

Is Globalization Making War More or Less Likely?

This paper examines how globalization influences the likelihood of war, including interstate war as well as intrastate war. The first part focuses on the positive effects of globalization, which means those effects reducing the likelihood of war. The main argument here is that globalization reduces the likelihood of interstate war and especially large-scale interstate war through economic interdependence and integration into one economic system that also includes a system of norms on how to deal with each other and intense communication between civil societies. This argument is also known as liberal peace theory. The second part focuses on the negative effect of globalization. The main argument there is that increased globalized black market trade empowers the actors of uncivil society, which are criminals, rebel groups and terrorists. Thereby globalization increases the likelihood of intrastate war and terrorism. In the conclusion the positive effects and negative effects are summarized and the combined effects are examined.

Positive Effects of Globalization

Globalization is often understood as the increase in international trade, but it is actually more than that. The process of globalization is more broad and involves increasing global connectivity, integration and interdependence in the economic, social, technological, cultural and political sphere. The economy and international trade is often

the driving factor of globalization and this is facilitated by technology. For example since the end of WW2 the cost of air-transportation has decreased by 80%, sea-transportation by 50%, and the cost of telecommunication by 99%. (Koslowski 2001: 339) The dramatic decrease of telecommunications-cost is a good example to explain how technological and economic globalization also affects society, politics and legal standards. Cheap telecommunication does not only facilitate international trade, it also brings societies together, as they can learn about each other through classic media as well as new media like online-videos, online-blogs or online-chats. And in order to facilitate cheap international telecommunications, there have been some adjustments to political and legal standards. Many national telecommunications markets around the world have been changed from a state-monopoly to a free market of private companies or companies in privatization. This is only one example of how economic interaction leads to common political and legal standards on how to interact with each other. The World Trade Organization (WTO) is dealing with a lot of issues in this field. There are a lot of issues that have not been solved and often states do not stick to the rules, but the process of globalization has already achieved quite something. The old realist assumption that international relations are a sphere of anarchy is becoming less true, especially between those states that are highly integrated in the world economy. The interaction between those states is increasingly influenced by international treaties, rules and norms of behavior. Due to economic interdependence, deviation would often be so costly that it influences behavior and especially pacifies behavior even if there is no international law enforcement system.

The idea that economic ties and shared liberal-democratic norms reduce the likelihood of war between nations is usually called “liberal peace theory”. (Kant 1795, Oneal et. al. 1996) Better known is the “democratic peace theory” that is a reduction to the idea that the shared norms between democracies reduce the likelihood of war between states that are both democracies. However, studies such as by Oneal (et. al. 1996) have found that the findings are much more robust if not only democracy, but also economic interdependence are taken as indicators. The findings get even more robust if the membership in international organizations is included as an indicator. But this third variable did not have such a big impact on the finding, since most states with a high level of economic interdependence that are both democracies, are usually already members in many international organizations. These quantitative findings also show the link between economic and political globalization.

The liberal peace theory is a very robust finding in international relations and can therefore be taken as a proof that globalization reduces the likelihood of interstate war between states within the globalized system. Some critics of the “liberal peace theory” argue that the peace is actually not caused by democracy, but rather by a strong hegemon like the USA (e.g. Rosato 2003). A counterargument is therefore often the “socialist peace theory”, which says that war between socialist states is less likely as well. However, in today’s post-cold-war world, where there is no longer a competition between two systems, globalization also means integration into one global system. This certainly means that at least a large-scale interstate war between two systems is very unlikely if not impossible. Obviously the globalization of the economic sphere is much more advanced than the globalization of the political sphere. But a forced integration of

those states lacking behind is also very unlikely. A system of democratic states and free trade can not be achieved by force because of its very definition: self-government and voluntary exchange of goods and services. The USA is currently making this experience in Iraq and will probably learn from this lesson. Those states that are well-integrated in the peaceful global system are not held there by force, but by economic interdependence, shared norms and political, social, and cultural exchange – and that is exactly what globalization is.

Negative Effects of Globalization

When looking for a definition or description of globalization, one usually finds references to “official” international interactions like statistics about international trade. But as legal international trade increases, so does also the illegal trade. Criminal entrepreneurs profit from the same technological advances that are also beneficial to legal entrepreneurs. The smuggling of drugs, humans, arms or counterfeited products is a huge international business that is often overlooked when talking about globalization. It is difficult to get a grip on the illicit economy since it operates in the secret and there are no official statistics available. But for example the United Nations in their Human Development Report calculates the annual trade alone in illicit drugs at 400 billion US\$. This is about the size of the Spanish economy or about 8% of world trade (Naim 2003: 30). To counter that, the USA is spending roughly 35-40 billion US\$ on the so-called “war on drugs”. Even though this “war on drugs” is not a war in the conventional sense, some aspects of it involve violent conflict or civil war. One instance where the war on drugs has led to a full-fledged interstate war is the US invasion of Panama in 1989. The Panamanian state leader Manuel Noriega was accused of supporting drug trafficking

and money laundering, and one of the official main reasons for the invasion of Panama was therefore the capture and extradition of Noriega. This goal was achieved within 14 days from the start of the invasion. He was taken to the United States and convicted on charges of drug trafficking, racketeering, and money laundering, and is imprisoned in Miami until today.

