

**Globalization: Theoretical Perspectives**  
**Professor R Santhosh**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**  
**Lecture 41**  
**Anti-Globalization: The Empire Thesis Part - I**

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Anti-Globalization: The  
Empire Thesis



Welcome back to the class. And welcome to a new week, week nine, where we will be focusing on some critical arguments that can be labelled as anti-globalisation theories or anti-globalisation ideas. So, we know that right from the beginning till the eighth week, we have been discussing a series of critical scholars and their arguments, basically sociological arguments about the fundamental transformations taking place in our contemporary world as a part of the process of globalization.

So, we discussed a set of scholars. In the last week, we had an elaborate discussion on Ulrich Beck, focusing on his arguments about the risk society and the cosmopolitan state. This week, we plan to introduce you to some of the essential theorisations and noteworthy observations that can be described as anti-globalization arguments.

And I hope you remember that in the very first classes, or the very first week, we had made some remarks about the kind of lack of consensus about globalization as an ideological project, globalization as a political project and globalization as an essential process that has different types of repercussions on the world. So far, there has been no clear consensus about

how to define, characterise, or theorise the process of globalization. More evidently, there is absolutely no consensus about the kind of implication of the impact of globalization.

What is globalization doing to the people? Or what is globalization doing to the world at large? Who are the people benefiting? And who are the people who are at a loss? Who are the people who are on the receiving end of globalization? These concerns get translated into the questions of what should be the kind of a political position about globalization. Is it something that we have to accept with our stretched arms? Or is it something that we have to be worried about and fight to ward off or try to stop this whole process of globalization?

Depending upon the ideological position, for example, the scholars, activists, or need not be activists. These people believe in a neo-liberal era; they argue that globalization has brought more positive aspects than negative ones. Whereas the people who belong to the other spectrum of political ideology, especially people from the left, are highly sceptical of globalisation. They argue that globalisation has brought in many misfortune, problems, and miseries for the people and must be opposed.

Despite these ideological squabbles and ideological conflicts and conversations, we increasingly realise the kind of optimism that we had about the process of globalization being lost somewhat. We are beginning to talk about deglobalisation, we are beginning to talk about globalization sceptics, and we are beginning to talk about the end of globalization.

And though we do not know precisely what lies ahead of this end of globalization, there is an apparent lack of enthusiasm about the prospects of globalization. This is very evident. It became more noticeable, especially after the global recession that happened in 2008. Even the people who were once very enthusiastically supportive of the prospects of globalization became more sceptical. And a series of recent events after that, especially after 2010, has raised quite a lot of questions and challenges for the long term prospect of globalization.

All of them will be examined individually, but one of the significant important things that emerged was the severe crisis democracy faced in many societies. We all know about the Arab Spring in the Middle East in 2012. However, though it gave much hope to many people who disparate about democratic values and institutions in the Middle Eastern world, the jubilation was short-lived.

Most of these countries - whether it is Tunisia or Egypt or Syria or all these places where we saw the Arab Spring - soon descended into absolute chaos and were completely taken over by dictators and dictatorial ruling systems. Also, even in many democratic societies, we have seen a kind of systematic eroding of democratic principles, spirits of democracy, spirits of multiculturalism, and a spirit of accepting others.

In other words, what we call the rise of compelling populist leaders, charismatic leaders, are not necessarily the leaders who stand for the majority of the people. These leaders have significantly little regard for some important cherished values like minority rights, human rights, or other things. The leaders use an ultra-nationalist kind of rhetoric to consolidate their positions.

So, the rise of nationalism, especially ultra-nationalism and populist leaders, results in a change in their national policies about migration rules. The best example is Donald Trump, who came to the US as the president and wanted stringent immigration rules and a much stronger border, especially between Mexico and the US. So, the world over, we see the resurgence of values and sentiments that are considered antithetical to globalization.

Hence there is quite a lot of scepticism about the long-term prospects of neo-liberal globalization. In this particular week, we will look at some of those arguments, theorisation about globalization and the challenges they demonstrate, and the kinds of evidence they show against the process of globalization.

