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INTRODUCTION

As more people become more connected across larger distances in different ways, they are creating a new world society in which they do more similar things, affect each other's lives more deeply, follow more of the same norms, and grow more aware of what they share. "Globalization" is one name for that process. With many examples, this book describes how and why it happens. As a preview, this introduction summarizes my main themes and the thrust of the chapters to come. Readers who prefer to plunge in can skip straight to the next chapter.

Themes

Globalization refers to the growth of ties that span space. Since people can link up across wider spaces in many ways, that definition is quite generic. Businesses that sell their wares abroad, or missionaries eager to save souls, or migrants leaving home in search of opportunity are all globalizers. Globalization occurs in many fields, world society has many dimensions. The definition therefore takes a broad and inclusive view: globalization is not a single thing or force but rather a set of human actions that share a similar quality and point in the same direction. In Chapter 2, I break the definition into four components, implicit in the opening paragraph, as a convenient tool for further analysis. "Ties that span space" minimally involve spreading or diffusing things or information, greater interdependence among more people, new forms of organization, and a wider awareness of commonalities. Applied to a great variety of social practices, from economic to legal to religious, this conveys the inherent diversity of globalization. To capture some underlying patterns that help to build world society, I still prefer to use the singular, globalization, but the plural, *globalizations*, does at least equal justice to what is happening.

Since globalization is still unfolding, describing it is a bit like charting the course or gauging the flow of a river from midstream. Yet while we cannot see exactly where we are going, the shape of world society is becoming clearer. For all the diversity described in later chapters, it has its own features, its own institutions, its own problems. In an earlier book, *World Culture: Origins and Consequences*, John Boli and I examined world culture as part of world society, arguing that this culture increasingly informs how we think and shapes much of what we do (Lechner and Boli 2005). Here I expand our argument to show how globalization creates a new framework for social life around the globe. My subtitle deliberately hedges a little: this book is about "the making" of world society – still incomplete, still in process. As later chapters will show, it involves many brakes and barriers that limit globalization in some way. At the risk of disappointing global enthusiasts, my point is not that everything or everyone is "going global," that world society somehow will sweep all before it. Rather, I want to show how new kinds of social organization intertwine with older ways of doing things.

The very term world society sounds ambitious. It captures something big and implicitly makes a grand claim. One reason it sounds ambitious is that most of us identify "society" with the state or country we live in. "Society" means Japanese society, American society, and so on. This kind of society is a package deal, containing a state that organizes a people, controls a territory, and fosters a culture. If the world consists of societies in this sense, how could there be room for "world" society? It is an interesting global fact that we often equate society and nation-state, but we are free to decline the package deal offered by world culture and instead think of world society in a different way. It will not be, and cannot be, a nation-state on a global scale. But we do need a name for the ways in which relations-across-spaces are crystallizing and congealing, for new ways of organizing and interpreting distant-but-common activities and experiences, and I use "world society" simply as a convenient name for that complex social reality. (Among scholars, the term is sometimes used as a label for one way of thinking about globalization (Meyer, Boli, et al. 1997), which has in fact influenced my own perspective; to avoid confusion I will describe this way of thinking by its older name, "world polity theory.")

If some kind of "world society" is emerging, it is also tempting to think that this will leave nation-states behind as hopelessly old-fashioned. If we have more in common with distant peoples, what we have in common with those nearby should matter less. This makes intuitive sense but we should resist the intellectual temptation. Nation-states are not going away; neither will national identities. Globalization will have to work in and through nation-states. At the same time, what nation-states do, and how people identify with them, will change. That was the topic of my book *The Netherlands: Globalization and National Identity*, which focused on the way the Dutch have dealt with their national identity in response to globalization (Lechner 2008). If anything, the problem for world society is not how to overcome nation-states but how to build them where they do not exist. After all, many so-called nation-states are neither – they are countries that have neither competent states nor

coherent nations. Yet a reasonably stable world society will need responsive and competent states that manage the affairs of particular areas and carry the hopes of particular peoples.

Globalization is a big enough theme for one book, but I also view it as part of a still-greater transformation, both technical and social. In just a few centuries, human beings have learned how to put nature to work for us more effectively, how to move things and people more easily, and how to share information more quickly. "Human beings" is vague and misleading, of course: some groups in some places have done all this, and the benefits have not spread to everyone. Yet the massive technical transformation, from electricity to engines to telephones to the Internet, does affect everyone. World society would be impossible without it. Along with new ways of doing things, we have devised new ways of organizing social affairs. Again, the "we" did not include everyone – a caveat that applies elsewhere in the book though I sometimes leave it unstated – but a particular kind of social change nonetheless ripples around the world. Modern societies do not all follow a single path to a single destination, but typically they do work differently than those that came before: they have more specialized institutions, they grant more leeway to individuals as consumers and citizens, and they overturn all sorts of hierarchies based on naked power, traditional privilege, or old beliefs. For centuries, these technical and social revolutions have spilled across the borders of states. Globalization follows from, complements, and reinforces them.

