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# Globalization's Challenge to Nation-State Sovereignty and Conflicts in the Middle East

*Küreselleşmenin Ulus-Devlet Egemenliğine Meydan Okuması ve Orta Doğu'daki  
Çatışmalar*

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## Abstract

Globalization, through social media, international organizations, cultural demands, and various political, social, and economic models, challenges traditional nation-state structures that depend on singular cultural identities and well-defined borders. These developments have had a particularly distinct impact on the Middle East compared to the West. Due to historical, social and political differences, these countries have not been able to fully implement the process of becoming a nation-state. Therefore, the lack of stable and inclusive governance has led to them having far deeper problems with globalization than the West. As a result, new demands in Middle Eastern societies are often expressed not through democratic or cultural avenues, but through violence, as the existing nation-states are neither stable and secure, nor democratic. This situation is further complicated by international pressures and interventions leading to sectarian and ethnic divisions, and even conflicts. According to the findings, in the sensitive social environment of the Middle East, such interventions exacerbate long-standing tensions and deepen crises, sometimes resulting in civil wars. For instance, the events in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Lebanon illustrate how the combination of globalization and external interventions have led to irreversible conflicts and polarized societies along identity-based lines.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Nation-State, Cultural Demands, International Organizations, Middle East

## Öz

Küreselleşme, son yıllarda uluslararası ilişkilerden politikaya, toplumsal yapılardan teknoloji ve kültüre kadar birçok alanda en çok tartışılan kavramlardan biri haline gelmiştir. Özellikle gelişmek ve ilerlemek isteyen toplumlar için kaçınılmaz bir süreç olarak görülmekte, bu sürece kayıtsız kalmak neredeyse imkânsız hale gelmektedir. Bauman'ın belirttiği gibi, küreselleşmiş bir dünyada yerel kalmak, toplumsal geri kalmışlık ve tecrit anlamına gelebilir. Küreselleşmeye direnerek yerel kalma çabası, daha büyük sosyal ve politik sorunları da beraberinde getirmektedir. Bununla birlikte, küreselleşmenin etkileri sadece politik veya ekonomik bağlamda kalmayıp, kültürel kimlikler üzerinde de derin bir etki yaratmaktadır. Kültürel kimlikler, küreselleşmenin baskısıyla homojenleşme tehdidi altında kalabilir, bu da yerel kültürlerin zamanla erozyona uğramasına yol açabilir. Küreselleşmenin en çok etkilediği yapılar arasında ulus-devletler öne çıkmaktadır. Geleneksel olarak devlet, egemenliğin temsilcisiydi. Ancak küreselleşme ile birlikte bireyler, topluluklar, çok uluslu şirketler ve çok taraflı örgütler önemli politik aktörler olarak ortaya çıkmış ve devletin tek başına dominant aktör olma rolü büyük ölçüde zayıflamıştır. NATO, Birleşmiş Milletler (BM), Dünya Ticaret Örgütü (WTO) ve Uluslararası Para Fonu (IMF) gibi uluslararası kuruluşların genişlemesi, ulus-devletlerin egemenlik alanlarını daraltmıştır. Bu tür uluslararası kuruluşlar, küresel politikaları şekillendirirken, yerel hükümetlerin karar alma süreçlerine doğrudan veya dolaylı yollardan müdahale edebilir. Bu da özellikle bağımsızlık ve egemenlik kavramlarının sorgulanmasına yol açmaktadır.

Küreselleşmenin etkileri, özellikle az gelişmiş ülkelerde daha belirgin olmuştur. Orta Doğu'da yer alan Afganistan, Irak, Suriye ve Lübnan gibi ülkelerde mezhepsel ve etnik gruplar arasındaki gerilimler, küreselleşmenin tetiklediği kimlik krizleri ile daha da derinleşmiştir. Bu ülkelerdeki kırılğan devlet yapısı, güçlü sivil kurumların eksikliği ve gelişmemiş demokratik kültür, yaygın çatışmalara ve istikrarsızlığa neden olmuştur. İç savaşlar ve sürekli çatışmalar, bu ülkelerdeki ulus inşası süreçlerini ciddi şekilde kesintiye uğratmıştır. Özellikle bu bölgelerdeki

lkeler, kresel dinamiklere uyum saęlamaya alıřırken hem i hem de dıř politik baskılar altında kalmaktadırlar. Bu durum, uluslararası arenada daha fazla mdahaleye aık hale gelmelerine neden olmaktadır.

