

Introduction to Globalization Debates

The study of globalization is highly disputatious. Indeed, this entire volume is devoted to at least some of the major conceptual debates in the study of globalization. However, there are even more fundamental debates surrounding the whole issue of globalization. This first chapter of the book contains an essay by Mauro F. Guillén that examines five of the key debates in the field. While he does not include it as one of his debates, Guillén begins with the much discussed issue of just what is globalization. He reviews various definitions as well as proposing his own definition. He points out that globalization is not only a scientific concept but also an ideology with a multitude of meanings. In addition to disagreements over its definition, there is much dispute over just when globalization began.

Having in fact covered several debates in his introductory remarks, Guillén turns to what he considers the five key debates:

- Is globalization really happening?
- Does globalization produce convergence?

- Does globalization undermine the authority of the nation-state?
- Is globality different from modernity?
- Is a global culture in the making?

Guillén closes with some thoughts on what one of the fields covered in this book – sociology (others include political science, international relations, anthropology, economics, literary theory, geography) – has contributed to our understanding of globalization, as well as on the need for further research and more interdisciplinary work on the topic.

Several of the debates outlined by Guillén appear later in this book, but the highly disputatious nature of globalization is reflected in the fact that there are many other ongoing arguments in the field. Many of them appear in the following pages, but they represent only a small proportion of the large and growing number of debates in the study of globalization. While the fact of these exchanges does not promise any easy answers to the big issues in the field, it does reflect the field's enormous vibrancy.



READING 1

Is Globalization Civilizing, Destructive or Feeble? A Critique of Five Key Debates in the Social Science Literature

Mauro F. Guillén

Introduction

Globalization is one of the most contested topics in the social sciences. Observers and theorists of globalization have variously argued that the rapid increase in cross-border economic, social, technological, and cultural exchange is civilizing, destructive, or feeble, to borrow Albert Hirschman's celebrated metaphors. Harold Levitt's "Globalization of Markets" or Kenichi Ohmae's *Borderless World* promise boundless prosperity and consumer joy as a result of globalization, i.e. the global as civilizing. In sharp contrast to this view, the historian Paul Kennedy warns in *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century* against our lack of structures to deal with a global world, while political economist Dani Rodrik rings a similar bell of alarm in *Has Globalization Gone Too Far?* concerning the increasingly free international economic and financial flows. As in the civilizing view, the destructive interpretation regards globalization as leading to convergence, albeit predicting harmful rather than beneficial consequences. Unlike the adherents to either the civilizing or the destructive views of globalization, other scholars, namely, Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson in *Globalization in Question*, and Robert Wade in "Globalization and Its Limits", see it as a feeble process that has not yet challenged the nation-state and other fundamental features of the modern world.

In this chapter I first define globalization and its timing. Then, I review the main contributions of the various social sciences to research on globalization, with an emphasis on sociological perspectives. I organize the discussion and critique around five key debates or questions: Is globalization really happening? Does it produce convergence? Does it undermine the authority of nation-states? Is globality different from modernity? Is a global culture in the making?

What Is Globalization?

Intuitively, globalization is a process fueled by, and resulting in, increasing cross-border flows of goods, services, money, people, information, and culture. Sociologist Anthony Giddens proposes to regard globalization as a decoupling or "distanciation" between space and time, while geographer David Harvey and political scientist James Mittelman observe that globalization entails a "compression" of space and time, a shrinking of the world. Sociologist Manuel Castells emphasizes the informational aspects of the global economy when he defines it as "an economy with the capacity to work as a unit in real time on a planetary scale." In a similar vein, sociologist Gary Gereffi writes about global "commodity chains," whereby production is coordinated on a global scale. Management scholar Stephen Kobrin describes globalization as driven not by foreign trade and investment but by increasing technological scale and information flows. Political scientist Robert Gilpin defines globalization as the "increasing interdependence of national economies in trade, finance, and macroeconomic policy." Sociologist Roland Robertson argues that globalization "refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole." Also sociologist Martin Albrow defines globalization as the "diffusion of practices, values and technology that have an influence on people's lives worldwide." I propose to combine the perspectives of Robertson and Albrow, and so define globalization as a process leading to greater interdependence and mutual awareness (reflexivity) among economic, political, and social units in the world, and among actors in general.

Globalization, however, is also an ideology with multiple meanings and lineages. As Cox has observed,

sometimes it appears loosely associated with neoliberalism and with technocratic solutions to economic development and reform. The term also appears linked to cross-border advocacy networks and organizations defending human rights, the environment, women's rights, or world peace. The environmental movement, in particular, has raised the banner of globalism in its struggle for a clean planet, as in its "Think Global, Act Local" slogan. Thus, globalization is often constructed as an impersonal and inevitable force in order to justify certain policies or behaviors, however praiseworthy some of them might be. In a broader historical sense, Mazlish and Robertson cogently argue that not only capitalism or advocacy movements but also Christianity, Islam, and Marxism have made global claims and harbored global pretensions. Hirsch and Fiss document that use of the term "globalization" in the press appears associated with multiple ideological frames of reference, including "financial market," "economic efficiency," "negative effect," and "culture."

The start of globalization is also a contested issue. One could argue that globalization begins with the dawn of history. The literature, however, has tended to date the start of globalization more recently in the experience of the West. At one end of the spectrum, historians have noted the importance of the first circumnavigation of the Earth in 1519–21. World-system theorists maintain that the expansion of European capitalism in the sixteenth century marks the start of globalization. Some economic historians point to the turn of the twentieth century as the heyday of international trade and investment before the convulsions of World War I and the Great Depression threw the world into spiraling protectionism. Robertson argues that globalization "took off" between 1875 and 1925 with the "time-zoning of the world and the establishment of the international dateline; the near-global adoption of the Gregorian calendar and the adjustable seven-day week; and the establishment of international telegraphic and signaling codes." Murphy recounts the history of international organizations to foster transportation and communication since 1850. Students of social movements for the abolition of slavery, woman suffrage, or the prohibition of female circumcision argue that the emergence of contemporary transnational advocacy networks can be traced back to the second half of the nineteenth century.