The idea that a social transformation upsets old hierarchies would hearten enthusiasts who think globalization creates a "flat" world, in which more people have more equal access to more opportunities (Friedman 2007). Critics would counter, of course, that the world is hardly flat, since quite apart from the abject poverty of billions not everyone can partake equally of all its opportunities. Globalization may just create a new hierarchy in place of the old. A stronger version of this criticism suggests that globalization has always done this, imposing a particular view of how to organize society while slotting the world's regions in a rank order that favors the West (or in current parlance, the North). Allied with this critique is the idea, prevalent among scholars and activists, that globalization is a poor word choice to capture the expansion of a free market, capitalist, or "neoliberal" system, a mainly economic process driven by powerful groups to serve their interests. From this perspective, globalization is all one-way, from North to South or from West to East: under the guise of globalization a new "empire" takes over the world. The argument often focuses on the role of the United States as a "hegemonic" power, one that is able to use its special strength to create a world in which all will abide by rules that work to its advantage. This critical view of globalization has a sharper but also more limited focus than my own. I see it as an argument not about globalization as such but about one form of globalization and the way this form became more prominent at the end of the twentieth century. Since the argument is important, I come back to it repeatedly along the way. Perhaps not surprisingly, given my choice of topic, I think it is more fruitful to view current trends in terms of globalization rather

than a world empire. Broadly speaking, the term empire and the reasoning behind it – not shared by all who adopt an overtly critical perspective on globalization – do not do justice to what is happening in the twenty-first century. About the United States my verdict will be more mixed: it obviously has had great influence in globalization, especially at key junctures, but its role is also variable and increasingly constrained.

The critical view of globalization owes much to Karl Marx (1818–1883), often credited with predicting its current sweep in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 (written with Friedrich Engels, 1820–1895), while my inclusive one owes more to Max Weber (1864–1920), the German sociologist who was less confident than Marx about our ability to predict the sweep of any big historical process or explain it in terms of one grand theory. Along with their colleagues, they investigated a great transformation that took place during the second wave of globalization. Just as the third wave is in fact shaped by the legacies of the second, so the analysis of the current period inherits ideas from that earlier era. How far they can take us is an open question. Part of our intellectual inheritance is a certain amount of disagreement about how best to understand society and how best to explain its recent transformation. We have no single "theory of society," and there is no all-encompassing account of globalization either. Trying to devise one would be premature, perhaps impossible. Playing different accounts off against each other, partly to see how some might work together, is an option I have explored before (see Lechner and Boli 2005: ch. 2, which summarizes four theoretical perspectives). In this book I take a slightly different tack by turning a spotlight on various aspects of globalization in order to assess explanations of globalizations rather than offer a theory to surpass all theories.

Together, those explanations have to help clarify what it means to live in a world that works and feels like a "single place," to quote Roland Robertson (1992: 6), a pioneer in studying globalization. If they do not add up to one theory, they can still serve as platforms from which to look at the world. "Globalization" is not just a process occurring out in the world, or a term with which to capture its direction, but also a vantage point from which to think about that world (Velho 1997). Thinking globally carries its own risks. Once you start, it is hard not to think of anything in global terms, linking it to one overarching process. Because globalization seems to be part of, or at least to accompany, many things people care and puzzle about, it is an easy step from simply trying to "think globally" to crediting or blaming globalization for just about anything – wealth or poverty, better or worse music, growing or disappearing forests. But the old truism that correlation is not causation often applies, since globalization does not cause many things commonly attributed to it. Much as this book makes a case for globalization, it also cautions against committing that globalization fallacy.

