

Approaches and Paradigms in Defining the Essence of Globalization*

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Lying at the core of Global Studies, globalization still remains among the most challenging phenomenon. Taking into account the complexity of the phenomenon itself, it is not surprising that scientific and popular scientific literature has been flooded with hundreds of different definitions of globalization. It is described as ‘the compression of time and space’ and ‘the onset of a borderless world’; ‘an ideological construct’; ‘an inexorable integration of markets’ and ‘a worldwide integration of humanity’; ‘the erosion of the nation-state’, ‘the triumph of the capitalist market economy’ and ‘McDonaldization of society’ (al-Rodhan and Stoudmann 2006: 41–62). According to a famous globalization expert, Jan Nederveen Pieterse, ‘globalization is like a prism in which major disputes over the collective human conditions are now refracted: questions of capitalism, inequality, power, development, ecology, culture, gender, identity, population, all come back in a landscape where “globalization did it”’ (Nederveen Pieterse 2009: 7).

This colorful range of definitions, many of which are only indirectly (sometimes ambiguously, or even adversely) connected with one another, relates to a no less diverse set of paradigms and perspectives emerging in globalization studies. For instance, Swedish researcher Göran Therborn provides ‘at least five major discourses ... that usually ignore each other – competitive economics, social criticism, state (im)potence, culture and planetary ecology’ (Therborn 2000: 151).

Apart from the inevitability of globalization, frequently disputed issues include its (ir)reversibility, its most likely future trajectories, and – perhaps the most widely debated question of all – its manifestations and implications for various involved actors, from the planet or humanity as a whole to particular individuals, lifestyles, traditions, economic activities, landscapes, *etc.* However, the answers to any of such specific questions posed by researchers of globalization – and even the wording of the questions themselves – depend on the definition of globalization chosen by a researcher. For this reason, let us try to outline the diversity of the existing definitions and interpretations of globalization, as well as the most relevant approaches to its study, and then determine our own position within this variety.

One of the earliest (and rather detailed) definitions was proposed neither by ‘The Economist’, nor by Bill Gates in his bestseller ‘The Road Ahead’, but – maybe surprisingly for the younger readers – by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the ‘Communist Manifesto’, first published in 1848.

* This study has been supported by the Russian Science Foundation (Project No. 15-18-30063 ‘Historical Globalistics: historical evolution, current state and forecast development scenarios for global networks of flows, interactions and communication, global processes, and planetary institutions, the role of Russia and BRICS’).

Not mentioning the word ‘globalization’, they, however, pointed out a number of key aspects of this phenomenon, such as ‘new industries’, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed not only at home but in every quarter of the globe.

In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new necessities requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. And this refers both to material and to intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from numerous national and local literatures, there arises the world literature (Marx/Engels 1848: 16).

The fact that many aspects of such a relatively recent phenomenon were accurately noticed more than 150 years ago makes one wonder about the true age of globalization and its historical antecedents – even though a truly massive surge of research interested in the diverse aspects of globalization occurred much later, starting in the 1980s and 1990s. Since that time, thousands of academic papers have been published (not to mention the popular scientific literature), addressing the very essence of globalization, its ‘age’ and its effects on various spheres of human life. Many of these offered their own definitions for the globalization phenomenon, more or less detailed, relatively general or highlighting some particular aspect(s) – and, of course, widely differing in meaning.

Typology of Definitions

Economic globalization

A major part of the existing definitions tend to interpret the phenomenon of globalization primarily through its economic dimension. We can note that 67 out of 114 definitions of globalization collected in a systematic review by Nayef al-Rodhan and Gérard Stoudmann are economic in their nature (al-Rodhan and Stoudmann 2006: 36, 41–62). The most frequently mentioned aspects of globalization include the following:

- global economic integration;
- increasing international (cross-border) economic activity;
- growing economic interconnectedness and interdependence of national economies: increasing sensitivity of local key economic variables to the mentioned changes at the regional and global level;
- rising global markets;
- increased international mobility of goods, capital, and labour;
- rapid expansion and growing influence of transnational corporations;
- international division of labour and global production chains; and
- common standards and global standardization.