Kreselleřme, ulus-devletlerin egemenlięini ve vatandařlarının devlete baęlılıęını sorgularken, uluslararası gler de bu lkelerin i siyasetinde nemli roller oynamaktadır. Bahsi geen lkelerdeki uluslararası mdahaleler, devletlerin egemenlik alanlarını daraltmıř ve vatandařların devlete olan baęlılıklarını zayıflatmıřtır. zellikle Batı mdahaleleri, bu lkelerdeki politik yapıların istikrarını tehdit eden faktrlerden biri haline gelmiřtir. Kreselleřmenin etkisi, dıř mdahalelerle sınırlı kalmamakta, aynı zamanda ulusal gvenlik sorunlarını da uluslararası bir dzeye tařıtmaktadır. Ancak ulus-devletlerin tamamen yok olduęunu sylemek doęru olmaz. Kreselleřmenin getirdięi zorluklara raęmen, ulus-devletler uluslararası sistemde hala nemli aktrler olarak varlıklarını srdrmektedir. Bununla birlikte, varlıklarını koruyabilmek iin ekonomik, politik ve sosyal alanlarda uyum saęlamaları ve yeniliki politikalar geliřtirmeleri gerekmektedir. Kreselleřmeye direnmeyip egemenliklerini yeniden yapılandıran ulus-devletler varlıklarını srdrebilirken, bu srece diren gsterenler uluslararası baskılar karřısında erime riski ile karřı karřıya kalmaktadır.

Kreselleřme srecinde ulus-devletin geirdięi dnřm, en arpıcı rneklerini Orta Doęu'da gstermiřtir. Fransız Devrimi'nden bu yana temel politik aktr olan ulus-devlet, kreselleřme srecinde ciddi bir deęiřime uęramıřtır. Geleneksel egemenlik anlayıřı ařınmıř, ulus-devletler kendilerini kresel dinamiklere gre yeniden řekillendirmek zorunda kalmıřlardır. Orta Doęu'daki deneyimler, bu dnřmn en dikkat ekici rneklerinden bazılarını sunmaktadır. Bu sre, etnik kimlik taleplerini artırma potansiyeline sahiptir ve ulus-devletlerin merkezi ynetim ve standardizasyon yoluyla dayattıęı tek tip kimlik anlayıřını sarsmaktadır. Etnik ve kltrel kimlikler daha fazla nem kazandıka, ulus-devletin tek bir ulusal kimlięi dayatma kapasitesi zayıflamakta, bu da i atıřmalar ve paralanma risklerini artırmaktadır. Buna ek olarak, modern iletiřim aralarının yaygınlařması, etnik kimliklerin kresel dzeyde daha grnr hale gelmesine ve bu kimliklerin siyasi taleplerini daha gl bir řekilde ifade etmesine olanak saęlamıřtır.

Kreselleřmenin, sosyal medya, uluslararası rgtler, kltrel talepler ve eřitli politik, sosyal ve ekonomik modeller aracılıęıyla ulus-devlet yapısına meydan okuduęu aıktır. Orta Doęu'daki ulus-devlet yapıları, Batı'ya kıyasla kreselleřmeden ok daha derin etkilenmiřtir. Bu lkeler, tarihsel, sosyal ve politik nedenlerden dolayı tam anlamıyla ulus-devlet olma srecini tamamlayamamıřlardır. Bu nedenle, istikrarlı ve kapsayıcı bir ynetime sahip olamamaları, bu blgelerde kreselleřmenin getirdięi sorunların Batı'ya kıyasla daha derin olmasına yol amıřtır. Ortadoęu toplumlarında ortaya ıkan yeni talepler, oęu zaman demokratik ya da kltrel yollarla deęil, řiddet yoluyla ifade edilmektedir. Var olan ulus-devletler ne istikrarlı ne de demokratiktir. Bu durum, uluslararası baskılar ve mdahalelerle daha da karmařıklařmakta, mezhep ve etnik blnmelere, hatta atıřmalara yol amaktadır.

