

Globalization

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A specter haunting the world with both promise and peril, globalization names a process of increasing but uneven global integration that is bringing market-mediated interdependency along with enormous inequality, asymmetry, and volatility to life across the globe (Sparke 2013). As a promotional and promissory Discourse, globalization has been increasingly politicized in ways that associate observations about global market integration with repeated calls for more market freedom. Thomas Friedman, for example, is a columnist for the *New York Times* who has made a name for himself globally by recommending pro-market reforms everywhere on the basis of arguing that the world is becoming flat, and that we must adapt or just get flattened. Globalization, he says, “involves the inexorable integration of markets, nation-states, and technologies to a degree never witnessed before – in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations and nation-states to reach around the world farther, faster, deeper and cheaper than ever before. The driving idea behind globalization is free-market capitalism – the more you let market forces rule and the more you open your economy to free trade and competition, the more efficient and flourishing your economy will be” (Friedman 1999, 7–8).

The sudden uptake in the use of the actual word “globalization” in the last two decades of the twentieth century has clearly been linked to such advocacy of market rule, or

what critics call Neoliberalism (Harvey 2005). For the same reason, its emergence as a key term of political debate needs to be examined in relation to at least three intersecting global imperatives: first, the economic shifts of the post-Fordist era (from roughly the 1970s onwards) in which corporations shifted from the Fordist balancing of mass production and mass consumption nationally to pursue market opportunities globally; second, the ideational achievements of pro-market academics, advocates, and think-tanks in promulgating neoliberal orthodoxy as a “business-knows-best” consensus; and third, the global political and economic dominance of the United States, which has led to a series of complex associations between globalization, Americanization, and the ups and downs of US hegemony.

Between militarized shock therapy for some and the commercial advance of McDonaldization, CocaColanization, and Wal-Martization on others, the variegated triangulations of globalization-neoliberalization-Americanization have been best theorized as a form of informal, market-mediated Imperialism (Gindin and Panitch 2012). Some of the associations with more overt forms of US militarism in the Bush administration’s “global war on terror” may also at least partially account for the fall-off in the use of the non-US spelling “globalisation” (with an “s”) after 2003 (see Figure 1).

But these terminological tendencies noted, globalization should by no means simply be viewed as American, unidimensional, or unipolar, especially now that Asian economic growth, the new triangles of Asian investment in Africa and Latin America, and the emergent terms of “Asianization,” “Easternization,” and “ChIndia”

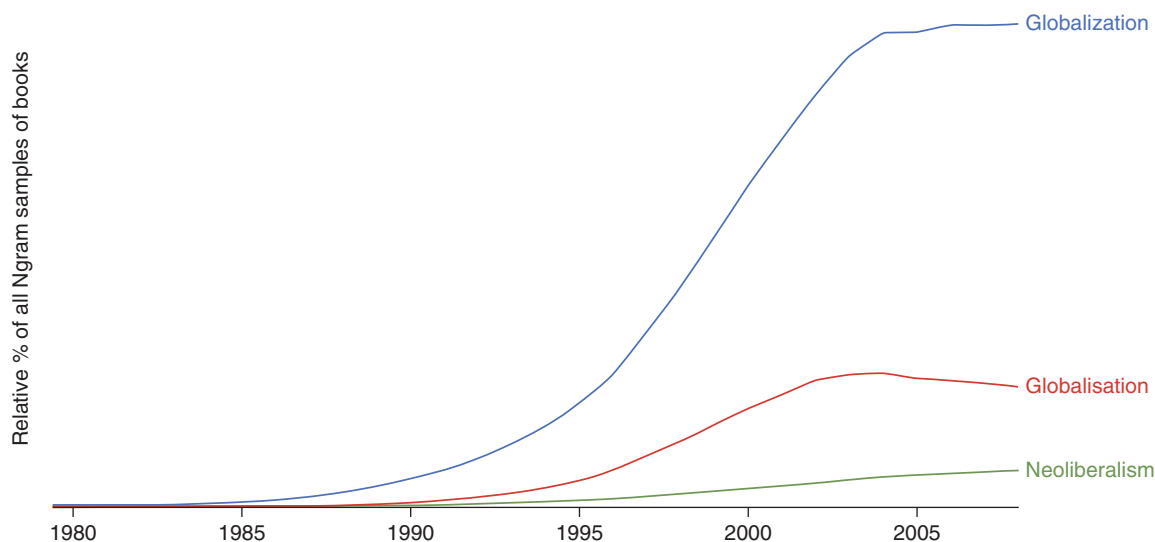


Figure 1 Changes in the use of terms in book titles as graphed by *Google Books Ngram Viewer*, March 27, 2014.

are further complicating the conflation of Americanization and globalization.

