on an increasing awareness of the global ecological and economic interdependence, clashes of culture and the need for dialogue for democracy (Tehranian, 2004). In this age of communications ordinary citizens are more informed than they used to be and are demanding more of the state, at a time when most states and their leaders are seemingly unable to provide (Ferguson, 2006). Thus, the NPS with its revitalized 'publicness' is facilitating global civil society with the required medium to mediate with the layers of political authorities (Castells, 2008).

Rise of Global Governance

A single global political authority is not visible at the global arena however; there are millions of control mechanisms for the management of transnational policies (Rosenau, 1995:9). These mechanisms range from the primary to the embedded, from informal modes of consultation to formal decision making arrangements.

The planet is ordered according to certain rules, regimes, and norms that enjoy widespread legitimacy (Crack, 2007). They cover a range of current issues, for example, climate change, fighting terrorism and managing global economy. This rising institutionalism denotes a transformation from national government to global governance (Khan et al., 2012).

The emergence of global governance matches the organizational shift from the mass society to a network society (Castells, 1996). State governments use the typical structural characteristics of a mass society where authority is centralized in a hierarchical and vertically integrated bureaucracy. On the contrary, global governance networks are hierarchical and horizontally integrated. Some centers in the network are more influential than others because of their international legal status, legitimacy and resources (Crack, 2007). Globalization has been with us for centuries however, efforts to govern the interconnections produced by it are not very old (Chanda, 2008; Sloterdijk, 2009:33) and this is the reason for the immaturity of global governance institutions. Nevertheless, relocation of state authorities in the global institutions is reflected in the increasingly emerging economic, political, security, and ecological institutions (Mazlish, 2012).

DISCUSSIONS

Many scholars have pointed to the fact that this transformation is initiated by economic forces that are seeking higher profits in the global space, and is facilitated by the rapid development of technologies in the field of communication, transportation, media and production (Wriston 1992). The primary characteristic of globalization is that geographical distance becomes irrelevant and that territorial boundaries become less significant (Scholte, 2000). It is contentious that whether the establishment of global governance institutions is also accompanied by trends of formation of polity on a global level (Zubair et al., 2011b).

Most theories of international relations still assume a nation-state context in which territorially bounded political societies interact in the absence of centralized authority (Bartelson, 2009). In order to make sense of contemporary global developments, state-centric theories of international relations needs to be abandoned in favor of a planetary or global vantage point (Bartelson, 2010).

It can be argued that 'globality' is being constituted by a rising common consciousness of human society on a planetary scale through an increasing awareness of the human and social relations as the largest constitutive framework of all relations (Shaw, 2000). Furthermore, there is growing awareness and consideration of the argument that globalization is not simply a bottom-up process leading to the emergence of global networks and structures that link preexistent institutions on sub-global

levels: the concept of society on a global scale customarily implies that there is something like a planetary social whole in a meaningful analytical sense as well (Albert, 2007).

The state is increasingly enfeebled today (Ferguson, 2006). It finds itself bounded by competitors offering alternative rules and norms for global politics. The monopoly of state in international politics is over; interstate relations are turning into transnational realm. These transformations are marked by the notion of a increasing interdependence of the various international actors, and globalization reinforces this interdependence (Kapitonenko, 2009).

Global economic and cultural forces are increasingly becoming successful. Furthermore, the communication technologies such as the World Wide Web have contracted the world so closely that more than half of the top hundred economic entities have become more homogenous and more connected to than ever before (Camilleri and Falk, 1992). Thus, the rise of transnational actors and a global civil society have transformed the inter-state system and directly affected the construct of sovereignty (Deibert, 1997). They have further distorted the line between the domestic and the international, compromised the idea of states as the ultimate authority, limited the significance of access to territory, and raised questions about the significance of actors in the global system (Kobrin, 2001).

Thus, the rise of new global sociopolitical realm, different from the Westphalian state system can be envisioned. It exists in transnational spatial formations, a new social whole fastened in norms and aspiration as well as institutional networks beyond the states (Ruggie, 2004:519). However, globalization has not led to the elimination of states rather states are a product of globalization and of actions of individuals and groups (Bayart, 2008). Globalization is expected to create a situation where states will continue to coexist but with global forms of authority.

CONCLUSIONS

The nation-state polity is being transformed into a planetary polity. The transformed polity is reflecting itself in global civil society, global public sphere and institutions of global governance. This does not necessarily suggest an extension of nation-state based institutions and concepts into their global equivalents rather the 'globality' itself is a new social whole on planetary scale.

ICTs led globalization is creating an environment in which sovereignty of the state is eroding and getting relocated in transnational realm. The state is increasingly getting enfeebled and giving way to transnational actors for its incapacities to resolve the mundane issues of twenty first century. Civil society is rapidly getting strengthened and expanded beyond state territories.

ICTs enabled NPS is boosting the powers of global civil society actors striving to establish networks of civic societies globally.

Obviously, a global community requires a uniform set of ethos as the base on which it agrees therefore as the world gets globalized, there is increasing demand to widen the scope of a common ethical code. However, the contemporary platforms and processes to deliberate on these issues are not quite inclusive and democratic. With regard to issues on human rights, democratic freedoms, environmental challenges, business ethics and warfare, there is a need to consider the shared global values and their transformation into rules about enforcement and inspection. Philosophers, scholars and policy-makers need to ponder upon and research those issues.

However, in the global polity, political authorities at global level are far from clear. The need for effective global governance has emerged from the mundane issues like global environmental, financial and security crises. The globalized world is in need of sophisticated and inclusive mechanism of global governance than what it has at the moment. Furthermore, effective economic and political governance at global level requires the involvement of governments, private sector, a broad range of civil society groups and international organizations like global NGOs. The technological and cultural exchanges have always enhanced human civilization and ways of governance, and it is expected that ICTs enabled civilization would also foster effective governance structures at global level.

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