Ortadoęu'nun hassas sosyal yapısında, kreselleřmenin tetikledięi bu tr dıř mdahaleler, uzun sredir var olan gerilimleri artırmakta ve krizleri derinleřtirmektedir. Irak, Suriye, Afganistan ve Lbnan'da yařanan olaylar, kreselleřme ile uluslararası mdahalelerin birleřiminin nasıl geri dnlemez atıřmalara yol atıęını ve toplumları kimlik temelli hatlar boyunca nasıl kutuplařtırdıęını gstermektedir. Bu kutuplařma, sadece i siyasal sreleri deęil, aynı zamanda uluslararası iliřkileri de etkileyen nemli bir faktr haline gelmiřtir.

Sonuç olarak, küreselleşme sürecinde ulus-devlet yapılarının içindeki etnik taleplerin güçlenmesi ve bu taleplerin uluslararası örgütler tarafından müdahale aracı olarak kullanılması, Orta Doğu'daki ulus-devletlerin egemenliklerini yeniden şekillendirmek zorunda olduklarını açıkça göstermektedir. Uluslararası örgütler, bu etnik talepleri küresel müdahalelerinde daha rahat bir şekilde kullanarak, bu ülkelerdeki iç karışıklıklardan faydalanmaktadırlar. Bu da ulus-devletlerin gelecekte daha fazla parçalanma ve iç çatışma riski ile karşı karşıya kalacağını ortaya koymaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Küreselleşme, Ulus-Devlet, Uluslararası Organizasyonlar, Orta Doğu

## Introduction

Globalization, driven by advances in transportation networks, communication technologies, and cross-border capital movements, has significantly impacted societies and states. Initially felt in the economic and cultural spheres, this influence quickly permeated the political domain, raising concerns about the sovereignty of nation-states. With the Treaty of Westphalia, the nation-state was recognized as the fundamental structure of the international system (Latouche, 1993: 89). Nation-states established various social frameworks to enhance the welfare of their citizens and ensure economic stability. However, the globalization of capitalism introduced new rules and dynamics that transcended national boundaries.

The defining feature of nation-states, "national sovereignty," is based on their ability to control the movement of information, goods, capital, and people within their borders. However, the economic, socio-cultural, and political effects of globalization have eroded this control. States can no longer fully isolate themselves from international structures and processes to maintain absolute sovereignty and are affected by war or any international incident (Alibabalu, 2023).

This paper examines the impact of globalization on nation-states and ethnic identities in the Middle East. Globalization, through tools such as social media, communication platforms, and international organizations, challenges the homogenizing identity imposed by nation-state structures. Ethnic, sectarian, and ideologically driven groups are increasingly questioning and challenging the traditional hegemony of nation-states, leveraging the opportunities provided by globalization. In this process, nation-states face pressures from internal demands, threatening their legitimacy, while simultaneously contending with international calls for human rights and minority rights.

These dynamics are particularly evident in the Middle East. States in the region, facing both internal and external pressures generated by globalization, perceive threats to their traditional power, identity, and legitimacy. In response, they have sought to redefine their identities either through soft means (democratic reforms) or more severe measures (repressive policies). This has exacerbated the region's ethnic and sectarian sensitivities, often sparking internal conflicts.

However, identity-based conflicts are not limited to the Middle East. Separatist movements in regions such as the Basque region in Spain, South Tyrol in Italy, and Scotland and Wales in the United Kingdom, as well as violent conflicts in Northern Ireland, demonstrate how even Western nation-states are being challenged by globalization. In the United States, tensions between Mexican and English-speaking groups can also be seen as a reflection of these global dynamics. Ultimately, the process of globalization has deepened identity issues and legitimacy crises in many countries that had long struggled to achieve nation-state status. These states have been forced to seek democratic solutions to identity demands or, in some cases, confront violent conflicts.

In this regard, various studies have been conducted. Fawcett (2017) believes that the state system in the Middle East exhibits fragility, collapse, and durability, with the protests following 2011 becoming an anti-revolutionary movement. Similarly, Nikfar (2020) argues that globalization poses significant challenges to absolute and authoritarian political systems in the Middle East, and asserts that changes in regional power dynamics and political structures are inevitable. Moussalli (1998) focuses on the impact of globalization on Arab nation-states, and highlights challenges to national sovereignty and economic policies amid global economic liberalism. He contends that globalization, regional dynamics, and foreign interventions have significantly altered political and economic systems in the Arab world.

Additionally, Griffel (2003) analyzes globalization's role in increasing Islamism in the Middle East, and argues that it has paradoxically strengthened Islamic fundamentalism by fostering networks among Muslims. He posits that globalization has shaped a shared understanding of Islam and Muslim identity across the region, which challenges the notion that globalization equates to Westernization. This process has also posed challenges to national governments in Middle Eastern countries.