So, this week, I will spend two hours or two sessions rather, trying to explain an essential book in this anti-globalization debate, of the title *The Empire* written by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, two exciting and unusual intellectual companionship. So, in this session and the next, I will give a comprehensive overview of this particular work. In the remaining three sessions, I will provide you with a broad overview of other arguments or other points that are raised or other important illustrations against the kind of scenario that can be labelled as a kind of a deglobalization or globalization, scepticism or a realisation that globalization is nearing its end or we are seeing a sort of reversal of globalization.

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- Intellectual and political positions on globalization
- Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri - The Empire, published in 2000
- Michael Hardt is from the US, while Negri is from Italy. Negri had a very active life in radical politics.
- Empire was written when Negri was still in the prison
- A post-Marxist position of critique of globalization and its rejection.
- Also, a call for clear political movement around the 'multitudes'.



So, as I mentioned, there are different intellectual and political positions on globalization. It was discussed in the first week, from Marxian to Neo Marxian to Neo-Liberal to Liberal, a host of other intellectual and political functions. These two are closely connected because your political situation is often derived from your academic position. At the same time, your educational place is not free from the kind of political ideologies around with which one works.

Now, this particular work, The Empire, published in 2000, on which they had been working for some four or five years, became, maybe, one of the most influential works. It is not very easy to read or easy to make sense of. However, it became highly effective and translated into many languages. The authors Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri became celebrities worldwide because of their very interesting theorisations against globalization.

They made a powerful political call to have a kind of a movement against globalization and to strive for an alternative world. And the whole anti-globalisation movement, especially something called World Social Forum, used to have their meetings in different parts of the world. That used to be a conglomeration of other civil society organisations worldwide.

They had conducted major World Social Forum meetings across the globe. There were demonstrations and campaigns in front of the IMF and World Bank, Seattle, and a host of other places. So, during the 1990s and 2000, many very loud campaigns were led by a wide array of organisations, representing different sections of people e starting with agriculturalists, small traders, indigenous people, women, minorities, to a host of people.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri became very influential for most of these people because they found their arguments to be very important. Michael Hardt is from the US, while Negri is from Italy; it is an enjoyable intellectual companionship. Negri is elder to Michael Hart by at least 27 years. They met in France and started working together, and that is how they came up with this particular book and then another book on the multitude in 2004.

Negri had a very active political life, where he was very closely associated with a left radical group. He was also accused of a murder case against one of the political leaders in Italy and was imprisoned for a long time. He wrote this book with Michael Hart when he was still in prison. Later he came out and moved to France, and then he worked as a professor there.

So, it is a post-Marxian position to criticise globalization and its rejection. Unlike many other scholars, like say, Giddens or Beck, of course, Beck is very much welcoming the whole process of globalization, unlike quite a lot of other scholars who are equivocal about what should be the kind of political position; these two scholars are evident in their political place against globalization. They say that globalization is wrong must be stopped and rejected.

So, their argument is nuanced and very elaborate theoretically and is also sound about analysing what globalization is. However, it also comes with a solid political project of stopping globalization and then taking this whole world order into something else. The second work especially calls for an apparent political movement around the entire idea of multitoools. This is an exciting concept, which will be elaborated and looked at more elaborately after some time.

So, this is a broad overview of these two scholars and the work Empire. I am again, depending upon Andrew Jones' work on the critical thinkers of globalisation, the textbook mentioned for this course, otherwise summarising the whole book of Empire, and the other text on multitude would become too complicated.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:24)

## The Empire Thesis



Heavily influenced by the poststructuralist theories of Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari. Especially their theorisations on power and bio-power, genealogical approach.

Also, synthesized Gramscian Marxism with these theories.



Hence the overall argument of the Empire thesis - through Hardt and Negri belong to Marxist school - are heavily influenced by the dominant intellectual influence of their times of the 80s and 90s, especially 90s, where they were very heavily influenced by poststructuralist theories of Foucault and Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari. The theorisations significantly affect them on power and biopower genealogical approach; Foucault also heavily influences them.

At the same time, they also combined their Gramscian Marxism kind of Neo-Marxism, put forward by Antonio Gramsci; it is hence a very curious combination. They synthesised Gramsci Marxism with these poststructuralists; so, it is a fascinating theoretical argument they have come up with.