By making a case I do not mean that I come to cheer globalization. My goal is to give a clear-eyed, hard-nosed account of what is happening, based on a wide range of scholarly work. Yet by comparison with other accounts, mine is likely to sound more cheerful. While popular writers occasionally sing globalization's praises,

among academics a more somber tone prevails, reflecting what one scholar calls "globophobia" (Ritzer 2007: 1) – globalization is "predatory" (Falk 1999), it takes place in "hard times" (McGrew 2007). My approach is different, partly because I disagree with some of the reasons for the widely shared academic aversion, partly because I try to steer clear of pleading a political cause. This does not mean I am sanguine about globalization's prospects. The technical transformation referred to above made world society possible, and technology has helped to raise the globe's carrying capacity, thus enabling more people to live longer and in greater comfort, yet in using nature we have also changed it, at times destroying what was there. Most of the resources we have mined cannot be renewed, raising the question how we will cope in the future, and if worst-case scenarios about global warming come to pass, that may threaten the very viability of world society. I address the issue as a global problem in a later chapter but do not presume to offer a definite answer and therefore remain ecologically agnostic for the purposes of this book. The view from midstream runs the risk of ignoring the precipice up ahead. But perhaps a clear grasp of globalization will give us a better sense of the resources we have that may help keep us afloat.

For more than ecological reasons, globalization is controversial. People argue about it in the streets, in the halls of power, and in seminar rooms. Globalization generates heat. Of course, as will become apparent, I am not neutral on many of the controversies, and I will explain where I stand in many of the debates. But more than anything I would like to shed light on the disputes themselves by delving into actual research to show what we know and do not know. In some cases, that will go a long way. For example, the opening paragraph claimed that world society witnessed "more" of several things, and historical evidence can help to defend or qualify the point. In other cases, my approach can only go so far. Deciding whether globalization is "predatory," or times are "hard," or technology spells future doom, involves different sorts of judgment, some normative. The best way to analyze globalization is itself a matter of dispute, and on that score I will argue only by example, since the proof of the pudding is not in any recipe. In fact, I doubt there is a "best" way; rather, several good ways serve different purposes.

My purpose is to offer a persuasive argument about globalization as a process creating a new world society, describe in some detail how it is unfolding across many places and in many institutions, and serve as a guide into the diverse literatures that make sense of it. Since those literatures are enormous, this guide can only sketch a partial map. The combined size of the literatures dealing with globalization makes it impossible to cover it all. It goes without saying that about any subject I discuss there is more to be said – for example, the chapter on states (Chapter 6) has much on social spending but nothing on defense, the religion chapter (Chapter 9) focuses on Catholicism rather than Buddhism, and the environment chapter (Chapter 12) picks three issues out of many on the global agenda – and I will therefore not belabor the obvious by saying it again after saying it here.

Structure

Each of the chapters to come is about a global something – global food, global law, global religion, and so on. I use each topic, illustrated with many examples, to make a point about globalization, enter a debate about its direction, or sketch a problem in world society. The chapters stand on their own and can be read in any order – for example, readers who first want to delve into the substance of global institutional change might want to focus on chapters 5 through 9 rather than start with food or sports. Each chapter draws on a distinct literature and concisely summarizes the state of the art as best I can. Yet I have also grouped the chapters for a reason. The first part illustrates how globalization changes everyday experience, the second focuses on the new institutions that may be the backbone of world society, and the third zeroes in on issues widely viewed as problems world society will have to confront.

In a way, it all started with food. Europeans' quest to add flavor to their food motivated them to seek ways to reach Asia. As Chapter 2 explains, this helped to set off what we may call the first "wave" of globalization. In that wave, Jamaica became a "sugar island" at the center of a global network. In the nineteenth century, a second wave followed, which rolled across newly cultivated American wheat fields, tied to world markets via train and telegraph. Both Tokyo's large fish market, a hub in the global fishing industry, and McDonald's in East Asia, an exemplary American multinational serving a quintessential global food, embody key features of the third wave that is still going on. Together the waves, a metaphor suggested by Robbie Robertson (2003), convey how globalization is nothing new yet also very different now. Each new wave relies on a distinct technical infrastructure and alters the global environment. Global food thus gives us a glimpse of the continuity and breaks in globalization history.

From the second wave we inherit many of the games people now play around the world – most games have become "global games," a process Chapter 3 describes. The global triumph of soccer is obviously familiar, and that very familiarity shows how people around the world have been drawn into the same story, the same sort of experience, the same organized activities. Partly thanks to the Olympic Games, many other sports also have become globally standardized, played by the same rules and with international organizations ultimately in charge. Global sports, and the global "sporting system" in which they are all embedded, thus illustrate how many common activities have become globally organized. The fact that America has long stood "offside" in the soccer world tells us that America is not the dominant player across all fields, one instance among others of the way in which globalization also constrains the presumed hyperpower.