### **Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative research approach, that relies on theoretical discussions and extensive literature reviews to explore the impact of globalization on nation-state sovereignty, with a specific focus on the Middle East. The qualitative methodology was chosen for its suitability in examining complex social, political, and economic phenomena. Qualitative research relies on textual and visual data, taking specific steps in data analysis and utilizing various research strategies (Creswell, 2009: 163).

The research began with an extensive review of both primary and secondary sources, including academic journal articles, books, reports from international organizations, and relevant historical documents. Key theoretical frameworks related to globalization, nation-state sovereignty, and ethnic identity were identified, including the works of Latouche (1993) on the evolution of the nation-state, and scholarly articles analyzing the Middle Eastern context.

The study primarily adopts a constructivist approach, recognizing that nation-state structures and identities are socially constructed and thus subject to change under the influence of global processes (Wendt, 1999). This framework helps in understanding how globalization shapes and reshapes national identities, especially in regions like the Middle East, where state sovereignty is contested by ethnic and sectarian groups. While this paper does not involve empirical data collection, it synthesizes findings from various case studies, such as those in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, to provide a comprehensive understanding of how globalization has exacerbated existing ethnic and sectarian tensions in the Middle East. These case studies were selected based on their relevance to the core research question, and analyzed through comparative and historical methods to identify recurring patterns and outcomes. By combining a theoretical analysis with case study evidence, this research aims to offer new insights into the ways globalization challenges traditional nation-state structures, particularly in fragile and conflict-ridden regions.

### **Globalization: Origins and Roots**

Globalization derives from the word "glob," meaning round, and is used to describe a development trend that encompasses the entire globe (Çağlı, 2006). The nature of globalization and how it

reflects social realities are topics widely discussed today. Beginning as a manifestation of Europe-centric developments, this process now affects every corner of the world (Karyelioğlu, 2012: 140).

It is argued that globalization began in the 18th century, gaining significant momentum, particularly in the late 20th century, due to economic, technological, and ideological factors. Advances in information and communication technologies have enabled the transition from an industrial society to an information society, reduced costs, altered consumer preferences, and eliminated the time and space limitations that previously separated countries, people, and markets. This has led to an increase in the trend of a globally integrated market, expanding companies' production areas from a single country to the entire world, initiating a process in which international corporations began to replace countries as economic actors (Aslan, 2009: 289).

Globalization accelerated after the 1945–1950 period and reached an unprecedented level, especially in the post-1980 era. There are several reasons behind this development. Economically, international trade volume and capital flows have reached unprecedented levels, and there has been a significant transformation in global production processes. Political globalization gained significant momentum after World War II, with efforts focused on preventing another such conflict. Additionally, the communication technology revolution of this period affected nearly every region of the world. Particularly after 1980, the environmental, demographic, and cultural dimensions of globalization began to take center stage on the global agenda (Bayar, 2008: 27).

The dissolution of the Soviet Union, the formation of the European Union, and the communication and information revolutions that accelerated during these years have all played a role in the spread of globalization. This process, characterized by the surpassing of state boundaries and the emergence of new relationships and institutions in the economic and political spheres, along with the introduction of new values, is known as "globalization" (Aslan, 2009: 289). This process has also impacted the classical sovereignty of nation-states, bringing various societies and peoples closer together. According to Robertson, globalization is the process of compressing the world and increasing the awareness that the world is a single, interconnected whole (Robertson, 1992: 8). This process has challenged nation-states in various ways, leading to a weakening of their ability to control and homogenize their populations and ethnic groups. In other words, movements such as divergence, localism, fragmentation, and the pursuit of independence are complementary processes to globalization (Waters, 2010: 67).

Some international relations theorists have described globalization as a fragmenting process, eroding the sovereignty of states and fostering the emergence of new social, cultural, and religious loyalties. They predicted a world divided along religious and civilizational lines, seemingly heading toward an era of ethnic and cultural violence (Sadowski, 1998: 4). Habermas is also among those who are skeptical of globalization, arguing that a state increasingly entangled in the interdependencies between the global economy and global society is witnessing a decline in its autonomy, capacity for action, and democratic substance (Habermas, 1999).