A third group of scholars starts the analysis of globalization at the end of World War II, with the coming of the nuclear age, the emancipation of colonies, the renewed expansion of trade and investment, and the economic rise of Northeast Asia. There is also justification for telling the story of globalization beginning with the unraveling of *pax americana* in the early 1970s or with the rise of neoliberal ideology in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In a more conceptually informed way, Kobrin distinguishes between the trade and investment linkages of nineteenth-century internationalization and the network and information ties of late twentieth-century globalization. Thus, there is no agreement as to whether it was with Magellan and Mercator, James Watt and Captain Cook, Nixon and Kissinger, or Thatcher and Reagan that globalization started or, to be more precise, that the narrative of globalization ought to begin. Lastly, it should be noted that the English term "globalization" was first used around 1960 in its world-wide sense as opposed to its much older meanings of the global as something spherical, total, or universal.

Definitions and timing aside, one of the persistent problems afflicting the study of globalization is that it is far from a uniform, irreversible, and inexorable trend. Rather, globalization is a fragmented, incomplete, discontinuous, contingent, and in many ways contradictory and puzzling process. Table 1 presents economic, financial, social, political, and bibliographical indicators of globalization. The measures are presented for the 1980–98 period not because globalization started in 1980 but rather because of data limitations. Foreign direct (excluding portfolio) investment as a percentage of GDP is 2.5 times greater today than twenty years ago – and nearly four times greater in the developing world. Trade has also grown, although not as fast as foreign investment. Financial globalization has grown fastest: foreign exchange turnover increased tenfold between 1979 and 1997 relative to world GDP, and both cross-border bank credit and assets have increased more than twofold as a percentage of world GDP.

Some key indicators of social exchange across borders are also increasing rapidly, including tourism and international telephone calls (see Table 1). International migration, though on the rise, has not reached important levels relative to world population. Also bucking the globalization trend is the growing number

of nation-states – from 157 United Nations members in 1980 to 184 by 1998. And more ethnic groups than ever seem to be reasserting their identities and yearning to create their own state – Palestinians and Kurds, Basques and Catalans, Scots and Welsh, Tibetans and Kashmiris, Corsicans and Quebecois. Meanwhile, the

number of international organizations has more than trebled. Among international advocacy groups, those concerned with human rights, the environment, Esperanto, women's rights, and world peace have grown fastest. And the internet has accelerated cross-border exchange during the 1990s, although less than

Table 1 Indicators of globalization, 1980–98

Indicators	1980	1985	1990	1995	1998
<i>A. Economic</i>					
Inward foreign direct investment stock, % world GDP	4.6	6.5	8.0	10.1	11.7 ^h
Developed countries, % GDP	3.8	4.9	6.6	9.1	10.5 ^h
Developing countries, % GDP	4.3	8.2	8.5	15.4	16.6 ^h
Gross value added of foreign affiliates, % world GDP	—	5.2	6.4	6.3	7.8 ^h
Exports of foreign affiliates, % total world exports	—	31.9	27.5	32.3	35.6
Exports + imports of goods, % world non-service GDP	72.7	68.1	76.0	87.5	92.1 ^h
Developed countries, % non-service GDP	76.6	72.1	81.8	90.1	95.1 ^h
Developing countries, % non-service GDP	60.9	54.6	55.0	77.3	83.2 ^h
Exports + imports of goods and services, % world GDP	40.0	38.8	38.9	42.9	45.2 ^h
Developed countries, % GDP	40.2	39.4	38.3	41.2	43.8 ^h
Developing countries, % GDP	39.1	36.6	41.0	49.5	50.6 ^h
<i>B. Financial</i>					
Daily currency exchange turnover, % world GDP ^a	0.7	1.3	3.8	5.6	6.8
Cross-border bank credit stock, % world GDP ^b	13.9	19.9	34.3	33.1	—
Cross-border banking assets, % world GDP ^b	13.7	19.9	28.1	28.5	—
<i>C. Social and Political</i>					
International tourist arrivals, % world population	3.5	6.7	8.6	9.9	—
Stock of international migrants, % world population ^c	1.5	1.8	2.0	2.2	—
International calls, minutes per million \$ world GDP ^d	—	1,354	1,600	2,174	—
Internet hosts, number (thousands) ^e	—	5	617	12,881	19,459 ^h
Nation-states with membership in the United Nations	157	157	159	184	184
International organizations, number	14,273 ^g	24,180	26,656	41,722	48,350

Table 1 (continued)

Indicators	1980	1985	1990	1995	1998
<i>D. Bibliographical</i>					
Literature on globalization, annual entries: ^f					
Sociological Abstracts	89	142	301	1068	1009
Econlit	19	269	608	1044	924
PAIS (Politics and International Relations)	64	101	309	366	698
Historical Abstracts	69	81	103	166	157
Anthropological Literature	6	2	6	1	34
Books in Print	48	92	328	689	589

^aData are for 1979, 1984, 1989, 1995, and 1998.

^bData are for 1981, 1986, 1991, and 1995.

^cEstimates.

^dExcludes international calls using cellular phones or private networks.

^eData are for 1986, 1991, 1996, and 1997.

^fArticles or books with the words "global" or "globalization" in the title, subject heading or abstract.

^g1981.

^h1997.