Political globalization

Political definitions of globalization are closely connected with the growing influence of global governance, as well as its major institutions, such as the UN, WTO, IMF, World Bank, G-8 and G-20, *etc.* Although these institutions do not constitute a single structure, which could be called ‘global government’, the increasing expansion of their activity results in the rising political integration of transnational actors. Their most important respon-

sibilities include defining standards and rules of interstate interaction; joint management of the collective efforts of national governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society and other actors in addressing global challenges; and joint development of solutions to problems involving the interests of more than one state.

One of the most debated aspects of political globalization is the weakening of nation-states through the reduction of their sovereignty due to the growing influence of global governance structures, MNCs and global capital markets, international law and legal institutions, and 'military blocks' (such as NATO) (Held *et al.* 1999: 212–222; Holton 2011: 124–132). One of the leading American sociologists, Michael Mann, shows that it is possible to encounter similar statements about the 'demolition' or 'marginalization' of the nation-state in the works of many representatives of different spheres of science and art – writers, philosophers, geographers, social scientists, and business economists, *etc.* (Mann 1997: 473).

Here we should underline two concurrent trends: 1) a number of economic, technological and other components of globalization undermine the sovereignty of states and their position as the main actors of international relations; 2) most states voluntarily and deliberately limit their sovereignty on certain issues (Grinin and Korotayev 2009: 489–505).

Cultural globalization

As a rule, socio-cultural definitions of globalization are more general in their wording than economic ones. Humanity still lacks a single, universal and comprehensive definition of culture (and things will most probably remain the same). So, one can hardly expect to encounter a comprehensive and universally acknowledged definition of cultural globalization (see Holton 1992: 182–185; Holton 2011: 189–192; Hopper 2007).

In general, there are three most important (and partly opposing) perspectives concerning the understanding of the relationship between globalization and culture. In the first one, globalization is considered as a process leading to unification and homogenization of culture around the world. These ideas are closely related to the idea of globalization as the worldwide spread of the Western or, more specifically, American cultural hegemony (see, *e.g.*, Ritzer 1993, 1998).

The second one is closely connected to the first and is based on the ideas about local cultures resisting the influence of the globally dominant culture. Cultures are emphatically juxtaposed in this paradigm, as well as their embedding societies. There are also abundant examples of scientific and popular scientific works in this field, among them the 'Clash of Civilizations' by Samuel Huntington and the 'Jihad vs. McWorld' by Benjamin Barber (1995).

However, the idea of a universal cultural 'Westernization' or 'Americanization', as well as the ideas of clash and confrontation of cultures have been subject to multilateral criticism due to their inconsistency with reality. Empirical evidence of the cross-national research showed a lack of global convergence of values. Thus, American sociologist and the leader of the World Values Survey covering 78 countries, Ronald Inglehart, once claimed: 'Globalization seems pervasive. So, one might think, the world's cultures must be converging into one homogenized global value system. But they aren't. Evidence from the World Values Survey indicates that the value systems of rich societies are moving in a common direction – but they are not converging (at least, not during the past 20 years, the period for which we

have data). Religious differences and other historical differences continue to shape human values today' (Inglehart 2005).

It is possible to underline a number of large-scale trends that run contrary to the ideas of 'cultural homogenization'.

Firstly, getting into a different cultural environment, the representatives of Western culture often acquire new traits and new values, which differ from those in Western societies. An illustrative example is McDonald's restaurants in different countries, which include dishes based on the traditions of local cuisine and religious requirements in their menu.

Secondly, different regions may have their own dominant cultures, whose spread and influence on the surrounding cultures can be much stronger than that of 'Westernization' – indeed, 'for the people of Irian Jaya, Indonesianization may be more worrisome than Americanization, as Japanization may be for Koreans, Indianization for Sri Lankans, Vietnamization for the Cambodians' (Appadurai 1990: 295).

Finally, the spread of western multinational companies producing consumer goods, means not only (and not that much) cultural globalization, but economic phenomena: unified organization of production, methods of management and quality control, as well as uniform standards. Therefore, the question about the depth and nature of the impact of these changes on the culture of individual societies remains open (Holton 2011: 198–199).