Moreover, as feminist scholarship further underlines, the ties and tensions of global integration are also embodied in intimate power relations that are as uneven and violent as they are intertwined with the asymmetries associated with changing configurations of global hegemony (Mountz and Hyndman 2006). Christa Wichterich, the author of *The Globalized Woman*, puts it like this: “For women around the world ... globalization is not an abstract process unfolding on an elevated stage. It is concrete and actual. Female textile workers from ... Eastern Germany are losing their jobs to women in Bangladesh; Filipinas clean vegetables and kitchens in Kuwait; Brazilian prostitutes offer their services around Frankfurt’s main railway station; and Polish women look after old people at rock-bottom prices in ... Germany” (Wichterich 2000, 2).

It is amidst such embodied experiences of globalization, at once global and personal, that diverse articulations of precariousness are being

critically reinterpreted as the basis for more emancipatory kinds of global consciousness and collaboration. Global precariousness may in this sense inspire global solidarity (Butler and Athanasiou 2013). The globalization and adaptation of the *Indignados* and *Occupy* movements following the 2008 financial crises can certainly be interpreted this way. But, by the same token, the sad fate of the Arab Spring that co-inspired the *Indignados* and *Occupy*, indicates that cruel winters of precariousness can return with a vengeance, and, in Egypt at least, new rounds of neoliberalization too (Atia 2013).

Reimagined in terms of planetary precariousness, ideas about living in a fragile global ecumene may also create the basis of transnational communities that can globalize both human health rights and (more-than-human) environmental security in the face of market-induced insecurities. But for global precariousness to inspire solidarity in this way, it clearly needs to be distinguished from the personalized, marketized, and, as such, increasingly neoliberalized practices of “resilient life” – practices that invoke the

inevitability of catastrophes of global finance, global health, and global climate change only to advocate for individualized and enclaved efforts at market-mediated adaptability. Against such apocalyptic-turned-adaptive accounts of enduring the “Anthropocene” (see Anthropocene and planetary boundaries), it is possible instead to explore how the interdependencies of the market and its degradation of the global commons nevertheless open opportunities for the active creation of the world as a common community beyond the market. Such alter-globalization efforts consciously politicize the political unconscious of the Anthropocene, rendering the inevitability invoked in pro-market globalization discourse open to resistance in the name of global climate justice, and thereby also opening globalized pathways out of the Kyoto–Copenhagen–Cancún–Durban dead end (Bond 2012).

Before contemporary climate justice struggles, the globalization of anti-neoliberal resistance in other areas has long been discussed by critical theorists. David Harvey’s revision of Marx’s notion of “primitive accumulation” (generally thought of as a pre-capitalist precursor moment of dispossession in which workers were deprived of their capacity for subsistence) as ongoing “accumulation by dispossession” (rethought as a form of ongoing destruction or removal or privatization of the commons and the personally shared) works well to further highlight how we have been witnessing a vast global accumulation of grievances against market-mediated dispossession (Harvey 2005). Conceptualizing all these responses as a singular global response to globalized capitalism, however, risks romanticizing resistance as well as obscuring how exactly ongoing value extraction and accumulation is tied to diverse forms of extra-economic domination. Most notably, for example, this is the danger in suggesting that a so-called Empire of networked

global capitalism is co-creating its own nemesis in the form of a globalized and media-enabled “Multitude”: a multitude that is becoming interconnected and experimental enough to break out from within the matrix of atomized consumerism and contingent labor control. In order to be more materialist about such emancipatory possibilities, feminist geographers suggest that we need first to denaturalize the disabling “impact model” of globalization as an inevitable, unstoppable, and leveling juggernaut of market-led integration. And key to this denaturalization of dispossession is the challenge of replacing the flat world visions used by pro-market promoters to naturalize neoliberalism with more accurate geographies of the inequalities, asymmetries, and unsustainability in the actual real-world experience of uneven global integration.

The discipline of modern geography, with its origins in enabling early imperial rounds of globalized dispossession, is by no means a “natural” place from which to denaturalize dispossession. Indeed, as critically informed as the field of geography now is, the asymmetries in its globalized patterns of publication still point to Anglo-American dominance and the tendency towards exclusion of non-English accounts from publications – including this *Encyclopedia* – that aspire to move to more inclusive and collaborative kinds of intellectual globalization. Reciprocally, some of the most powerful geographical critiques of flat-world globalization discourse have come from outside the Global North and outside the discipline. One of the best textbooks on globalization available, for example, is a brilliantly geo-graphic (as well as graphic) account by the Mexican cartoonist *El Fisgón* (Rafael Barajas Durán), published under the subversively subaltern title of *How to Succeed at Globalization: A Primer for the Roadside Vendor*. “Location, location, location,” is what *El Fisgón*’s main character – a roadside

vendor from Mexico City – is told when he asks how he might succeed at globalization; the point being that he really needed to have started out in another household, in another city, in another wealthier part of the world in order to benefit from the skewed arrangements of opportunity and exploitation that shape global integration (Fisgón 2004). This kind of geographical critique is also echoed in Vandana Shiva's powerful retort to Thomas Friedman himself. "Friedman," she writes in a scathing review of *The World is Flat*, "has reduced the world to the friends he visits, the CEOs he knows, and the golf courses he plays at. From this microcosm of privilege, exclusion, blindness, he shuts out both the beauty of diversity and the brutality of exploitation and inequality, he shuts out the social and ecological externalities of economic globalization and free trade, he shuts out the walls that globalization is building – walls of insecurity, hatred and fear – walls of 'intellectual property', walls of privatization" (Shiva 2005).

