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Citizenship in the Age of Globalization

February 15, 2008 | Volume 1 | Issue 3
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During the early part of this decade two competing and influential conceptions of the ‘new imperialism’ emerged to focus on questions of international security, world order, and the evolving world system of states. Robert Cooper (2000), one-time Deputy Secretary of the Defence and Overseas Secretariat in the British Cabinet

Office, posits the development of a postmodern European state system based on transparency, interdependence, and mutual surveillance. He calls for a ‘new imperialism’ – one compatible with human rights and cosmopolitan values – in order to sort out the problems of rogue states and the chaos of pre-modern states. By contrast, Michael Hardt and Anthony Negri (2001) use the combined resources of Marx and Deleuze to chart the emergence of a new form of sovereignty they call Empire. They narrate a history of the passage from imperialism to Empire, that is, from a modernity dominated by the sovereignty of nation-states under Westphalia, and the imperialisms of European powers, to a postmodernity characterized by a single though decentred, new logic of global rule. They suggest that the passage to Empire, with its processes of globalization, “offer new possibilities to the forces of liberation,” arguing that our political future will be determined by our capacity “not simply to resist these processes but to reorganize them and redirect them toward new ends.”(p. xv)

In a strong sense, Hardt and Negri’s Empire and Cooper’s ‘new imperialism’ are both geopolitical and juridical forms of globalization that are dependent on emergent forms of global sovereignty though not necessarily forms of global citizenship. Questions of national identity and citizenship are transformed when raised in this new geopolitical context. The difference between the two views is that whereas the former focuses on American Empire as the dominant form the latter concentrates on an emergent European postmodern state system. They both entertain extranational forms of sovereignty based on these supranational systems and yet only the latter problematizes the concept of citizenship based on the bounded system of the sovereign state to describe a complex of rights that varies with scale and location. The U.S., exhibiting a kind of ‘defensive modernity’, recoils from liberal multiculturalism to fiercely defend its borders especially against the southern influx of Mexican migrants who want to equalize global opportunity and world resources. This defensive posturing also focuses negatively on American values and identity in contradistinction to the Other, and often blatantly engages the politics of racism and stereotypes to instil fear, create division, and manipulate the voters.

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At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the world experiences processes of both integration and disintegration. The expansion of world markets as a form of economic globalisation can be understood as a process of integration composed of international flows of capital, goods, information, and people. The same process is both a form of economical integration and a polarization of wealth that exacerbates existing tendencies toward greater global inequalities between rich and poor countries and regions. It also accentuates the need for reviewing the templates of the global system of governance that emerged with the Bretton Woods agreement, which founded many of the world institutions that comprised the architecture of the postwar world system. Now, more than at any time in the past, with the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet system, the consolidation of the EU, the entry of China in the WTO, and the growth of India, we are witnessing an accelerated set of changes – economic, cultural, technological and political – that impinge on one another in novel ways and create new possibilities and dangers both for the democratic state and the notions of citizenship and national identity that underpin it.

The modern concept of citizenship – a recent concept historically – implies the existence of a civil or political community, a set of rights and obligations ascribed to citizens by virtue of their membership in that community, and an ethic of participation and solidarity needed to sustain it. Most traditional accounts of citizenship begin with the assertion of basic civil, political and social rights of individuals and note the way in which the modern concept as inherently egalitarian, took on a universal appeal with the development of the liberal tradition which is often understood as synonymous with modernity. Yet the concept has appealed to both conservatives and radical democrats: the former emphasise individual freedom at the expense of equality and see state intervention as an intolerable and unwarranted violated of the freedom of the individual while the latter stress the democratic potential of citizenship. Increasingly, on the left the concept has been seen as a means to control the injustices of capitalism. For the left, the most pressing question has been the status of citizenship in the modern state and what kind of political community best promotes it.

The classic theorisation of democratic citizenship is to be found in Marshall’s famous modelling of three forms of citizenship: civil, political and social. In this conception civil citizenship referred to personal liberty and a regime of individual rights, political citizenship referred to both political participation and democratic representation,

and social citizenship to intervention by the state to reduce economic inequalities and promote social justice. It is now possible to chart the significant shifts in the definitions of citizenship that have accompanied globalization, including the breakdown of the historic compromise between capitalism, democracy and the welfare state, the rise of neoliberalism, and with it the expansion of world markets.

In the U.S. under the neocons, and the U.K. under the so-called Third Way, a mantle inherited by Prime Minister Brown, there has been a shift from the concept of rights to responsibilities and a move away from state intervention towards the market and the construction of ‘consumer-citizens’ who are increasingly forced to invest in themselves at critical points in their life-cycle (education, work, retirement) or go into debt. At the same time there has been a shift to the third sector with community and church involvement in the definition of social welfare policy and an emphasis on giving, gifting and voluntary work often thinly disguising a moral re-regulation of social life, especially of single women and their children. Increasingly, with the development of information and communications technologies, there has been a rise in state surveillance and, especially after 9/11, an erosion of liberal rights and a shift from active political citizenship to passive political literacy; concomitantly, the same technologies have supported new public spaces and civil networks that are interest-based and transcend the geography of face-to-face communities and even larger collectivities like states.

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Perhaps, more than ever before the question of globalization and citizenship revolves around the free movement of peoples. By this I mean not only the modern diaspora, or the planned colonial migrations, or the more recent global mobility of highly skilled labour that is rewarded by citizenship. But more importantly, I mean refugees of all kinds and asylum-seekers and all that that entails – enforced border crossings, ethnic cleansing policies, the huge illegal movement of so-called ‘aliens’ or the ‘undocumented’, detention camps the likes of Woomera in Australia and even Guantanomo Bay, where the concept of rights is fragile or has entirely disappeared. Derrida (2001) argues for a form of cosmopolitanism that entails the right to asylum while Dummett (2001) focuses on refugee and immigration policy, increasingly a

defining policy issue for the U.S., France, and the U.K.

The terms ‘globalization’ and ‘citizenship’ are not normally juxtaposed in social and political analysis. They tend to appear as contradictory or, at least, conflicting: the former points to a set of economic and cultural processes of unequal and uneven world integration, based on the unregulated flows of capital and underwritten by developments in new information and communications technologies, while the latter serves mainly as a metaphor for political community or solidarity. To what extent does globalization (as financialization) threaten the sovereignty of the nation-state and with it the notion of citizenship that developed during the modern era? To what extent can citizenship be severed from questions of national identity? Within the context of globalization how can we maintain or develop a sense of community and local identity to establish or defend the hard-won entitlements of social citizenship? What possibilities are there for developing genuine transnational alliances and defining entirely new sets of rights within supranational political arenas? To what extent can the movement of individuals and peoples come to be regarded as genuinely free within states, regions, and continents; and how might states that encourage the free-floating ‘globally integrated enterprise’ also extend universal and lawful protections to migrants, refugees and those seeking asylum? These are critical questions that ought to inform a democratic response to citizenship and to the question of citizenship education.

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