(Refer Slide Time: 14:26)



#### Globalization as Empire

For Hardt and Negri, 'empire is materializing before our eyes' (Hardt and Negri 2000: xi). The central argument is that 'over the past several decades . . . we have witnessed an irresistible and irreversible globalization of economic and cultural exchanges' which have been accompanied by not only 'a global market and global circuits of production' but also 'a new global order' (ibid.: xi). This they suggest represents 'a new form of sovereignty' where the concept of 'Empire' represents 'the political subject that effectively regulates these global exchanges, the sovereign power that governs the world' (ibid.: xi).




Now, what is the basic thesis of globalization as an Empire? For Hardt and Negri, Empire is materialising before our eyes; the central argument is that over the past several decades, we have witnessed irresistible and irreversible globalization of economic and cultural exchange, which have been accompanied not only a global market and global circuit of production but also by a new global order. This, they suggest, represents a new form of sovereignty where the concept of an empire represents the political subject that effectively regulates these international exchanges at the sovereign power that governs the world.

So, what does this empire mean? We know about the kingdom in the old sense, the empires and imperialism as a new economic and political arrangement as elaborated by Lenin, but here they are using realm in a completely different way. They are looking at the kingdom as a new form of sovereign power that clubs both political and economic power together as a new social order, as a new form of sovereignty, as a new form of freedom that goes beyond the control of the nation stage.

So, here they have a fascinating argument about the decline of the nation-state and what comes to replace the nation-state. The central idea is that we have witnessed an irresistible and irreversible economic and cultural exchange globalisation over the past several decades. This has been accompanied by a global market and circular production, which we usually identify with economic globalization and a new global order.

So, this global order will be elaborated on in the following section. These, they, suggest represents a new form of sovereignty. So, they understand empire as a new form of authority, as a new form of articulation of power. The concept of an empire represents the political subject that effectively regulates these global exchanges, the sovereign power that governs the world. So, 'Empire' represents a political subject that controls and regulates the international sales of sovereign power under which rules the world.

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The consequence for understanding what globalization 'is' in this analysis is substantial for Hardt and Negri. Rather than meaning that 'economic relations have become more autonomous from political controls' along with an associated decline of political sovereignty, they argue that 'the decline in sovereignty of nation-states ... does not mean that sovereignty as such has declined.' In contrast, therefore, to propositions that the global political system has become liberalized and freer of controls, they suggest that 'throughout the contemporary transformations, political controls, state functions and regulatory mechanisms have continued to rule the realm of economic and social production and exchange' (ibid.: xii). The 'basic hypothesis', therefore, is that 'sovereignty has taken a new form, composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule' (ibid.: xii). It is this 'new global form of sovereignty' that they define as the concept of 'Empire'.



The consequences of understanding what globalization is in this analysis are substantial for Hardt and Negri. So, before taking up any political position supporting or opposing globalization, they want to spell out your understanding of what globalisation means. So, the central question is what globalization is; several scholars try to explain it; however, most fail badly at it.

So, rather than meaning that economic relations have become more autonomous from political control along with an associated decline of political sovereignty, they argue that the decrease in the power of nation-states does not mean that sovereignty as such has declined. This is one of the usual conventional arguments that are different from the arguments about imperialism by Lenin, where political projects and economic policies are being decoupled, financial projects or the economic processes are increasingly detached or divorced from the political ambitions, and they work differently.

That is what one thinks, especially about the neo-liberal scholars; they think about an independent capitalist system, a capitalist system that is not inside or under the control of any



particular ideology and does not have an affinity to any specific political ideology. They try to present both economic and political interests and streams as entirely separate.

However, Hardt and Negri disagree with that. They argue, rather than meaning that economic relations have become more autonomous from the political control, along with an associated decline of political sovereignty, the declining power of the nation-state does not mean the sovereignty as such has declined.

So, in contrast to the proposition that the global political system has become liberalised and free of control, they suggest that through the contemporary transformations, political powers, state functions, and regulatory mechanisms have continued to rule the realm of economic and social production and exchange. Therefore, the primary hypothesis is that sovereignty has taken a new form, composed of a series of national and supranational organisms and united under a single rule logic. This is the new global form of sovereignty that they define as the concept of Empire.