In his book *Legitimation Crisis*, Habermas explores the relationships between state, capital, and nations, asserting that if any of these elements weaken, the legitimacy of that nation-state will diminish. According to him, because of globalization, the powers of nation-states are diminishing step by step. Habermas refers to this process as "post-national." He argues that globalization of markets, economic processes, culture, and communication challenges the traditional functions of nation-states, such as maintaining order, ensuring peace, sustainable security, market balance, and the legitimacy of institutions originating from the nation-state. Similarly, Samir Amin

contends that the globalization process challenges and undermines the ideology of the nation-state (Salimi, 2005: 182).

### **Globalization's Impact on Middle Eastern Nation-States' Sovereignty**

Globalization has deeply impacted the sovereignty of nation-states. At its core, a nation-state can be defined as a political structure where nations, united by common values, live together within a certain political framework shaped by national policies (Cebeci, 2008: 2). From another perspective, a nation-state is a political organization with sovereignty over a defined territory and population. It claims to represent a national identity. National identity represents a form of collective identity anchored in historical symbols, shared memories, and values associated with a particular territory. It not only differentiates one nation from others but also shapes its future trajectory (Guibernau, 2001). Traditionally, the key features of a nation-state include mandatory membership of a society within defined borders, full dependence of this society on the state, efforts for the stability and sovereignty of the state, and citizens' adherence to a national identity. In general, the contributions of the nation-state model can be summarized as the development of national consciousness, the advancement of language, overcoming regional and local fragmentation, the establishment of a single currency, protectionist customs barriers, the creation of a national industry in developing countries through import substitution, strong and stable central power, the growth of national markets, and the replacement of religious and imperial concepts with secular national and citizenship ideals (Yalçinkaya, 2012: 12).

There are various types of nation-states suited to different structures. Among the most significant are the "top-down" and "bottom-up" processes of nation-building. Bottom-up nation-building occurs over time, as groups of people sharing a common identity and culture within a specific territory form their own state. In contrast, as it was in the Middle East, in the top-down model, a powerful state establishes institutions to unify diverse ethnic, sectarian, and cultural groups into a single nation, using nationalism, citizenship, and civil rights as tools. In this process, the state becomes the primary actor in nation-building, aiming to resolve crises through policies and strategies.

These types of states often remained under long-term colonial rule and, even after gaining independence, continued to rely on Western societies for their economic and political structures. As a consequence, they encounter persistent challenges to their cultural identity and national security posed by Western influences. For example, societies that were shaped by ethnic and sectarian divisions during decolonization, with artificially drawn borders, are more prone to insecurity and conflict (Clark, 2003: 243).

Some political and social science scientists believe that nation-state-building "top-down" is always facing the crisis of nation-building and cannot solve this problem due to discrimination and internal colonization against other ethnic and religious groups. For example, Michael Hechter is among those who believe that ethnic tensions have increased both in Third World countries and in countries like Britain, which ranks among the first in capitalist production and industrialization. According to him, the new nation-states in these regions have failed to eliminate these ethnic tensions (Hechter, 1975).

This issue is particularly significant in the Middle East, where, with few exceptions, almost all countries have ethnic or religious minorities and have been engaged in ethnic-religious conflicts for decades (Alibabalu et al., 2020). This trend has intensified with globalization, as it has led to challenges for nation-states, an increase in cultural relativism, multiple identity references,

and greater awareness among ethnic groups about their counterparts in neighboring countries. In the age of globalization, differences and diversities manifest themselves through various identities. Identities no longer possess the rigidity they once had and instead take on a transformative and fluid nature. As Castells (2001: 23) argues, all identities become constructed and fluid. Therefore, the socio-cultural aspects of globalization are increasingly coming to the forefront.

### **Globalization's Challenges to Nation-State Sovereignty**

First of all, globalization has socio-cultural, economic and political effects on the national sovereignty of nation-states. The socio-cultural changes brought about by globalization have profoundly shaken the concept of sovereignty in nation-states. Global mobility, particularly in the form of migrants and refugees, has emerged as a significant threat to the security and economic structures of nation-states. In response to these challenges, nation-states have been encouraged to collaborate with international organizations, occasionally sharing or adjusting certain aspects of their sovereignty, though they still retain significant control in most areas. Moreover, the impact of globalization is not limited to migration alone. With the advancement of communication technologies, interactions between different societies, ethnic groups, and cultures have increased. Globalization has weakened the nation-state's efforts to create a homogenized national identity, leading to the fragmentation of national cultures. While some view this as cultural degradation, it has also allowed global and local cultures to challenge the homogenizing influence of national cultures (Bakan, 2012: 61).