In contrast, the third perspective, perhaps the most promising one for now, focuses on increasing cultural diversity due to the intensification of transnational cultural flows, increased frequency of contacts between different cultures (including between the geographically remote one) through their frequent encounters in media, *etc.* Thus, globalization leads to blending, interpenetration, and 'recycling' of particular elements of different cultures within various social frameworks. The concepts of 'global peripherization', 'creolization' and 'hybridization' proceed from this perspective in order to describe adaptation, domestication of local cultures to global cultural exchanges, trends and phenomena (see, *e.g.*, Appadurai 1996; Hannerz 1992, 1996; Nederveen Pieterse 2009). Cultural hybridization can also be perceived as an example of the phenomenon of 'glocalization' – a concept introduced by Roland Robertson (1992, 1995). Considerable attention is also given to the culture of new information technologies, such as spread of the Internet and creation of a global information environment.

Paul Hopper introduced one of the potentially most productive approaches to study cultural globalization, which rather focuses on practical implementation and verification of specific hypotheses than on theoretical concepts. He studies the phenomenon of globalization by dividing it in separate dimensions, such as the impact of global factors on dynamic changes of rules and practices, values, patterns, and symbolic forms of different cultures; spatial displacement (permanent and temporary migration) of those who represent other cultures than dominate culture, personal and virtual contacts between representatives of different cultures; especially the 'internalization' of new global cultures ideas and meanings, *etc.* (Hopper 2007: 41).

Environmental aspects of globalization and sustainable development

This discourse regards not the globalization *per se*, but rather its observed and projected impacts on the world development. It is within this discourse that humanity and global society started to be viewed as a part of a planetary ecosystem with all its resources. The pioneering works by Jay Forrester and his student Dennis Meadows are focused on global modeling and studying the interdependence of various processes in their dynamics.

'Limits to growth' (1972), which became the first official report of the Club of Rome, included warnings about serious global threats that may hinder the global development from being sustainable – such as the reduction of energy reserves and other resources as well as because of intense pollution. These findings resonated globally and attracted tremendous attention to environmental issues in the 1980s that resulted in the widespread introduction of energy-saving technologies (Sadovnichy *et al.* 2012: ch. 1).

Ideas Underlying the Concepts of Globalization

While looking into attempts to define globalization not through economy, politics, culture, social sphere, *etc.*, but through the essence of its constituent processes and driving forces and their factors, we can distinguish three basic ideas around which a great part of the globalization discourse is concentrated.

'Compressed' World

This idea suggests that due to technological progress there is a 'compression' of time and space, which lies at the core of globalization (Harvey 1989). We mean here not the absolute geographical distance between countries, which, surely, has remained stable (setting aside the cases of border changes), but the 'relative distance', as due to the modern technology, people, goods, capital, ideas and knowledge nowadays are able to overcome distances much faster and cheaper (though we need to emphasize here that the cost and the speed decreased unevenly around the world).

Technological progress, particularly the spread of the Internet since the first half of the 1990s, inspired a number of research papers on the 'compression' of time and space and, more broadly, the transformation of their role in the globalizing world. In this respect, the classic work by Manuel Castells 'The Rise of the Network Society' (1996) should not be missed out. Having introduced the notion of 'timeless time', Castells claimed that the global society's independence from time is accelerated by new information technology. Therefore, the global economy (primarily, global capital markets) can function as a single organism, as a whole system in real time. According to Castells, further technological development can lead to the full independence of capital and culture from time.

The then-chief editor of *The Economist* Francis Cairncross presents an extreme point of view on 'the death of distance', claiming that 'the distance will no longer determine the cost of electronic communication. Once investment in a communication network (purchase of a computer or phone, or creation of a web site) is made – an additional cost of sending or receiving any information almost equals to zero. Any form of communication will be available for mobile or remote usage' (Cairncross 2001: xiii).

