

Scanned Documents

Chapter 4

The political dimension of globalization

Political globalization refers to the intensification and expansion of political interrelations across the globe. These processes raise an important set of political issues pertaining to the principle of state sovereignty, the growing impact of intergovernmental organizations, and the future prospects for regional and global governance, and environmental policies affecting our planet. Obviously, these themes respond to the evolution of political arrangements beyond the framework of the nation-state, thus breaking new conceptual and institutional ground. After all, for the last few centuries, humans have organized their political differences along territorial lines that generated a sense of 'belonging' to a particular nation-state.

This artificial division of planetary social space into 'domestic' and 'foreign' spheres corresponds to people's collective identities based on the creation of a common 'us' and an unfamiliar 'them'. Thus, the modern nation-state system has rested on psychological foundations and cultural assumptions that convey a sense of existential security and historical continuity, while at the same time demanding from its citizens that they put their national loyalties to the ultimate test. Nurtured by demonizing images of the Other, people's belief in the superiority of their own nation has supplied the mental energy required for large-scale warfare—just as the enormous productive capacities of the modern state have provided the material means necessary to fight the 'total wars' of the last century.

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