The speed and intensity of global cultural flows have transformed the world into a space where processes of both cultural integration and disintegration occur simultaneously (Çoba, 2005: 13). These cultural interactions have sparked not only international tensions but also deep internal cultural conflicts within societies. Samuel Huntington's concept of the "clash of civilizations" highlights the internal cultural struggles that manifest at the local level (Huntington, Berger, 2003: 24). Thus, globalization has intensified cross-border cultural interactions and put nation-states under pressure from international forces and local cultures. To what extent nation-states can withstand these challenges has become a matter of debate.

Globalization also has economic and socio-political effects and has profoundly reshaped the structure and functioning of nation-states. Economically, globalization has given rise to multinational corporations, regional integrations, and non-governmental organizations that transcend national borders. These developments have forced nation-states to adapt, as decision-making is increasingly influenced by these new global actors, alongside traditional state powers (Cebeci, 2008: 28). Additionally, in regions like the Middle East, where developing nations struggle to meet the social needs of their citizens, globalization has further strained the capacity of states to address such issues. According to Bauman, weak states which fought against the Western colonial policies in the past may act as local enforcers of global corporate interests rather than challengers to Western colonialism (Bauman, 2000: 79). Furthermore, the delegation of authority to supranational institutions such as the IMF, OECD, and GATT, as well as regional cooperation agreements, has diminished the economic sovereignty of nation-states in terms of decision-making, implementation, and oversight (Kazgan, 2005: 16). As a result, global actors have reduced the role of nation-states as sole architects of the global order, making it impossible for states to operate independently of this new framework.

Politically, rapid technological and economic advancements have also triggered significant transformations within the international system and nation-states such as Syria and Iraq.



Traditionally, nation-states have sought to maintain internal stability by fostering homogeneity among their populations, often employing measures to suppress diversity. However, globalization has paradoxically both facilitated the emergence of globalized individuals with shared characteristics and revived the distinct identities that nation-states had attempted to homogenize (Bakan, 2012: 59). This has blurred the lines between national and global issues, as states are increasingly influenced by international developments. Consequently, some nation-states find their capacity to respond to global challenges limited, leading to a reconfiguration of state sovereignty. The shift from absolute to conditional sovereignty is evident in instances such as the prosecution of criminals in international courts, which has restricted the power of states over their citizens and weakened the traditional understanding of sovereignty (Aslan, 2009: 293).

As globalization accelerates, nation-states are facing increasing scrutiny over their internal governance, particularly as economic, political, and military dependencies grow, limiting their ability to pursue independent policies (Aslan, 2009: 291). Moreover, the authority of nation-states has become subject to international norms in areas such as democracy, human rights, trade law, and environmental protection, with supranational institutions and civil society organizations assuming greater oversight and accountability functions (Kazgan, 2005: 17). Hence, modern nation-states such as Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen and Lebanon find their sovereignty being challenged both from above by supranational entities and from below by ethnic groups, social movements, and local governments demanding greater autonomy.

### **Nation-State Erosion and Ethnic Identity in the Middle East**

Modern states, particularly nation-states, are built on three fundamental assumptions:

1. They are stronger than other actors within their territory.
2. The people living within their borders generally accept the authority of these states.
3. States provide fundamental services, such as "law and order," which are not available under other conditions.

However, these assumptions are increasingly being challenged by the process of globalization (Hobsbawm, 2008: 107). Several factors contribute to this shift within the context of globalization. The economic model imposed by capitalism envisions a nation-state with limited intervention in the economy. This situation risks narrowing the sovereignty of nation-states and rendering them functionally obsolete. On one hand, the authority of nation-states is being diminished; on the other hand, the capitalist global economy demonstrates that it is difficult to completely disregard the security and profitable activities provided by nation-states (Bakan, 2012: 62). For example, while global economic crises extend beyond the capacity of individual nation-states, powerful nation-states continue to provide a secure refuge for their citizens during such crises (Fukuyama, 2008: 140). Consequently, nation-states continue to play significant economic and political roles. Nevertheless, globalization is transforming nation-states into new structures, and the ultimate outcomes of this transformation remain uncertain.