Sources: *World Investment Report; International Trade Statistics Yearbook; UN Statistical Yearbook; Baldwin, R.E., Martin, P. (1999). Two waves of globalization: superficial similarities, fundamental differences. NBER Work. Pap. Ser. 6904. Cambridge, MA: Natl. Bur Econ. Res.; Tschoeigl, A.E. (1998). Country and bank sources of international competitiveness: the case of the foreign exchange market. Work. Pap., Wharton School, Univ. Penn.; Vernon, R. (1998). In the Hurricane's Eye: The Troubled Prospects of Multinational Enterprises. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press; Miguel Centeno, Dept. of Sociology, Princeton University; Yearbook of International Organizations; Penn Library Databases.*

two or three percent of the population has access to it in most countries except the very rich ones.

It is perhaps ironic to observe that the fastest increase among the indicators included in Table 1 does not refer to globalization itself, but to the literature on globalization. As shown in Figure 1, there has been an explosion in the number of articles on globalization published in the economic, sociological, and political literatures. The number of books on globalization has also increased steeply. The historical and anthropological literatures, by contrast, have lagged behind. Among the social sciences, sociology was the first to pay attention to globalization. Sociology journals started to carry large numbers of articles on globalization during the early and mid 1970s, primarily induced by world-system theorizing. Some authors have attempted to summarize the literature, and several edited volumes have been compiled. Perhaps the most bewildering feature of the literature is not its sheer size but the

remarkable diversity of authors that have contributed to it, ranging from postmodernist scholars or social theorists who rarely, if ever, engage in empirical research to number-crunching empiricists, politicians, and management consultants.

Five Key Debates

The five key debates that I identify in this chapter are not an exhaustive list of issues in the vast and rich literature on globalization. They capture, however, a broad spectrum of social, political, and cultural themes of interest to sociologists and other social scientists. [. . .] One should not assume those on the same side of the fence regarding a particular question actually agree with each other on other issues or that they approach the issue from exactly the same perspective.

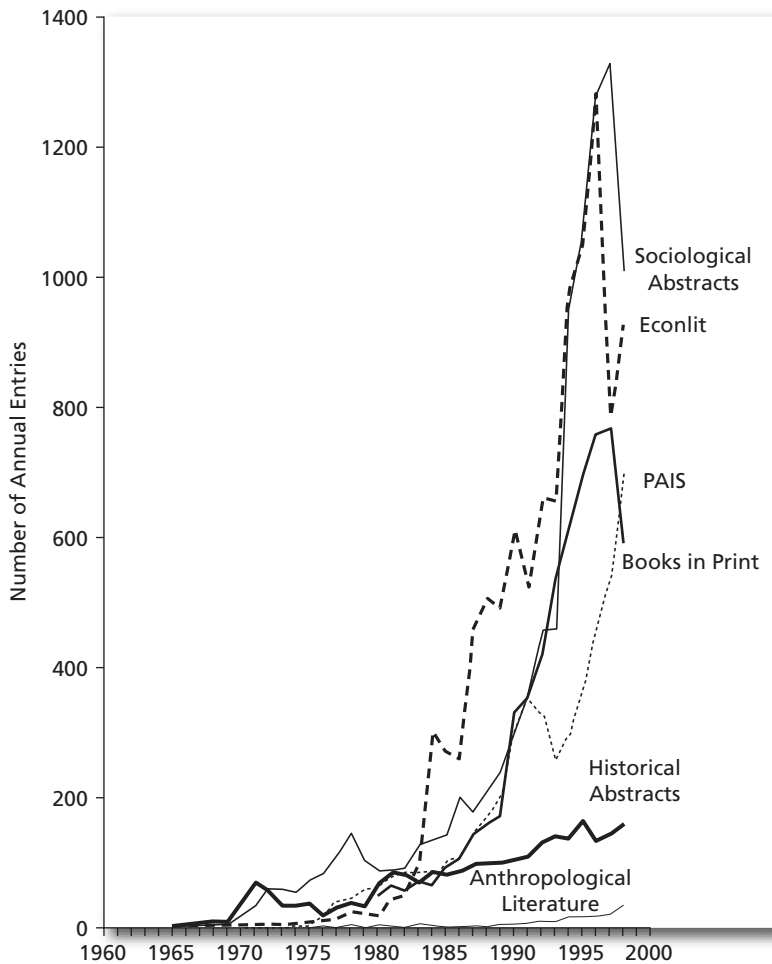


Figure 1 The literature of globalization

Is it really happening?

Most of the books and articles discussed in this chapter simply assume that the world is becoming more global, that is, more interrelated. Myriad policymakers, publicists, and academics take it as axiomatic that globalization is in fact happening without supporting their claim with data. Political economist and policymaker Robert Reich, for example, proclaims that “national economies” are disappearing and companies no longer have a nationality; only people do. There are, however, many skeptics.

Perhaps the best-documented case for the feeble argument against globalization has been made by Paul

Hirst, an Oxford political scientist with ties to the Labour Party. In a recent book, Hirst and Thompson argue that the globalization trend of the last twenty years has been overstated as a process: it is not unprecedented in world history, they say, and foreign investment and trade are concentrated in the so-called triad – Western Europe, North America, and Japan. In sum, they argue that the economy is becoming more international but not more global. Political scientist Robert Wade echoes these criticisms: the volume of trade is small relative to the size of most economies; domestic investment is greater than foreign investment; multinationals locate most of their assets, owners, top managers, and R&D activities in their home countries;

and vast areas of the world have not been affected by globalization, namely, South and Central Asia, and the bulk of Africa.

