Part B, Q4: How has globalization affected the nature and the role of the state in Canada?

Globalization as an analytical tool is complicated by its usage in describing often simultaneous phenomena. Skogstad (2000) points to the conflation of these different globalizations in describing four streams that the term encompasses: economic globalization, cultural globalization, ideological globalization, and political globalization. Each one of these conceptualizations of globalization has different implications for its influence on the nature and role of the state. For example, economic globalization suggests that international firms are able to penetrate local markets more efficiently than in the past; political globalization points to the changing nature of governance within and outside of countries; cultural globalization at times worries about cultural homogenization or concerns itself with the movement of people throughout the globe; while ideological globalization can include norm diffusion of any variety, from the patterns by which nations accept and adopt policies recognizing the relationships of same-sex couples, to the diffusion of neoliberalization throughout nations. As such, this question can be evaluated along each of these different streams.

Additionally, to properly consider this question, we must also spend a short amount of time discussing what is meant by “state” in the context of the forthcoming answer. The term – in globalization literature – usually applies to nation-state: the role and nature of the federal government, in light of global forces. That will be its usage in this short essay. It is important to make note of this, as state can also be used to encompass lower levels of government – provincial or municipal. These will be described, instead, as sub-state governments (Paquin and Lachapelle, 2005) within the context of this short essay. For the purposes of this short essay, only two forms of globalization will be fully considered. Political globalization, will be quickly reviewed, but will be treated as static, while cultural globalization will not really be investigated herein. This paper, then, will look at economic and ideological globalization (which frequently go hand in hand, especially when considering the diffusion of neoliberal values throughout the globe).

Globalization, in any of its forms, it usually conceptualized as an exogenous variable acting on the domestic policy sphere. Indeed, that would appear to be its position of globalization in the question as well, as the question is currently phrased. Economic and ideological globalizations are treated as outside factors that intrude inwards to domestic policy behaviour, subsequently changing the nature and role of the Canadian state. However, not only may the threat of globalization be over-emphasized, some suggest that it may not be acting in this exogenous nature.

Economic globalization has long been considered a central (if not the primary) component of questions of globalization. Concerns over its influence have spread across a number of policy and political spheres. However, evidence from the field suggests that the implications of political globalization may not be as widespread as initially conceived. Economic globalization was implicated early on in influencing (undermining) the Canadian welfare state. However, these implications may have been overstated. Haddow and Klassen (2006) suggest that the relationship between economic globalization and the welfare state might not be so simple, and that the influence on globalization is strongly mediated by provincial institutions. Meanwhile, concern over policy convergence with the US (as globalization is also often conceptualized in Canada as Americanization) have been largely unfounded, with greater economic integration with the US not leading to policy convergence in most areas of policy (Banting, Hoberg, and Simeon, 1997).

If we consider political globalization as an outcome of economic globalization, the case may be made that this is one area that has seen significant movement. Canada can increasingly be seen as a tiered system of government that has seen provinces and municipalities gain in relative power (along with supranational institutions – either if a continental or global nature), while the federal government has seen its power shift out of its hands (downwards and upwards). Clarkson and Lewis (1999) describe this *new* system of government, and within the general conception of globalization, many of the implications rest on the increasing constraint of nation-states. But the question must be asked, to what degree is this the function of globalization, and to what degree is this the function of other (domestic) factors? Clarkson (2002) suggests that the changes associated with globalization and the neoliberal turn are in fact best explained endogenously – and are based off of the decisions of domestic actors. Though this then raises the question, to what degree are these endogenous actors influenced by (for example) the global norm diffusion of neoliberal tendencies, it nonetheless points to the fact that what is often attributed to globalization may be equally (or more) affected by domestic politics. Certainly, the shift in power upwards to supranational institutions may be more difficult to directly attribute to domestic politics, but the shift downwards to provinces/regions and municipalities can be discussed under the lens of province-building and changes to the relationship of interstate federalism in Canada (Cameron and Kirkorian, 2002).

Another example of the complex relationship between globalization and governance can be investigated through the relationship of the Canadian state with Aboriginal nations within Canada. Clarkson and Lewis’s typology (1999) leaves room for conceptualizing Aboriginal nations as regional sub-state governments implicated in shifts of power downwards under economic and political globalizations. MacDonald (2010) also views this shift under the lens of ideological globalization, suggesting that the devolutionary practices of the central government fit very well with the ideological principles put forward by neoliberalization. However, this conceptualization is again complicated by domestic factors, as Aboriginal peoples in Canada have long pushed for self-government and self-determination, demands of rights that in no way interact with the neoliberal agenda, since the 1969 White Paper (Scholtz, DATE). That is not to say that globalization does not impact the governance and role of the state – Kuokkanen (2010) warns against the shift towards private companies as a replacement for state-provided services and goods, suggesting that this is in fact just a replacement of one colonial master to another.

Nonetheless, despite the heightened interest in globalization, the Canadian political science discipline has yet to put forward a cohesive and convincing account of the true effects of globalization (as an exogenous variable) on the Canadian state. At best, we can say that while a relationship exists, it does so in a web of complex interactions between society, state, and larger global forces.