Some perspectives argue that new forms of social organization emerging from globalization will eventually replace the nation-state, which will eventually disappear. Conversely, others claim that while the social and national dimensions of the nation-state are being eroded, the state mechanisms will not completely vanish due to the needs of the capitalist system. Some commentators suggest that states might develop strategies to adapt to globalization, reshape their concepts of sovereignty, and continue to exist (Aslan, 2009: 291). The key issue here is to analyze

this process thoroughly and develop appropriate policies. Globalization is an unstoppable process, but it can be controlled and directed with the right policies.

Today, states are deeply interdependent, especially in the economic sphere. In such a tightly interconnected network, it is challenging to speak of absolute sovereignty. States operate not only within their own territories but also in other countries, which has become a necessity for playing a significant role in the global economy (Alici, 2010: 322). In a world where economic and trade barriers are dismantled and capital and labor move freely, the traditional role of nation-states is undergoing a significant transformation. The increasing scale and power of multinational corporations particularly threaten the political dominance of nation-states. Additionally, economic and political integration processes have made nation-states more connected to the global economy. This situation ties the future of nation-states to their ability to maintain international balance.

The incomplete establishment of nation-state structures in regions like the Middle East complicates this process further. In these countries, nation-states struggle to manage ethnic diversity and historical tensions, increasing the potential for minority demands to escalate into conflicts. In a globalized world, the global impact of these ethnic conflicts is also growing. The quest for minority rights in the Middle East can be manipulated by global powers, threatening the stability of the region. Thus, the impact of globalization on the internal dynamics of nation-states is deepening not only in economic and political realms but also in ethnic and social spheres.

In fact the rapid spread of globalization has led to profound changes in traditional nation-state structures, significantly affecting core concepts such as sovereignty, legitimacy, and security. This process has particularly intensified identity crises in regions with high ethnic and sectarian diversity, such as the Middle East. The fragility of state structures and their susceptibility to global interventions have contributed to the weakening of nation-states.

In certain countries in the Middle East, which have experienced long-standing ethnic, sectarian, and tribal conflicts, the absence of peace and convergence, combined with weak traditional democratic practices and a lack of authoritative power, has led minorities to resort to violence as a means to achieve their goals (Liphard, 1977: 1-3). In many of these societies, the fragile nature of states and political institutions has resulted in severe crises, instability, and insecurity. Globalization has exacerbated these issues by undermining state sovereignty, highlighting security concerns, and internationalizing domestic problems, thereby striking significant blows to the nation-state formation process. This situation has, in some cases, even provoked external interventions under the pretext of security. Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan are notable examples of such countries.

For instance, in Iraq, external forces have exacerbated identity crises arising from sectarian and ethnic contexts, leading to major conflicts. Countries intervening in Iraq, notably the United States, attempted to establish a new nation-state comprising all ethnic and sectarian groups. However, this attempt at democracy failed to bring peace and instead intensified tribal and sectarian conflicts (Waymer, 2003: 3-5). The new national state, composed of Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds, has been unsuccessful, and other groups, such as Turks, have also fallen victim to these conflicts. In countries like Iran, Lebanon, and Syria, globalization has increased the potential for ethnic and sectarian demands to escalate into conflicts. In Iran, ethnic minorities such as Azerbaijani Turks, Baluchis, Kurds, and Arabs have historically sought recognition of their identities. Although the Iranian state has pursued centralized policies to control these demands, the increased external connections and international media, influenced by globalization, have

enabled these groups to amplify their voices. Consequently, regional instabilities and pressures on ethnic minority rights in Iran have deepened the identity crisis.

Lebanon represents another complex case with its sectarian structure and the political power balances among different religious groups. The power struggle among Sunni, Shia, and Christian groups has hindered the formation of a national identity. The impact of globalization, particularly external interventions affecting domestic balances, has further exacerbated the country's instability. Since the 1980s, the strengthening of organizations like Hezbollah and the interventions of external actors such as Iran have deepened the identity crisis in Lebanon. The fragility of Lebanon's political structure has weakened the nation-state framework and, under the impact of globalization, internationalized the crisis.

