

What is meant by the
term globalisation



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Globalisation is one of the key ideas in modern politics and international relations and also a main, if not key idea in social sciences. Every discipline has an angle on globalisation from Sociology to Psychology. However is globalisation just another "buzz" word dreamt up by the media, the idea of globalisation is not a new idea. The United Nations and its predecessor the League of Nations are both attempts at some form of World wide governmental systems.

Modern globalisation is a lot easier with the new technology such as satellites, the internet and video conferencing. It's now physically possible to have all the various governmental leaders in one place if not in person but in spirit. The world may not be ready for a world government but it's technologically quite straight forward. The proponents of globalisation argue that all the other fields in the political arena have become redundant or at least less important.

The backbone of the political world is the division between the right and left. This division has become clouded recently as the various actors have started to merge into one general consensus. Globalisation is progressing throughout the governments of the world eroding the nation-states power and its sovereignty. States that embrace globalisation risk being over run by states that have not and so no state is willing to throw themselves blindly at globalisation.

The term globalisation foggy at best and as with most grand words used to describe incredibly complex events political thinkers are unsure of what it exactly means. These people fall into three main camps; *

'Transformationlists', who agree that something has changed but are unsure to what end. * 'Hyper-globalisationlists', who think that everything has changed along a very definite course. * Globalisation Sceptics, who say that globalisation is just a myth and that nothing has really changed.

Firstly I will talk about the Transformationlists. " Globalisation has destabilised the 'national industrial state'. The central dynamics of economic life now transcend national borders and have become uncontrollable for national governments. " (Castles, S & Davidson, A. pg 7 line 14.) This becomes clearer if we look at a definition of 'national industrial state' as it is seen by Lapeyronnie; " Society' referred to an economic and social system based on rational ... principles. The) 'State' referred to a political system based on (secure) principles (and finally) 'Nation' referred to a 'people' defined on the basis both of belonging to the territory of the state and having a common cultural and ethnic background. "

Transformationlists also argue that the 'people' no longer have the power they used to have before globalisation. What does it mean " to be a citizen if the autonomy of the nation-state is being eroded, and the vote that one wields cannot influence key political decisions because they are no longer made by national parliaments? " (Castles, S & Davidson, A. g 7 line 27).

Castles & Davidson believe that the idea of national cultures is the bases for nation building and national pride and that globalisation has changed all this, " rapid improvements in transport and communications has led to an unprecedented degree of cultural interchange (this mixed with) the diffusion of specific value systems connected with consumerism, individualism and US

lifestyles" (Castles, S & Davidson, A. pg 8 lines 2 & 4) has led to a drop in nationalistic behaviour and thought.

People are slowly beginning to except globalisation at least in the consumer world. Globalisation is a term that has been fashionable since about the mid-1980s, when it began to replace terms such as 'internationalisation' and 'Transnationalisation'. " (Hoogvelt, A. pg 114, line 1). Certain authors see globalisation or rather its effects as something rather more scientific than the above authors. I have mentioned that due to technology it is possible to 'be' somewhere that your not. David Harvey and Anthony Giddens both have very similar theories 'Time/Space Compression' and 'Time/Space Distantiation' respectively in which they talk about the shrinking of the world due to the latest technology such as the internet.

Space is expressed in time; delivery of goods to consumers is measured in the time it would take to cover the distance between the producer and the consumer. As technology increases this means that eventually space would become redundant. This is what Giddens calls the 'Time/Space Distantiation'. This theory is quite similar to the earlier 'Time/Space Compression' by Harvey whom has taken a slightly different angle to Giddens in as such that Harvey believes that, again in the capitalist society, Time is becoming more and more important and in fact more important than money.

Production costs are determined by the time it takes to produce the item so producing items quicker will save money. This is also reflected in the workers, a quicker work force (a work force that saves time) is a cheaper work force. As Marx states " Economy of time, to this all economy ultimately

reduces itself. " Time, argues Harvey, now dominates money and defines how much money is worth with regards to the stock market, accountants calculate interest rates as 'the time value of money'. Production time together with Circulation exchange time is referred to as 'the turnover time of capital'.

The faster that money is returned to a person the greater the profit will be. Again time determines the end monetary result. Sceptics would argue that all these documented changes are not actually the result of globalisation and/or that nothing out the ordinary has changed. For example it can be argued that Time has always been closely linked to money and the cost of items. Similarly space and time have been gradually getting smaller since man first needed to travel at faster than walking pace. It is then no surprise that people start to take advantage of these faster means of transport and communication.

As globalisation is a relatively new term thought up in the eighties it does not take in to consideration the similar leaps forward in the ability to travel great distances at relatively fast speeds. When airplanes became more common place people could get to places that would either be hard or near impossible to reach without a great deal of effort and at a reasonably cheap price. Similarly with boats, trains and cars. Granted in today's technological world these existing forms of transport are more often that not used to take people to their job rather to meet clients.

As clients can be talked to over the phone via email, instant messaging or even via video phones. When these technologies become cheaper and more

widely available planes, trains and automobiles will become obsolete as an office worker would have no need to be at the office. This process is awe inspiring but it is not something new or unexpected. It seems that authors such as Harvey and Giddens have just realised a simple process that is constantly going on and will probably never end. To get excited about this is jumping the gun somewhat.

Again it is true that these latest changes do seem to point to a goal but it cannot be assumed to be some form of utopian society where every nation state and person coexists in perfect harmony. On the other hand to right of these changes as purely the progression of mankind or even worse to ignore them entirely as some sceptics do is a fatal mistake. Hyper- globalisationlists would have you believe that all these changes to the commerce, to technology, to travel, to politics are just the beginning of 'a brave new world'.

Everything has not changed, far from it in fact. To suggest that the whole world is in the same place is fundamentally wrong. For starters third world countries lack most of the latest modern inventions like running water, heated homes, electricity so it is pretty silly to expect these legitimate states to suddenly become more active in world politics and commerce when there is more pressing problems at home. Globalisation is not an invitation to infringe on a nations sovereignty as the United States have chosen to interpret it.

The United States as the world's last super power sees itself as more sovereign than all the other states. All nation states are equal but some are

more equal than others. Huge U. S based companies such as Microsoft, Nike, Adidas, IBM and even Star Bucks are quickly spreading over the planet.

Nations such as France have attempted to resist these huge multi-national corporations by limiting the number of franchises across a city or town.

That's why you will mostly find McDonalds and Burger Kings on the outskirts of cities in industrial areas or in commercial shopping centres.

The exact of the United Kingdom when even relatively small towns will have three McDonalds even in the heart of the town. This invasion is slowly choking small business and eventually you will have to either join one of these multi-national corporations or die. So to conclude, what is meant by Globalisation? The three perspectives differ in their views quite dramatically but the core of all of them is that they share the same thought that this progression is happening and will continue to happen but what they disagree about is to what end and to what extent this progressing will lead to.

Hyper-globalisationists would have you think that the world is a very different place that is only going to get a lot more different with time.

Sceptics would argue that yes there is a change but it is nothing to afraid of and will progress at the same speed as it has always done. While the

'Transformationists' would argue that changes have and are taken place but they are unsure to what end.