'Borderless' world

Many definitions of globalization coined in the 1990s, including the economic ones, focus on the growing easiness in overcoming national borders, on increasing cross-border flows and interactions: 'globalization is a process that encompasses the causes, course, and consequences of transnational and transcultural integration of human and non-human activities' (al-Rodhan and Stoudmann 2006: 36).

The idea of 'vanishing borders and barriers' is closely connected with the ideas of partial loss/limitation of national sovereignty of states through the expanding influence of global governance institutions, international law, and transnational economic actors, such as TNCs and global capital markets.

Equal to the reduced role of distances, the decreased role of national borders, and the growth of cross-border flows, connections and interactions are often attributed to the spread of modern technologies, first and foremost the Internet. In its extreme form, the idea of 'vanishing borders' means that the world (especially the global economic space) becomes 'a single, seamless unity' without any barriers (see, *e.g.*, Ohmae 1999, 2005).

'Interconnected' world and global networks

This idea proceeds logically from the abovementioned increase in cross-border linkages and flows, and the declining role of borders and barriers. Some definitions of globalization suggest that its essence consists in the increased connectivity of the global world, in strengthening global networks of relationships, flows and interactions. Jan van Dyck and Manuel Castells are among the authors of the concept of the network society; the latter introduced also the concept of the 'space of flows'. According to Castells, society, in other words the social space, is being formed around flows of capital, information, technology, organizational interaction, images, sounds and symbols. 'Space of flows' reflects the processes prevailing in the economic, political and cultural life of society, and produces the structure of this society. At the same time, elites of a network society are not tied to a particular geographic area, but to this very 'space of flows' (Castells 1996: 412–413).

Further research on global networks and flows has significantly enriched our knowledge of these concepts. Jonathan Friedman has identified globalization as a set of processes through which local economy is connected to the global information network and to the global market network (Friedman 2001). Christopher Chase-Dunn and his colleagues describe globalization as 'the increasing global density of large-scale interaction networks with respect to the density of smaller networks' (Chase-Dunn, Kawano, and Brewer 2000: 77). Leonid Grinin and Andrey Korotayev define globalization as 'the process by which the world becomes more connected and more dependent on all its actors. Consequently, there is as an increase in the number of common challenges for states and an expanding number and types of integrating subjects' (Grinin and Korotayev 2009: 495).

What is Missing?

Despite the voluminous globalization discourse, a number of crucial points are still lacking in our understanding of the phenomenon. First and foremost, we need a sufficiently comprehensive definition of globalization to serve as a starting point in verifying numerous globalization-related hypotheses and ideas on concrete data before we can consider them true, or false, or partially true, or true under certain conditions *etc.* The most vivid example of a widespread catchphrase with very ambiguous (or, even further, directly contradictory) data background is the idea of 'cultural homogenization' and 'cultural Westernization'. The absence of a comprehensive definition which could introduce the dimension of measurability into the complex phenomenon of globalization (and not just one or several of its aspects, such as the volume of foreign trade, or number of Ikea stores in a country – sometimes insignificant, frequently volatile – see Zinkina, Korotayev, and Andreev 2013).

In our opinion, such a definition, allowing for a multi-dimensional, systemic view of globalization and its constituent processes, can be borrowed from a prominent global politics and economics scholar George Modelski, who aimed at combining two approaches: the 'connectivist' approach, viewing globalization as the increase of transborder interactions, relations, and flows, and the institutional approach, which explains globalization as

the emergence and evolution of global, planetary-scale institutions. Let us emphasize that 'institutions' is a very wide-encompassing term for Modelski, so this notion includes global free trade, TNCs, global governance, worldwide social movements and ideologies, *etc.* (Modelski 2008).

This approach can be enriched by the ideas of the Russian school of Global Studies, viewing the emergence and development of global (planetary) social institutions as a result of co-evolution of natural, social, and socio-natural processes (Ilyin and Ursul 2010, 2012, 2013a, 2013b; Ilyin, Ursul A., and Ursul T. 2013; Ursul and Ilyin 2010).

In our opinion, such a combined approach to defining and studying globalization allows for a whole new paradigm, posing globalization into a wider socio-natural context, as well as adding not just a historical, but an evolutionary dimension.

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