Sports spread partly through mass media, especially television, in the third wave. Though still very much tied to domestic markets and shaped by state policies, global television has also served to expose more audiences to more similar shows, characters, music, and advertising. At times, it creates common occasions witnessed by

billions simultaneously, one way of fostering global awareness. Reflecting on changes in India's media market, Chapter 4 reviews how media globalization is happening and asks whether the flow of shows and the rise of commercial formats reduce the variety in what we watch. At the risk of equivocating, I invoke the term "glocalization" to answer yes – and no. Through cultural encounters critical audiences actively sift and sort increasingly globalized "content," while preserving a sense of distinction. India's popular Bollywood film tradition further supports this way of thinking about media globalization, which runs counter to claims about the persistence of "cultural imperialism." The flow of cultural products, though certainly dominated by US producers in both movies and TV programming, is not one-way, which sustains global variety even as the contrasts across media markets diminish.

For many people globalization simply means that international trade and investment are knitting together a vastly larger world economy. China, of course, plays a crucial role in this part of the story, as Chapter 5 explains. Its shift to a "market economy with socialist characteristics" tied it much more closely to the world economy, and many of its domestic reforms mirror broader global trends. For China, it has paid off. The world economy, too, has performed much better in the third wave, as more places have become more intricately connected in production, through trade, and via the financial markets, although the global pay-off has been much more uneven. Reviewing the history of economic reconstruction after World War II and a new global thrust from about 1980, the chapter describes just how intricate the connections have become. More than any other feature of globalization, these economic trends have also provoked critics who argue that the singular "neoliberal" global expansion of recent decades is both unjust and unsustainable. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of this diagnosis of globalization as the virulent spread of "market fundamentalism."

Even if it is an exaggeration to say that markets rule the world, the economic expansion after World War II has made states much more dependent on forces they cannot control. Are they bound to retreat? Chapter 6 argues that the fear is premature. Already in the second wave, some states started using their new-found powers to build a safety net that sheltered some groups from the impact of globalization. In the third, it is more difficult to keep that net in good repair but its basic role has not changed. Welfare states that put their economic house in order may well be a linchpin rather than a liability in the globalization process. The larger point, a paradox only if we think of markets and states in opposition to each other, is that globalization also enhances state authority in some ways – states cannot do just "their own thing," they are also charged with global tasks. This applies not just to welfare but also to other such tasks, including education. Globalization, then, certainly challenges states but also operates in and through them. The problem is not with competent states at risk of retreating but with those that have little to retreat from in the first place.

While world society still relies on state authority, it is also building institutions that organize its affairs in a different way, trying to "run the world," or bits and pieces of it, in the absence of a world state. Slowly but surely, "global governance"

is taking shape, as Chapter 7 explains with a focus on law. For example, as the "legal capital of the world," The Hague is home to several legal bodies with international responsibilities, including the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (which announced its closing as I completed this book). Contrary to its founders' intent, the United Nations has become a law-making body at the center of a web of governance. Farther outside the orbit of states, many private groups have devised ways of regulating their cross-border activities, notably in business. In some respects, at least, "international" law is turning into "world law," though the actual structure of governance is still quite messy. To make sense of the trend, which leaves a world of states behind but has yet to crystallize into a world society with a common legal culture, I draw on the work of Hugo Grotius, the seventeenth-century Dutch scholar who was a pioneer in thinking about international law.

Among the people who connect across state borders are groups committed to particular causes that seek allies abroad and form networks to take on a wide range of issues. By linking up, voluntary associations thus create a global civil society, again in the absence of a global state. Chapter 8 begins with the movement against female genital cutting (or mutilation), a practice widely denounced as a cruel violation of women's human rights, and shows how groups coalesced around the issue to bring it to global attention, mobilize support, and put pressure on relevant states. Exactly how global civic action gets organized varies from case to case – the Red Cross differs from the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, for example. Thanks to the enormous growth in international nongovernmental organizations or INGOs, ranging from professional associations to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to Greenpeace, global civil society basks in the glow of a new kind of authority, yet it also faces many constraints. I critically review the argument that it represents a "power shift" in world society.