Syria is another significant example where both ethnic and sectarian conflicts have violently erupted. In the Syrian civil war, the involvement of both local and global actors fighting against the Assad regime highlights the decisive role of globalization in the crisis. Conflicts among Sunni, Alawite, Kurdish, and other ethnic and religious groups have been further intensified by global powers, leading to the near collapse of the nation-state structure. Syria turned into an international battleground due to globalization after 2011, severely undermining core nation-state concepts such as sovereignty, identity, and security. The deepening of domestic conflicts and external interventions has rendered the reconstruction of Syria's nation-state structure nearly impossible.

Similar to Iraq, countries such as Iran, Lebanon, and Syria struggle to resolve their domestic issues due to the effects of globalization, and the periodic identity crises in these nations have often led to significant unrest. The demands of ethnic and sectarian groups in these countries have weakened central authority, while external interventions have further fueled these conflicts. Consequently, globalization has deepened the identity crises of nation-states in the Middle East and complicated their integration into the international system.

## **Conclusion**

In recent years, "globalization" has become one of the most debated concepts across various fields, including international relations, politics, society, technology, and culture. Globalization is seen as an inevitable process, particularly for societies aiming to develop and progress, making it impossible to remain indifferent to this process. As Bauman notes, remaining local in a globalized world can signify social regression and isolation. Attempting to stay local amid globalization brings about larger social and political issues. For instance, certain states in the region, such as Iran and Syria, have made considerable efforts to maintain their local orientations, which has exacerbated existing challenges and created additional complexities.

One of the most affected entities by the globalization process has been nation-states. Traditionally, the state represented sovereignty, however with globalization, individuals, communities, multinational corporations, and multilateral organizations have emerged as significant political actors, significantly diminishing the state's role as the sole dominant actor. In this regard, the expansion of international organizations such as NATO, the UN, WTO, and IMF has led to a reduction in the sovereignty of Middle Eastern nation-states like Syria and Iraq. Global sanctions posed by international organizations have severely weakened the traditional concept of absolute sovereignty in these countries and highlighted the growing necessity for immediate reforms, especially in developing nations or those with unstable democratic institutions.

The effects of globalization have been more profound in less developed countries, particularly in the Middle East. Tensions between sectarian and ethnic groups in countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon have been exacerbated by the identity crises triggered by globalization. In these countries, the fragile state structure, lack of strong civil institutions, and underdeveloped democratic culture has contributed to widespread conflict and instability. The nation-building process in these countries has been severely disrupted by civil wars and continuous conflicts between the state institutions and people.

Globalization challenges both the sovereignty of nation-states and the loyalty of their citizens, while international actors exert a significant influence on the domestic politics of these countries. In the Middle East, interventions by the great powers, such as the United States intervention in Iraq and Syria, have weakened state sovereignty, weakened citizens' allegiance to their governments, and exacerbated sectarian, ethnic, and religious tensions. These interventions have directly contributed to the strengthening of ethnic and religious identities, accompanied by increased demands for rights and representation. The failure of central governments to adequately address these demands has, in some cases, led to the emergence of extremist groups, some of which have evolved into organized terrorist entities, ultimately triggering civil wars across many countries in the region. Therefore, the impact of globalization extends beyond external interventions and also affects domestic security issues which extend on an international scale.

Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that nation-states, especially those of Middle Eastern, are entirely disappearing. Despite the challenges posed by globalization, nation-states continue to exist as key actors in the international system. However, to maintain their existence, they must adapt and innovate in the economic, political, and social spheres. Nation-states that can adjust to globalization by restructuring their sovereignty will persist, while those resisting this process face the risk of being overwhelmed by international pressures.

Given the crucial role of education, the development of political and social structures, and particularly the reform of governmental institutions, alongside technological advancements in adapting to the globalization process, many societies in the Middle East are confronted with complex historical challenges. Consequently, they experience varying degrees of social, economic, cultural, and even political disintegration in response to the powerful forces of globalization. The post-2011 experiences of Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Egypt serve as a clear illustration of this phenomenon.

In conclusion, the nation-state, a fundamental political actor since the French Revolution, has undergone significant transformation during the process of globalization. The traditional notion of sovereignty has eroded, and nation-states have been compelled to reshape themselves in response to global dynamics. The experiences in the Middle East provide some of the most striking examples of this transformation. This process is likely to amplify ethnic identity demands, undermining the uniformity that nation-states have historically sought to impose through centralized governance and standardization. As ethnic and cultural identities gain more prominence, the nation-state's capacity to enforce a singular national identity will face increasing challenges, potentially leading to greater fragmentation and domestic conflicts within the region.

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