Overcoming the epistemic exclusions and blinders of its own imperial roots and routes, research within the formal discipline of geography is also now mapping the uneven political geographies of dominance, governance, and resistance shaping actually existing globalization. Attuned to the powerful presentism through which neoliberal globalization discourse asserts its own novelty, such work has further underlined how flat-world ontologies are inevitably ahistorical too, despite having historical-geographies. To be sure, some poststructuralist geographers (see Poststructuralism/poststructural geographies) further suggest that we need another kind of flat ontology in order to challenge fantasies about equalized access through market flattening. But, inspired by thinkers such as Badiou, Derrida, and Deleuze and Guattari, they do so deconstructively with a view to shaking off preconceived axioms about what sorts of spatial connection

and hierarchy get to count as globalized in the first place. This in turn makes it possible to go from debunking globalization as discourse to examining its consequential framing effects in ways that include attention to the uneven economic developments that the dominant flat-world discourse itself tends to obscure.

One area where the assertive framing power of globalization discourse has been especially obvious (and obscuring) is in international relations and associated diplomatic, military, and foreign policy discussions that frame war, peace, and security in the terms of, on the one side, disconnection and geopolitical danger, and, on the other, global integration and geoeconomic opportunity. The actual term "geoeconomics" is still not widely used, and the work of the French economic geographer Jacques Boudeville, who first developed it, remains largely unknown. Nevertheless, as market-led globalization has intensified, geoeconomic arguments and visions have become increasingly popular and have even been formalized by Edward Luttwak as a new grammar for foreign policy. In place of orthodox geopolitics and its concerns for soldiers and citizens, this geoeconomic grammar tends to elevate the entrepreneurial interests of investors and customers; in contrast to a geopolitical focus on national borders and place, it privileges networks and pace; and instead of concentrating international politics on building alliances for "security" against supposed "evil empires," geoeconomics is primarily concerned with building international partnerships that advance "growth," "integration," "harmonization," and "efficiency" against the threats of "traditionalism," "isolationism," "anachronism," and "anarchy." In this dualistic discursive system, globalist claims about the "borderless world" and ideas about geoeconomics eclipsing Geopolitics have become influential scripts accompanying claims about globalization's supposed historical novelty – even

though historical-geographical work documents that earlier rounds of global integration themselves came with similar talk of transnational capitalist expansion and opportunity.

While historical work points up the dangers of too quickly periodizing and separating a geopolitical past from a geoeconomic present, ongoing geographical research points in turn to the need to avoid partitioning the globe into geopolitical spaces defined by disconnection and geoeconomic spaces of globalized connection. Postcolonial geographies of the colonial present instead make clear that the supposedly “disconnected places” – places that are depicted by partisans of geoeconomics as mired in geopolitical strife because of a lack of globalization – have in fact long been connected through predatory forms of imperial connection and biopower. This point is also ironically confirmed by today’s apologists for empire who map the borderlands of intervention in terms of making the world safe for globalization and minorities at the very same time. In another way, political geographies of actual real-world borders have made clear that border regions are sites where, despite all the attempts to envision borderless geoeconomic futures, geopolitical ideas, affects, and imperatives keep coming back to shape practices of (b)ordering transnational flows on the ground. So rather than locate geopolitics in the past or in regions wrongly represented as disconnected, it seems far more useful to see geopolitics and geoeconomics as entangled, geostrategic discourses that encode underlying tensions of global uneven development (Sparke 2013, Chapter 8). These tensions can in turn be at least partly explained in terms of the ongoing tensions between spatial fixity and spatial expansion in capitalism itself (Harvey 2005). And while all sorts of other imperatives ranging from the personal and emotional to the national and territorial to the global and ecological also

overdetermine uneven development, much of the ongoing oscillation between geopolitical and geoeconomic discourses can thus be parsed in terms of the tensions between capitalist fixity and expansion that have made the long-term development of globalization so episodic, asymmetric, and geographically transformative.

SEE ALSO: Anthropocene and planetary boundaries; Discourse; Empire; Fordism/post-Fordism; Geopolitics; Imperialism; Neoliberalism; Poststructuralism/poststructural geographies

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