So, what do they mean by that? It is not a very clear or very concrete idea. They argue that there is a decline of the nation-state and the power of the nation-state's sovereignty. However, that does not mean the fall of the idea of sovereignty or the actual political articulation of sovereignty; this sovereignty exists but in a different form.

And what does it mean? Therefore, the primary hypothesis is that sovereignty has taken a new form, composed of a series of national and supranational organisms, united under a single rule logic. So, what are these new national and supranational organisms? They talk about the IMF, the United Nations, the World Bank, and a host of similar conventions such as ILO, GATT and several other things, which they argue have a take, united under a single logic of rule. This is the new global form of sovereignty that they define as the concept of Empire.

It is not a very concrete description of what they mean by this idea of sovereignty. Still, it is presented as an entirely new form of political control, coming along with economic activities.

(Refer Slide Time: 20:52)



- Three propositions

1. The Empire has no boundary and it has completely taken over the whole civilized world.

2. It presents itself as 'an order that suspends history and thereby fixes the existing state of affairs for eternity'

3. The Empire manages everything, from economy to the very nature of human beings



So, there are three essential propositions. The Empire has no boundary, and it has completely taken over the whole civilised world. So, this, again, entirely moves beyond our conventional understanding of the limits of an empire. For example, if you think about a traditional Empire, like British Empire, or a French Empire, they had very distinct geographical boundaries or geographical points of segregation. But here, they argue that this individual sovereignty is characterised as Empire with no limit. It does not work along with the conventional geographical boundaries. Instead, it has completely taken over the civilised world.

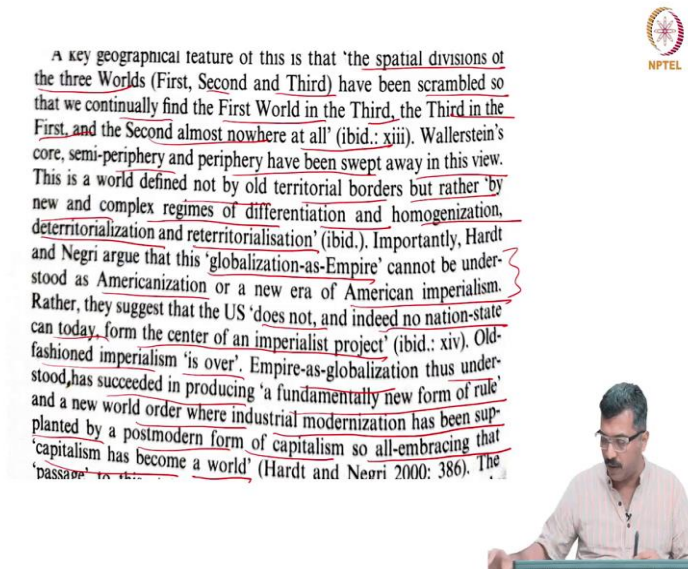
Secondly, it presents itself as an order that suspends history, thereby fixing the current affairs for eternity. This is another very tall, far-fetched claim that they make sense of. So they do not consider this as another turn in history that a new arc will replace. They disagree with that argument; instead, they argue that this fundamentally suspends an account, thereby fixing the existing state of affairs for eternity.

So, they argue this is a distinctive form of historic change that will significantly change the future because it will fix it for eternity. And the third point is that the Empire manages everything, from the economy to the very nature of human beings. So, the way Empire works again is in a characteristically different way, compared to older forms of empire or imperialism, where it must be confined to the realm of economy or polity.

Here, they argue that the Empire works through economy and polity and even through a human being, human nature, human body, and human population. So, that is where we come

across the argument of Foucault, and others, Deleuze, primarily, when they talk about the biopower and society of control, which we will discuss later.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:11)



A critical geographical source of this empire is that the spatial division of three worlds, the first, the second and the third, have been scrambled, resulting in us continually finding the first world in the third, the third in the first and the second, almost nowhere at all. This again is very problematic for me, at least personally; it is a problematic assumption when they say that this conditional distinction between the first, the second and the third world or the developed societies, the developing and the underdeveloped communities are wholly scrambled. They no longer exist because you can see the first world in the third world, it may be true that some of the very affluent places in the third world resemble the first world, and you may also find the third world in the first world.

