



Understanding Social Change

Internationalist views

Bob Kelly

Right. OK, moving on to the critics of the globalist position, what do the internationalists essentially have to say Grahame?

Grahame Thompson

The internationalists I think would stress the central importance of the nation state so the system from them is an international one, not a global one; it's made up of the interactions between essentially nation states that are still the key player, the key agent in the system. The national territory is still fairly intact, there isn't a borderless world, so they would stress that and the national economies are still a viable category that can be managed and organised, and that broadly speaking the international economic activity, let's begin with that, is really between players that still are tethered to the nation, to the national territory, so it's an international set of relationships and connections, rather than there being an overall global set of relationships that are usurping these international ones. They still, I think, would stress that there's still a robust national culture as well, so that cultural relationships are still tethered to the nation centrally, and that the system therefore can be kind of managed by international rather than global organisations, international organisations like the WTO, like the IMF, like the World Bank. To some extent these are international; they rely on representation and organisation up from nations to representatives in these systems, in these politically regulatory organisations. The internationalists would say that this is something not particularly new, and that it's likely actually, the role and pertinence of the nation state is likely to increase in the future, not be reduced as the globalists, or the globalist position would kind of tend to imply so that, you know, as environmental issues become more pertinent, more problematical internationally, as security issues and defence issues grow in importance people will appeal to their national governments for aid, and to provide the security associated with that.

Bob Kelly

Right. It's quite interesting that in everyday speech we tend to use international and global as being almost being the same thing, but what we're stressing here is it's that hyphen between the inter and the national, that it's still the nation that matters and it's what happens between nations, not something global and above those individual...

Grahame Thompson

Well that is certainly the internationalist position I think, clearly the globalist positions are some would say that the transformation list position would stress, I think, this rather extra national sort of system to relationships that are transnational systems and relationships that are really becoming the dominant ones and would downgrade a bit the importance of the international relationships.

Bob Kelly

Right, right. We've tended to present the transformation list viewers somewhere in the middle of the continuum between the internationalist and the globalist perspectives. Raia, is that an accurate portrayal of the transformation lists – are they simply saying something in between the other two, or do they have something more distinctive to say?

Raia Prokhovnic

Well my view would be that the transformation lists are not the kind of middle, sensible, reasonable way between two extremes that they would like to paint themselves as being. But they do have particular things to say. Cultural transformation lists stress the role of active

agents in culture, and assert the importance of the regional over the global. In economics, transformation lists place themselves in what they see as a middle ground between the globalists and the internationalists, and in politics the transformation lists' case emphasises the flexible and adaptive capacity of nation states, and a redefinition of community in order to resist and shape globalisation. As you mentioned, Bob, it's worth remembering that the three positions that we're outlining on globalisation are found along a continuum, so along with the internationalists, transformation lists are reflective about what's going on, whereas globalists take for granted the meaning of these processes. But unlike the internationalists, transformation lists take a global perspective rather than an international one as you and Graham have been talking about. Transformation lists position themselves as comprehending the interaction of structure and agency in a way that globalists don't. On the other hand, they agree with globalists that things are changing, but are less precise, more vague about the outcome than the globalists.

I think the transformation lists in a sense emphasise the kind of adaptability of meanings and understandings, and sense, in a kind of dynamic kind of way, so they're thinking really about an open system but we don't quite know where it's going, it's always in a process of transformation, and it's a matter of agency maybe adapting their own understandings of the situations, meanings being produced in a kind of dynamic process of evolution more than some of the other positions who tend to take up rather kind of fixed kind of positions I think in the way, you know, one way or another.

Bob Kelly
Right.