Another case of militarized war on drugs is the US involvement in Colombia. The US never invaded Colombia but is actively supporting the Colombian government in a civil war against the communist guerrilla groups FARC and ELN. Since these guerrilla finance themselves with drug trafficking, they are often referred to as “narco-guerrillas”. In 1982 the Colombian government agreed to US demands to change it’s laws in order to allow the extradition of Colombian nationals, because the Columbian judicial system was simply too corrupt to deal with the drug barons effectively. The result was an increase of violence. Besides the guerrillas also the drug cartels attacked the government by killing high-ranking officials, such as the justice minister in 1984, and also by campaigning for election of their own candidates with the clearly stated aim to abolish the laws on extradition of Colombian nationals. They finally achieved their goal in 1991, when the new constitution prohibited any extraditions of citizens. Two years later the Colombian drug baron Pablo Escobar was killed by a US trained Colombian police unit after he was located with the help of US intelligence. During the hunt for Escobar there have been so many spy-planes over Medellin that the Air Force needed to assign an AWACS to control the air traffic. (Andreas / Nadelmann 2006: 162)

Besides this blending of law enforcement and military engagement, the globalization of the black market economy fuels civil wars almost everywhere. During the cold war the Soviet Union delivered arms to left-wing guerrillas all around the world. Today Russian organized crime is delivering the arms to everyone who pays for it. The payment can be from drug money, but also from the illegal trade in otherwise legal commodities. According to many studies of the causes of civil wars, economic incentives for rebel groups are a very important factor, if not the most important factor. Paul Collier (2003) explains in a World Bank study that the combination of a weak government and easily lootable resources makes a country very prone to civil war. This is why he says that diamonds are a rebel's best friend. If diamond mines are conquered by rebels, the diamonds represent value in such a compact format that they can be easily smuggled out of the country and sold on a globalized market. Such conflict diamonds or "blood diamonds" are now well known and the Kimberly process limits the problem by providing a certification of the origin of diamonds. Yet there is still a remaining black market for conflict diamonds and many other resources that allow rebels to fund their arms purchases. Scholars such as Duffield (2000) or Keen (2000) challenge the idea that a civil war is a breakdown of a system. They describe civil war economies as functioning systems, where it is hard to distinguish if rebels are actually looting to support their war or if they are fighting a war in order to loot. For example Charles Taylor is reported to have made about 400-450 million US\$ from the conflict in Liberia 1992-96. (Duffield 2000: 82) And government officials may very well depend on bribes that criminals pay to get looted resources out of the country and arms inside. In such a system the government bureaucracy depends on the rebels that they are officially fighting. And the globalization of a black market economy is fueling such civil wars.

Today's terrorists also heavily depend on globalization. Their ideology may be directed against cultural globalization and a perceived imperialism of the USA. But no matter what their ideology is, their organization and funding depends on globalization and especially on the illicit side of globalization. They employ modern technologies, such as the internet or cellphones, to communicate. They use legal and illegal migration streams to establish a global network between ethnic communities in different parts of the world. And they get their supplies as well as their funding through trade on the global black market. For example Hezbollah is reported to have a major source of income through criminals of the Shi'ite Lebanese diaspora in West Africa, the United States and the tri-border area of Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil. Their activities include cigarette smuggling, cigarette counterfeiting and other product piracy. (Horwitz 2004, Madani 2002) Ordinary criminals and terrorists may have different motives, but very often they work together to achieve their aims – not only through exchange of goods on the black market. Criminals and Terrorists both have an interest to operate out of areas with weak law enforcement, so that they are safe from prosecution. For example Louise Shelley (2005) describes how organized crime creates very effective networks of corruption that are also used by terrorists to avoid prosecution. And corruption is a phenomenon that is far more widespread than only to those failed states that are usually expected to harbor terrorists. The profit margins on the globalized black market are very high. For example the cocaine trade has a profit margin of about 1000%. With such profits, criminals are willing to pay bribes that are so high, that they also make officials in well-established western democracies vulnerable to corruption. This is one way how the dark side of globalization strikes the very core countries of the globalized system.

Conclusion

Globalization has two sides: a bright side and a dark side. The bright side decreases the likelihood of interstate war and the dark side increases the likelihood of intrastate war and terrorism. The bright side of globalization is the increasing global integration and interdependence of the economy, the civil society, and the political sphere. As the liberal peace theory shows, this interdependence makes war less likely. As globalization integrates states into one global system, and not into two different systems like during the cold war, a large-scale interstate war is very unlikely. The strong states in the global system would certainly have the potential to attack weak states outside of the system. But, as everybody can currently see how difficult it is to force a state to integrate into the system at the example of Iraq, this is very unlikely to happen, unless there is a state with a strong pro-democracy and pro-globalization movement that just needs a little help from outside. On the other hand, weak states outside of the system are very unlikely to attack states within the system, since they are effectively deterred by an overwhelming military force. But they could instead covertly give support to non-state actors operating in the dark side of globalization. The dark side of globalization is the globalization of illegal activities such as the smuggling of drugs, humans, counterfeited products, arms or looted goods from civil wars. These illegal activities empower the actors of uncivil society, which are not only criminals, but also rebel groups and terrorists. Both heavily depend on a globalized black market to get supplies and funding for their goals. Therefore globalization increases the likelihood of civil war and terrorism. A strategy to a more peaceful world is therefore on the one hand to help states to join the peaceful global system and on the other hand to take effective measures against the dark side of globalization.

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