The argument for the feebleness of globalization is useful in that it provides an important corrective to visions and myths of globalization assuming its inevitability and irreversibility. There are, however, two key counterarguments. Regarding the issue of the heterogeneous spread of globalization across the world, Castells correctly observes that the global economy is not meant to encompass the entire Earth. Rather, it comprises only certain segments of activity in both developed and developing countries. The second counterargument is that proponents of the feeble thesis focus almost exclusively on the economic and financial aspects of globalization to the detriment of political, social, and cultural ones. The literature offers and discusses evidence in support of political and cultural globalization that is, on the whole, quite persuasive. In addition, global warming, the AIDS pandemic, and the globalization of the media have heightened our awareness of living in an increasingly interconnected world. In sum, scholars arguing the feebleness of globalization have made a contribution in debunking certain myths and assumptions about a process that has all too often been uncritically reified. However, they are perhaps too wedded to a “monolithic” concept of globalization and oblivious to the notion that globality is a network of relationships that creates mutual awareness.

Does it produce convergence?

A second contested issue in the literature on globalization has to do with its consequences as to the convergence of societies toward a uniform pattern of economic, political, and even cultural organization. Most famously expressed in modernization theory, the spread of markets and technology is predicted to cause societies to converge from their preindustrial past, although total homogeneity is deemed unlikely. This line of thinking was advanced during the 1950s and 1960s by both economists and sociologists. Economic historians such as Jeffrey Williamson have documented convergence in income and labor markets during the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth. Sociologist Daniel Bell argued for a technologically driven convergence of postindustrial societies.

Further support for the convergence thesis comes from the world-society approach in sociology. In their summaries of an extensive empirical research program on the worldwide spread of educational systems and other forms of state activity, John Meyer and his associates and students argue that the expansion of rationalized state activities has acquired a momentum of its own, largely unaffected by cross-national differences in political structure or economic growth rates. Rather, the diffusion of rationalized systems follows the “exigencies of global social organization whose logic and purposes are built into almost all states.” The result is that “the world as a whole shows increasing structural *similarities of form* among societies without, however, showing increasing *equalities of outcomes* among societies”. Nation-states are seen as exhibiting convergent structural similarity, although there is a “decoupling between purposes and structure, intentions and results.” World-society researchers argue that conformity comes both from the world-culture of rationalized modernity and from domestic groups that make claims on the state following the “consensus” over the formal acceptance of “matters such as citizen and human rights, the natural world and its scientific investigation, socioeconomic development, and education.” They even present evidence to the effect that nationalism and religious fundamentalism “intensify isomorphism more than they resist it.”

Social and political theorists as well as historians have elaborated a comprehensive critique of the presumed convergent consequences of globalization. Political historian Robert Cox writes that “the social and ethical content of the economy may be organized differently in various parts of the world.” Historian Bruce Mazlish argues that “no *single* global history is anticipated.” Sociologist Anthony Giddens adds an interesting twist when asserting that globalization “is a process of uneven development that fragments as it coordinates. [. . .] The outcome is not necessarily, or even usually, a generalized set of changes acting in a uniform direction, but consists in mutually opposed tendencies.” In another book, Giddens elaborates: “Globalization has to be understood as a dialectical phenomenon, in which events at one pole of a distanced relation often produce divergent or even contrary occurrences at another.” In a similar vein, anthropologist Jonathan Friedman asserts that

globalization is the product of cultural fragmentation as much as it is the result of modernist homogeneity, and that “what appears as disorganization and often real disorder is not any the less systemic and systematic.”

These social and political theorists, however, have neither engaged in empirical testing of their propositions nor bothered to look for support in the existing literature. There is, though, a considerable body of empirical research backing the antithesis that globalization produces divergence and diversity or at least does not undermine national policies and institutions. Management scholar John Stopford and political economist Susan Strange document that the increasingly complex interaction between multinationals and states has produced a divergence in outcomes, while Doremus et al. show that differentiated national systems of innovation, trade, and investment remain firmly in place.

Political scientist Geoffrey Garrett has perhaps contributed the most extensive and solid body of empirical evidence, though it refers mostly to the experience of the advanced industrial democracies. He argues and demonstrates empirically that in the context of a global economy at least two paths are possible for national economic and social policymakers: adherence either to neoclassical economics or to social democratic corporatism. Garrett’s analysis refutes simplistic views about convergence, proposing instead to view the balance of left–right political power and labor market institutions as the two key variables in a contingent analysis of economic performance. The best macroeconomic performance is obtained when the two variables are aligned with each other. For example, redistributive and interventionist policies combine with encompassing labor market institutions to produce macroeconomic performance in terms of growth and unemployment that matches or even surpasses the achievements of laissez-faire policies combined with weak labor market institutions. He concludes that there are “enduring cross-national differences” in economic policymaking and engagement of the global economy. In a broader study encompassing over one hundred countries during the 1985–95 period, Garrett finds no convergence in government expenditure patterns as a result of globalization. What has happened over the last decade is that many governments have pursued policies that buffer their citizens from the vagaries of global

markets and, in the presence of free capital mobility, willingly and knowingly accepted higher interest rates to keep capital at home.

Students of the varieties of capitalism, mostly political scientists, have long argued that firms and countries pursue different paths of incorporation into the global economy. Thus, German, French, Japanese, and American firms are competitive in the global economy, but rarely in the same industry and market segment. German firms excel at high-quality, engineering-intensive industries such as advanced machine tools, luxury automobiles, and specialty chemicals; French firms at large-scale technical undertakings such as high-speed trains, satellite-launching rockets, or nuclear power; Japanese firms at most categories of assembled goods, namely, household appliances, consumer electronics, and automobiles; and American firms at software, financial services, or biotechnology.