Perhaps the largest, and oldest, "civic" organization in the world is the Roman Catholic Church. It has always had a universal vision and mission, but after the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, it changed its relation to the world at large, accepting the fact that Catholicism was just one religion among others and committing itself to human rights and freedom of religion. Not coincidentally, the Church's center of gravity also moved South: more new adherents came from developing countries. As Chapter 9 describes, the Church thus went through a globalization phase of its own during the tenure of Pope John Paul II, whose unprecedented travels expanded the Church's reach. One reason for the trips was religious competition: in many countries, Pentecostal groups made inroads, turning that branch of evangelical Christianity into one of the fastest-growing religious communities, with its own global impact. While Catholics and Pentecostals differ in many ways, they roughly converge in viewing religion as distinct from worldly institutions and embedded in a diverse culture. For many Muslims, that religious relation to world society is more problematic – its institutions are not rooted in Islamic tradition, its practices make adherence to traditional rules of conduct more difficult, and its dominant powers call into question the superiority of Islam. A

militant minority has turned Islam into a kind of ideology, centered on building an Islamic state under Islamic law, that differs from non-Islamic forms of religiosity, but the chapter argues that this politicization of religion is likely to fail and increasingly will give way to distinctly Islamic accommodations to world society. Again using Catholic examples, it concludes by suggesting that religion viewed as part of civil society, enlivened by the faith of millions of believers, does not become impotent but instead addresses global problems in distinctive fashion.

Religions move to new places because believers do. In fact, some 3 percent of the world population or about 200 million people do not live in their country of origin – a big number, certainly, but also a reminder that even in the global age most people stay put. Migration has many benefits, for migrants and host countries alike, but those who move change the places where they arrive and this often creates tension, perceived as a problem especially by people who feel their way of life changing. Starting in my home territory – DeKalb County, Georgia – Chapter 10 describes who moves where and why, reviews some of the responses to migration, and throws cold water on one pessimistic American diagnosis of its impact. Again arguing against overly global views of globalization, I also suggest that true "transnationalism" still only involves a small number of people, another indication that globalization has its limits.

One force that drives migration is inequality: many poor people move to get ahead. Using the experience of Malawi as an example, Chapter 11 emphasizes just how deep global inequality is. Referring to South Korea, it also suggests that in some respects global gaps are shrinking. The chapter tries to answer the larger questions about what is happening to inequality worldwide but also explains why it is difficult to gauge inequality accurately. Overall, it takes issue with the common lament that globalization makes the rich richer and the poor poorer – among other reasons, because it is a fallacy to attribute many of the existing gaps to the process of globalization. Globalization has made some of the poor richer but also leaves the excluded poor relatively worse off. How to make Malawians full participants in world society remains one of its biggest challenges, and the chapter offers no easy answers in that regard.

As the common label, "developing countries," indicates, recipes intended to help Malawi and similar places do better necessarily include one ingredient: development. But under current global norms, some kinds of development are better than others: development must be "sustainable." Chapter 12 recounts how that norm developed as the centerpiece of a global environmental "regime," a common set of assumptions, rules, and procedures applied to a problem recognized as intrinsically global. Starting with a controversy over an Indian dam project, intended as a spur to development there, the chapter describes how since the 1960s environmental awareness and concern has spread, in part thanks to a global movement led by environmental INGOs. World society has taken some action in dealing with some environmental problems, as illustrated in the cases of ozone depletion, deforestation, and climate change, but the institutional means for addressing them still leave much to be desired. The shortcomings of the global regime(s) give some

environmentalists reason to advocate more drastic changes in the relation between humans and nature, which also leads them to devalue development.

Both global inequality and environmental damage have helped to inspire a movement critical of globalization and its impact, the topic of Chapter 13. Once called the "antiglobalization" movement, a more common label is the "global justice movement." Composed mainly of groups on the political left, it flexed its collective muscle in opposition to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle in 1999 and at many subsequent gatherings of international economic organizations. Since 2001, when it was first staged in Porto Alegre, Brazil, the World Social Forum has also provided an ideological home for globalization critics. While it is internally diverse, with different groups choosing different targets and tactics, the movement has propagated the common view that globalization really is an unjust and unsustainable neoliberal project. As part of the "counterculture" of world society, it challenges many rules of the current global game. How to do better is less clear: the critics' proposals range from drastic "deglobalization" to more gradual reform in the direction of "global social democracy." However vital the global justice movement has been, such proposals have not yet attracted a major global following or had a great impact on world society. Yet the future direction of globalization depends on the way world society deals with its critics.

Further Reading

David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt, and Jonathan Perraton, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics, and Culture* (Stanford University Press, 1999)

Frank J. Lechner and John Boli, *World Culture: Origins and Consequences* (Blackwell, 2005)

Frank J. Lechner and John Boli (eds.), *The Globalization Reader* (Blackwell, 2008)

George Ritzer (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Globalization* (Blackwell, 2007)

Robbie Robertson, *The Three Waves of Globalization: A History of a Developing Global Consciousness* (Zed Books, 2003)

Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (Sage, 1992)