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Progress of Agricultural Science/Technology Policy and Multinational Agribusiness:
A Preliminary Review on the Role of the Nation-State and the Perspective of Civil Society under Globalization

Shuji Hisano

Hokkaido University, Japan

In the context of neo-liberalism and the trend of globalization, it is often argued that the nation-state is going to decline as it has become unable to perform its full functions. However, the more capitalism becomes global, the more state coordination becomes necessary. Globalization is a never-ending process. Neither monopoly capitalism nor economic globalization can eliminate the competitive capitalistic relations. There are no multinational corporations that can acquire advantageous positions in the global market without any political support from the nation-state. Additionally, even if the market were to become united globally, it would cause numerous socio-economic contradictions at local, national, and regional levels. The nation-state is the only entity that can coordinate and conduct legislation and political action so as to avoid explosion of contradictions, as well as to sustain the global nature of capitalistic relations.

The purpose of this paper is to clarify such dynamism of this relationship between globalization and the nation-state as it appears in the agri-food sector, especially in the progress of the policy on agricultural science & technology (i.e. GMO). The formation of biotechnology policies, such as biosafety regulation or patent policy, shows the significant role of the nation-state. We can observe the sharply divided political position: the United States on one side and on the other, the EU and some developing countries. Of course, each side has some internal contradictions. Nor should we overlook the role of civil society organizations or NGOs, which have successfully appealed to public opinion, as well as influencing international politics and pushing the EU and some countries outside the EU towards opposing the international harmonization of biotechnology policy based on the US standard.

In the last section, I critically review some discussions related to the direction of alternative society under globalization; global governance theory and civil society theory. Both theories are useful aids to understanding the emergence of international civil society. However, from the viewpoint of Marxian political economy, they are weak in their treatment of political struggle to change the national politics and capitalist relations, which are both causes of the problems now afflicting civil society, both at national and international level.