Comparative organizational sociologists have also presented qualitative and quantitative evidence to the effect that firms pursue different modes of economic action and adopt different organizational forms depending on the institutional and social structures of their home countries even as globalization increases. Moreover, they have collected data on newly industrialized countries in addition to the most advanced ones. Orrù et al. draw a number of systematic comparisons among East Asian and Western European countries, demonstrating that unique national patterns of organization not only persist over time but also contribute to the international competitiveness of firms. Guillén presents systematic case-study and quantitative evidence demonstrating that firms and labor unions in Argentina, South Korea, and Spain diverged in their patterns of behavior, organizational form, and growth even as their home countries became more integrated with the global economy during the post-World War II period.

Taken together, the empirical evidence provided by sociologists and political scientists supports well the case for diversity, or at least resilience, in cross-national patterns in the midst of globalization. It must be admitted, however, that world-society researchers also have a point, and one that is well supported by empirical evidence. The reason behind these seemingly irreconcilable empirical results might be that world-society research has made measurements at levels of analysis and abstraction higher than the finer-grained

analysis of comparative sociologists and political scientists.

It should be noted that some sociologists reject the very terms of the convergence debate by arguing that globalization homogenizes without destroying the local and the particularistic. For example, Viviana Zelizer argues that “the economy [...] differentiates and proliferates culturally in much the same way as other spheres of social life do, without losing national and even international connectedness.” Thus, globalization is not seen as precluding or contradicting diversity. Like Zelizer, Robertson sees the global as the “linking of localities.”

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of the convergence debate has to do with the impact of globalization on inequality across and within countries. The evidence unambiguously indicates that there is today *more* inequality across countries than ten, twenty, fifty or even one hundred years ago. Stunningly, the gap in per capita income between rich and developing countries has grown five-fold between 1870 and 1990. There are, however, several noteworthy developing countries that have managed to close half or more of the gap since 1960, e.g. South Korea, Taiwan, and Ireland. Very few developing countries, though, have consistently grown faster than the most advanced ones since 1980. Thus, development levels across countries appear not to be converging as a result of globalization.

By contrast to cross-national inequality, it is not clear whether increased foreign trade and investment during the last twenty years have resulted in substantially higher wage inequality or unemployment *within* countries. Wage inequality has risen in most advanced countries during the last three decades. In a review essay, Kapstein presents several counterarguments to the claim that globalization has been the major cause of increased wage polarization, including that trade is too small a percentage of GDP to have a large impact, and that technological change is the ultimate cause of wage polarization. In agreement with Kapstein’s reading of the evidence, Baldwin and Martin summarize the empirical literature as follows: “Virtually all studies find some impact of trade on the labor market in both the United States and Europe. The range of findings, however, is wide. Some find that trade accounted for virtually none of the wage gap, while others assigned 100 percent of the gap to trade. The consensus range is

perhaps 10–20 percent.” As opposed to wage disparities, overall indicators of income inequality within countries have not increased during the last thirty years, and there is evidence indicating that when countries grow economically and become incorporated into the global economy poverty rates fall. Discussions and calculations of the impact of globalization on wage and income inequality within countries should take into account that while foreign trade and investment are powerful forces, domestic politics and processes still matter.

In sum, globalization does not seem to compel governments, firms, and individuals to converge in their patterns of behavior. While this may be regarded as a welcome aspect, it is important to bear in mind that increasing globalization has coincided in time with an exacerbation of income disparities across countries, and that at least part of the greater degree of income and wage inequality within countries is due to increased foreign trade and investment.

Does it undermine the authority of nation-states?

A third key issue surrounding the topic of globalization is whether this process has outgrown the governance structures of the international system of states and undermined the authority of the nation-state. For example, economist Raymond Vernon has long argued that the spread of multinational corporations creates “destructive political tensions,” and that there is a “need to reestablish balance” between political and economic institutions. Historian Paul Kennedy asserts that governments are losing control, and that globalization erodes the position of labor and developing countries, and degrades the environment. “Today’s global society,” he writes, “confronts the task of reconciling technological change and economic integration with traditional political structures, national consciousness, social needs, institutional arrangements, and habitual ways of doing things.” In a similar vein, Kobrin argues that globalization both challenges the autonomy or independent decision-making of the state and “raises questions about the meaning of sovereignty in its external sense of a system ordered in terms of mutually exclusive territoriality.” And Mazlish argues that global history is an attempt to “transcend the nation-state as the focus of history.”

International relations scholar Yoshikazu Sakamoto and political scientist Robert Cox concur in arguing that globalization generates problems of international governance and reduces the regulatory power of states. For Rodrik, globalization creates social and political tensions within and across nation-states. And political theorist Michael Mosher asks, “is there a successful way of reconciling the boundary transgressing character of markets with the boundary maintaining activities of nation-states?” He further notes that globalization has placed two liberal practices – the liberalism of the market and the liberalism of democratic citizenship – on a collision course, raising the dilemma of whether “moral concerns stop at the national border.”

Sociologists have also joined the chorus of state doomsayers. For Waters, there is an “attenuation of the state,” a rise of international organizations, and a trend toward more “fluid” international relations. McMichael also sees a decline of the state. For Albrow, “the nation-state has failed to confine sociality within its boundaries, both territorial and categorical. The sheer increase in cross-national ties, the diversification of modes of personal relationships and the multiplication of forms of social organization demonstrate the autogenic nature of the social and reveal the nation-state as just another timebound form.” In a more empirically grounded way, Evans points out that globalization undermines the state because its associated neoliberal ideology is against the state and not because globalization is inextricably against the state. He further argues that the state may stage a comeback if there is a “return of the ideological pendulum,” or a transformation of the state and a development of new elements of state-society synergy.