In this view, Wallerstein's core, semi-periphery and periphery have been swept away; Emmanuel Wallerstein's compelling argument about how colonialism and capitalist expansion happened through the transfer of capital from the semi-periphery, from the edge or through the semi-periphery to the core. So, such a spatial argument, they say, is no longer valid.

This world is defined not by all the territorial borders but by new and complex regimes of differentiation and homogenisation, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. So, according to them, in this new era of Empire, all geographical scales or geographical schema no longer hold any good. It is a unique story of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation; territories

have been completely scrambled. They have been wholly disturbed, and they are being ordered into new entities.

Importantly, Hardt and Negri argue that this globalisation as Empire cannot be understood as Americanization or a new era of American imperialism. It is a critical point because this used to be a conventional left slogan; slogans of the left political parties that its Pan Americanism or 'Coca-Colalization' is happening as if America is perpetuated or represented or replicated across the place.

Instead, they suggest that the US does not. Indeed, no nation-state today can form the centre of an imperialist potential, again; a fundamental argument that you cannot understand the current Empire project as being driven by a single nation. So, it is similar to the idea of Anthony Giddens where he says that it is a runaway world, it is gone out of your control, and it works on its logic.

Here, no country can claim to represent or be the driver of this whole process. Old fashioned imperialism is over, Empire as globalisation, thus understood, has succeeded in producing a fundamentally new form of rule and a new world order where a postmodern form of capitalism has supplanted industrial modernisation; it so embracing that capitalism has become a world.

That is an important argument. Hence it is not the old, the ancient forms of imperialism. Still, a post-modern form of capitalism has become all-embracing capitalism, and capitalism has become a world. How they argue this more postmodern logic of capitalism has become so pervasive that there is nothing untouched by this whole system.

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Finally, as implied in the concept of biopower, the 'postmodernisation of the global economy' has an important social dimension. Unlike earlier historical phases of capitalism, Hardt and Negri argue that in the contemporary period 'the creation of wealth tends ever more toward . . . biopolitical production' which amounts 'to the production of social life itself, in which the economic, the political and the cultural increasingly overlap with each other' (ibid.: xiii). This is significant, for Hardt and Negri's contribution explicitly links the world order and the global economy with society and culture in one intimately interwoven framework. The separation between the economic sphere and other aspects of global social life that marks many positive, reformist and even some academic thinkers on globalization is dismissed in their approach.

To be continued



As implied in the concept of biopower, the postmodernisation of the global economy has a significant social dimension. Unlike the earlier historical face of capitalism, Hardt and Negri argue that in the contemporary period, the creation of wealth tends ever more toward biopolitical production, which amounts to the production of social life in which the economic, the political and the cultural increasingly overlap with each other.

This is significant for Hardt and Negri's contribution, explicitly linking the world order and global economy with society and culture in one intimately interwoven framework. The separation between the economic sphere and another sphere of global social life that marks many positive, reformist and even some academic thinkers on globalization is dismissed in their approach.

So, the separation between the economic sphere and others is significant; they synthesise Marxian, Neo-Marxian understanding of the central role of the economy with that of poststructuralist thinkers like Foucault, Deleuze and others.

They argue that this biopower, which will be elaborated, the influence of the economy or force of economic power cannot be an economic sphere, cannot be seen as something contained within that sphere itself, it has the enormous ability to influence social-cultural life. This again is a fundamental argument of Antonio Gramsci; his ideas about hegemony and his definition of power illustrate that one cannot think of one's cultural sphere or social sphere as something disconnected with a more significant economic argument.

Even Marx makes this kind of argument. However, the ideas of Foucault and Deleuze are much more focused on the production of subjects, the output of the physical body, production of population, production of how human beings behave, how they are groomed, how they are, how they grow up and how this social life is controlled, intensely controlled by more extensive power relations.

Okay, I will stop here, and we will continue with the same discussion in the coming class. I split the slides into two sections. Thank you.