The analysis by British political economist Susan Strange is perhaps the most sophisticated articulation of the position that the international system of nation-states and the nation-state itself are coming under fire in a global world. She writes about the “declining authority of states” and preempts several possible criticisms. First, she notes that state interventionism is on the rise, although in relatively marginal matters. Second, she argues that there are more states in the world, especially after 1989, but that most of the new ones are weak and lack control. Third, she points out that the effectiveness of the East Asian state in orchestrating economic growth was only possible in

a post-World War II order in which protectionism of the domestic market was acceptable and mature technologies were available. She further observes three power shifts in the global world, namely, from weak to strong states, from states to markets, and from labor markets to financial markets, with some power evaporating or dispersing.

Not surprisingly, those who argue that globalization is a feeble process also maintain that it can be easily handled by nation-states. For example, Hirst and Thompson and Wade assert that states can cope with globalization, although they have lost some freedom of action, especially concerning financial flows. Feeble proponents, however, are not alone challenging the notion that globalization undermines the nation-state.

Macrosociology has long maintained that the global arena is a “playground” for states, where they compete for economic, military, and political supremacy and survival. Thus, the world-system or the international arena, far from threatening states, actually fosters them. Neorealist international relations scholar Robert Gilpin points out that globalization reinforces the importance of domestic policies, as countries engage in regionalization, sectoral protectionism, and mercantilistic competition in response to changes in the international location of economic activities, resulting in a “mixed system,” increasingly globalized and at the same time fragmented. A related, though distinct, argument against the presumed loss of state power in the wake of globalization comes from political scientist Leo Panitch. He rightly argues that “today’s globalization is authored by states and is primarily about reorganizing rather than bypassing them.” Moreover, as Cox observes, “power has shifted not away from the state but *within* the state, i.e. from industry or labor ministries towards economy ministries and central banks.” And sociologist Seán O Riain sees states not as passive pawns but rather as “adapting, whether out of necessity or desire.”

Another influential social scientist, Saskia Sassen, maintains that the state does not lose significance. Rather, there is a redefinition of the modern features of sovereignty and territoriality, a “denationalizing of national territory.” Cox argues that globalization induces a transformation of the state, not its diminution. Stopford and Strange examine the new possibilities for state action in the global economy and conclude that its role has actually become magnified and more

complex. According to most political scientists, therefore, the nation-state is alive and well, and the Westphalian order is unlikely to be replaced by a fragmented, medieval one. A key effect of globalization, however, has been the rise of global cities – New York, London, Miami, Singapore – whose role and stature transcend the nation-state in which they happen to be located.

Finally, the world-society view also rejects the claim that globalization undermines nation-states. Noting the expansion of state bureaucracies since World War II, Meyer et al. write that “globalization certainly poses new problems for states, but it also strengthens the world-cultural principle that nation-states are the primary actors charged with identifying and managing those problems on behalf of their societies.” This argument is strikingly similar to the one offered by Panitch and Poulantzas. The modern nation-state, world-society scholars conclude, “may have less autonomy than earlier but it clearly has more to do.”

The question of whether globalization undermines the authority of the nation-state comes best to life when examining the impact of globalization on the viability of the welfare state. Rodrik argues that globalization puts downward pressure on government spending for redistribution and welfare, and that the interaction of trade risk and openness calls for more welfare spending, but governments have trouble finding the money, an argument that Vernon finds persuasive. Stryker summarizes her assessment of the evidence in that globalization places limits on expansionary policies, represents a loss of power for the working class, and causes welfare state retrenchment. According to these social scientists, the challenge is “to engineer a new balance between market and society, one that will continue to unleash the creative energies of private entrepreneurship without eroding the social basis of cooperation”. These arguments have become conventional wisdom among neoliberal policymakers and journalists. Gloomy, often unsubstantiated, forecasts about the inability of European welfare states to pay for generous social benefits have become commonplace since the early 1980s.

Other political scientists and sociologists, however, see things utterly differently. Political scientist Paul Pierson argues that the welfare state has declined not so much as a result of globalization but because of such

indirect actions of conservative governments as reductions in the revenue base of the state and attacks on the strength of interest groups, especially labor. This is an argument that Fligstein and Gilpin endorse. Garrett empirically demonstrates the viability of social democratic corporatism even with increasing exposure to globalization in the forms of cross-border trade and capital mobility. He also proves that it is possible to win elections with redistributive and interventionist policies, and that better economic performance in terms of GDP growth and unemployment obtains, though with higher inflation than in the laissez-faire countries (United States, Britain). Garrett concludes that “big government is compatible with strong macroeconomic performance” and that markets do not dominate politics. In a direct rebuttal of Rodrik, Garrett analyzes data on more than 100 countries during the 1985–95 period to find that increasing exposure to globalization does not reduce government spending. Political scientist Evelyne Huber and sociologist John Stephens echo Garrett’s conclusion that the welfare state is compatible with global capitalism, although they do admit that social democratic policies are today more constrained than in the so-called “golden age” of the 1950s and 1960s.

For Garrett, Huber, and Stephens and for Fligstein the welfare state is perfectly viable under conditions of globalization. Moreover, it may be able simultaneously to deliver social well-being and enhance national competitiveness. Thus, they reject the tradeoff that neoliberals see between welfare expenditures and economic competitiveness under conditions of globalization. In spite of the excellent, well-supported research by these authors, however, the debate in the media and among politicians throughout the world remains heavily tilted in favor of those blaming the welfare state for declining competitiveness and various social ills.

Is globality different from modernity?

Perhaps the most difficult debate surrounding globalization has to do with whether it is merely a continuation of the trend toward modernity or the beginning of a new era. On one side of the fence, Giddens argues that “modernity is inherently globalizing,” and that “globalization [makes] the modes of connection between different social contexts or regions become networked

across the earth's surface as a whole." This view follows directly from the concept of "disembedding" or "the lifting out" of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across time and space," which Giddens considers a prerequisite for modernization. World-society scholarship takes sides with Giddens on this point: globalization results in a "sharing" of modernity across the world.

On the other side of the fence, British social theorist Martin Albrow argues that globalization is a "transformation, not a culmination," and the "transition to a new era rather than the apogee of the old." He proposes a stark distinction between modernity as the "imposition of practical rationality upon the rest of the world through the agency of the state and the mechanism of the market, the generation of universal ideas to encompass the diversity of the world," and globality as it restored "the boundlessness of culture and promotes the endless renewability and diversification of cultural expression rather than homogenization or hybridization." Other noted social theorists of globalization also support the same distinction, especially insofar as the modern nation-state is concerned: "The politics of identity substitutes for the politics of nation-building."

The debate over the relationship between modernity and globality is a central one for sociologists. If globality is merely the result of an intensification of modernizing trends, then the recent surge in the number of books and articles on this subject can hardly be justified. There is, however, a key theoretical argument to be made in favor of the view that globality is different from modernity. Modernity – like the distorting Mercator projection – is an outgrowth of the Western worldview. For reasons of theoretical consistency, one should reserve the terms "globalization," "global," and "globality" to denote, respectively, processes, qualities, and conditions that are not set into motion or dominated by any one model, paradigm, or worldview. In its broadest sense, globality is about a multiplicity of conceptions, not about cultural or paradigmatic hegemony; it is about the proliferation of cross-national network ties of an economic, political, social, and cultural nature. This criticism is especially germane in the case of authors who consider globalization to be an inevitable and sweeping process – neoliberals and Marxists in particular – as Fligstein has aptly pointed out.

Finally, Kobrin has proposed a distinction between globalization in the late twentieth century and the previous period of modern expansion of the world economy that is useful empirically. The international economy of the nineteenth century "links discrete, mutually exclusive, geographical national markets through cross-border flows of trade and investment." By contrast, the global economy of the late twentieth century is driven by the increasing scale of technology, the surge in cross-border collaboration of firms along the value-added chain, and the cross-border integration of information flows. Thus, globalization has "substantive meaning" because, this time around, "national markets are *fused* transnationally rather than linked across borders."

Is a global culture in the making?

Perhaps the most popular and controversial of the debates about globalization has to do with the rise of a global culture. Actually, there are only a few scholars who maintain that a global culture is in the making. The idea goes back to Marshall McLuhan's slippery concept of the "global village," later picked up by some influential marketing researchers who argued that the world was becoming increasingly populated by cosmopolitan consumers. Sociologist Leslie Sklair writes that a "culture-ideology of consumerism" – driven by symbols, images, and the aesthetic of the lifestyle and the self-image – has spread throughout the world and is having some momentous effects, including the standardization of tastes and desires, and even the fall of the Soviet order.

Other sociologists, however, argue against the homogenizing effects of mass consumerism. Zelizer writes that consumer differentiation should not be confused with segregation and posits that in the US economy differentiation is combined with connection: "the same consumer product can have at the same moment universal and local meaning." Zelizer urges sociologists to distinguish between the phenomenon of worldwide diffusion and the experience at the receiving end, which seems to be growing more diverse even as globalization intensifies. Similarly, anthropologist Arjun Appadurai argues that "individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern," and that "consumption of the mass media worldwide

provokes resistance, irony, selectivity, and, in general, *agency*.” Using cross-national attitudinal data over the 1981–98 period, Inglehart and Baker find that national cultures and values change over time, though in “path-dependent” rather than convergent ways. Even world-society arguments about the “world culture of educated individual choice and responsibility” stop short of announcing a global culture à la McLuhan. However, they do describe world-culture as binding society and individuals together “by rationalized systems of (imperfectly) egalitarian justice and participatory representation, in the economy, polity, culture, and social interaction.” Other researchers have found that the spread of the mass media is not enough to account for the rise of cross-border advocacy groups, although “global governance” of major aspects of cross-border communication has been on the rise since 1850.

Political and social theorists and historians have noted the rise of what modernists would call “particularistic” identities as evidence against the rise of a global culture. Cox writes about globalization producing a “resurgent affirmation of identities,” whereas Waters contrasts a cultural and “religious mosaic” with global cultural production and consumption of music, images, and information. Mazlish notes that “ethnic feeling is a powerful bond,” and skeptically asks, “What counterpart can there be on the global level?” Political scientist Deborah Yashar rejects “global culture” and “global citizenship” concepts but also finds fault with the argument that globalization has induced the proliferation of ethnic movements. In her comparison of indigenous movements in Latin America, Yashar clearly demonstrates that no aspect of globalization – economic, political, social, or normative – can account for the rise of ethnic-based activism since the 1960s. Rather, globalization changes the characteristics of the state structures that activists face when making their claims.

Cross-border migration creates an unusually rich laboratory for assessing the rise of a global culture. Sociologist Alejandro Portes proposes the term “transnational communities” to refer to cross-border networks of immigrants that are “‘neither here nor there’ but in both places simultaneously.” Different transnational communities, however, exhibit different origins, features, and problems, and they certainly do not form a monolithic global class of cosmopolitan citizens.

Similarly to Portes, Friedman accepts the basic notion of cultural fragmentation proposed by Appadurai, Smith, and Zelizer but argues that in today’s world the existence of tribal societies cannot be correctly understood without explaining how they are embedded in global networks. In his view, cultural diversity must be seen in a global context.

Some of the most persuasive arguments against the idea of the emergence of a global culture come from anthropologist Clifford Geertz. He observes that the world is “growing both more global and more divided, more thoroughly interconnected and more intricately partitioned at the same time [. . .] Whatever it is that defines identity in borderless capitalism and the global village it is not deep going agreements on deep going matters, but something more like the recurrence of familiar divisions, persisting arguments, standing threats, the notion that whatever else may happen, the order of difference must be somehow maintained.” Like Geertz, sociologist Anthony Smith is skeptical and notes an interesting “initial problem” with the concept of “global culture”: “Can we speak of ‘culture’ in the singular? If by ‘culture’ is meant a collective mode of life, or a repertoire of beliefs, styles, values and symbols, then we can only speak of cultures, never just culture; for a collective mode of life [. . .] presupposes different modes and repertoires in a universe of modes and repertoires. Hence, the idea of a ‘global culture’ is a practical impossibility, except in interplanetary terms.”

The ultimate question about the alleged rise of a global culture has to do with whether a global language is emerging. The diffusion of Esperanto has certainly not delivered on early expectations, and the “English-as-global-language” argument seems equally far-fetched and indefensible. As Mazlish observes, English “is becoming a sort of *lingua franca* [but] there are serious limitations to the use of English as the daily language of a global culture.” Moreover, English is being challenged as the dominant language in parts of the United States and the United Kingdom. Even on the Internet, fewer than 50 percent of world users know English as a first language, and the proportion is dropping steadily as the new medium diffuses throughout the world. It is also instructive to recall that the most successful world language ever, Latin, evolved into a mosaic of Romance languages after spreading in its various vulgarized

forms throughout the territory of the Roman Empire. Smith notes that, rather than the emergence of a “global” culture held together by the English language, what we are witnessing is the emergence of “culture areas” – not necessarily at odds or in conflict with each other, as Huntington would have it. Thus, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, French, Kiswahili, and Chinese have become the shared languages of certain groups, communities or population strata across countries located in specific regions of the world, namely, Latin America, the CIS, the Arab world, Sub-Saharan Africa, East Africa, and South East Asia, respectively.

Toward a Comparative Sociology of Globalization

The social science literature on globalization contains important theoretical and empirical disagreements. Scholars have provided very different answers to the five key debates discussed in this chapter. The balance of opinion appears to be tilted, however. Most research either assumes or documents that globalization is indeed happening, and most empirical studies – with the notable exception of the world-society approach – do not find convergence in political, social, or organizational patterns as a result of globalization. The most persuasive empirical work to date indicates that globalization *per se* neither undermines the nation-state nor erodes the viability of the welfare state. Some empirical evidence also documents that globality is different from modernity. Finally, it seems that no such thing as a global culture is emerging.

Relative to the other social sciences, sociology has contributed to the debate over globalization in three important ways. First, social theorists have developed an understanding of the nature and epochal implications of globalization. Although there is no agreement as to whether globalization is a continuation of modernity or not, there is an incipient body of work that outlines in detail what are the main theoretical perspectives and problems. Moreover, sociologists have called attention to the cultural, reflexive, and aesthetic aspects of globalization in addition to its economic and political dimensions. Second, world-society scholars have developed a macrophenomenological approach to globalization and the nation-state based on a sound

institutional theoretical foundation, and they have supported their view with systematic empirical evidence encompassing the entire world. Third, comparative sociologists have theorized about globalization’s effects on cross-national difference and similarity. They have also offered empirical evidence in the forms of both rich case studies and quantitative analyses. Sociologists, however, need to continue reading the important contributions that economic historians, management scholars, political scientists, and anthropologists are making to the theoretical and empirical study of such a complex and multifaceted phenomenon as globalization.

The analysis and critique presented in this chapter indicate that globalization, far from being a feeble phenomenon, is changing the nature of the world. However, it is neither an invariably civilizing force nor a destructive one. Although further empirical investigation is warranted, there is already enough evidence available to reject either extreme. Globalization is neither a monolithic nor an inevitable phenomenon. Its impact varies across countries, societal sectors, and time. It is contradictory, discontinuous, even haphazard. Therefore, one needs to be open-minded about its unexpected and unintended consequences. One also needs to take into account the role that agency, interest, and resistance play in shaping it. As Pieterse has pointed out, globalization does not necessarily pose a choice between condemnation and celebration. Rather, it begs to be engaged, comprised, given form.

The complexity of globalization certainly invites additional research. We are in great need of further theoretical work to clarify the economic, political, cultural, and aesthetic dimensions of globalization and how they interact with each other. We also lack theoretical perspectives that bridge the micro–macro gap, i.e. that move across levels of analysis from the world-system to the nation-state, the industry, sector, community, organization, and group. Many of the empirical disagreements in the literature are primarily due to the various levels of analysis at which different researchers operate. Understanding globalization will require us to gather more and better data about its myriad manifestations, causes, and effects. We still know very little about what exactly causes it and what are its consequences on such key sociological variables as organizational patterns, authority structures, social

inequality, and social movements, to name but a few. And sociologists need to work hard on government agencies and other data-gathering organizations so that they pay more attention in their surveys and censuses to relationships at various levels of aggregation.

Given the infancy of our efforts to understand globalization and the complexity of the phenomenon, it seems sensible to ask not only for an intensification of our interdisciplinary awareness but also for a comparative approach to the sociology of globalization. Comparing lies at the heart of the sociological enterprise.

We need to engage in comparative work in the dual sense of using multiple methods of data collection and analysis, and of applying our theoretical and empirical tools to a variety of research settings defined at various levels of analysis. The differences and similarities across such settings ought to give us a handle on the patterns according to which the causes and effects of globalization change from one setting to another. Without a comparative approach, the literature on globalization promises to remain as puzzling and contradictory as the phenomenon itself.

