

GEORGE RITZER and
PAUL DEAN

GLOBALIZATION | A BASIC TEXT

Second Edition



WILEY Blackwell



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The Globalization Reader, 5th Edition

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Matthew Sparke

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George Ritzer and Paul Dean

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To Bodhi Axel Ritzer, With Much Love and Great Hope
for a Better World in Your Future
(GR)

To Tia Shields Dean, My Wonderful and Caring Wife who
has Helped to Make
this Book and so Much More Possible
(PD)



ABOUT THE WEBSITE

The Globalization: A Basic Text, Second Edition, companion website includes a number of resources created by the author that you will find helpful.

www.wiley.com/go/ritzer/globalization



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- Student Study Guide
- Chapter Summaries
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PREFACE

As we revise this preface in July, 2014, we are struck by how much the events of the day both reflect, and are profoundly changing, the process of globalization. For example, we write this only hours before watching Lionel Messi and Argentina take on the Netherlands in the World Cup – the most famous *global* sporting event. Football (or soccer, as it is known in the United States) is the most played and most watched sport around the world. Football fandom also reflects a global culture and, with FIFA as its governing body, it has a global organizational structure.

It has been particularly fascinating to watch global events unfold as we were writing the second edition of this book. For instance, the first edition was published in the midst of the Great Recession. The ways in which economic processes (e.g. mortgage failures, credit freezes, the failure of legendary financial firms and banks), largely originating in the US, flowed around the world in relatively short order was breathtaking. As the crisis deepened and widened, political unrest grew, and the future of the global economy was uncertain. As of this writing, the global economy has stabilized but it has not yet rebounded to its pre-recessionary levels for many Americans and for many others in most parts of the world. A great number of scholars and activists argued that it was neoliberal policy (see [Chapter 4](#)) that led to the Great Recession, and as the economic turmoil wore on, some predicted its demise. Now, having emerged from the Great Recession, it is clear that neoliberalism remains a strong force in both global politics and the global economy.

Numerous recent events have also profoundly changed the process of globalization. For example, global climate change is dramatically affecting economic processes and flows of people. Tens of thousands of people are losing their homes to rising sea levels, and are being displaced to other countries, and creating new conflicts. Environmental problems flow seamlessly across national borders and many of these problems, such as global warming and deforestation, have come to affect the entire planet. Many previous skeptics are finally acknowledging human-caused global warming, even though governments around the world continue dragging their feet on combatting the problem (current scientific evidence is even more definitive than it was when the first edition was published).

Another area that is experiencing rapid developments, and is dramatically shaping globalization, is the various global high-tech flows (see [Chapter 9](#)). This encompasses much more than the explosive growth of social networking sites (e.g. Facebook) and other social media (e.g. Twitter), but the ways in which technological flows are monitored, governed, and used to promote other types of change. Through the efforts of Edward Snowden and Wikileaks, we now know more about how governments and corporations are spying on their citizens and customers. Our understanding of this surveillance has also facilitated changes in how the Internet is governed, marking a shift from a US-dominated framework to a more global (and potentially fragmented) governance system. Such high-tech flows have also been used by activists promoting political change, as was seen in the so-called “Twitter Revolution” in much of the Arab world.

The changes noted above illustrate some ways in which this second edition has been revised, and suggest that such topics will continue to be further revisited as other global processes become more apparent. Nonetheless, the basic

foci, perspectives, concepts, and theories offered here apply to whatever changes are occurring in, and are in store for, globalization. Change is nothing new to globalization, indeed it could be argued that change, including cataclysmic events and changes (the Spanish influenza epidemic of 1919, the Great Depression, WW II), is an integral part of it. More recently, we have seen a variety of economic crises in, for example, Asia, Russia, and Argentina, that are also part of the process of globalization. Any useful perspective on globalization must be able to help us better understand such occurrences.

Writing a general overview of globalization has been, to put it mildly, a daunting task. It is almost literally about everything - every place, every thing, everybody, and virtually every field of study. It also requires a sense of a wide expanse of history and of what it is about the present "global age" that differentiates it from epochs that came before it. We have been involved in textbooks before, including one that covers all of classical and contemporary sociological theory, but none has been more challenging than this one. Beyond the sheer magnitude of what needs to be covered, there is the fact that globalization, at least in its present form, is quite new, with the term itself entering the lexicon only three decades ago. As a relatively new phenomenon, it is constantly changing, as are conceptions of it. With few precedents to rely on, we have had to "invent" an approach to globalization (based on major theoretical sources), as well as create a structure for the book that encompasses most of the major topics and issues in globalization today. This is difficult enough, but it is made far more difficult by the fact that global changes (e.g. the price of that all-important commodity, oil; the landscape of global protests and conflict) occur constantly.

This is related to the issue of sources for this book, which include popular books (e.g. those of Thomas Friedman,

although we are highly critical of his work), newspapers, magazines, and websites. These are atypical sources for a textbook designed to offer an overview of what we know about a field from a scholarly point of view. However, globalization occurs in the real world and continues apace in that world. Such occurrences either do not find their way into academic works or do not do so for years after they have happened. Thus, in order to be up to date – and it is important that a text on globalization be current – this book relies, in part, on a variety of popular sources. Popular sources also serve the function of providing down-to-earth, real-world examples and case studies of globalization. They serve to make globalization less abstract.

However, because it is an academic text, this book relies far more on scholarly work, especially journal articles and academic monographs of various types. It is heavily referenced and the many entries in the References section at the end of the book (as well as suggested readings at the end of each chapter) provide students with an important resource should they wish to learn more about the many topics covered in this book.

Another challenge has been to bring together these popular and academic sources in a coherent overview of globalization and what we know about it. A related challenge is the need to write a book that is not only accessible, useful, and of interest to undergraduates (the main audience for this book), but also of use to beginning graduate students and even scholars looking for a book that gives them an overview of the field, its major topics, and key works in the area. We have tried to deal with a good portion of the increasingly voluminous scholarly work on globalization, but in a student-friendly way. We have also sought to use many examples to make the discussion both more interesting and more relevant to the student reader.

We have sought to put together a coherent overview of globalization based on a theoretical orientation (increasing liquidity as the core of today's global world) and a conceptual apparatus ("flows," "barriers," etc.) developed in the first chapter. The rest of the book looks at globalization through the lens of that perspective and those concepts. Great emphasis has been placed throughout on key concepts and "thick" descriptions of important aspects of globalization. We have tried not to get bogged down in the text itself with data and statistics on globalization (which are highly fluid and often open to question), but we have included a number of maps designed to summarize, in a highly visual way, important aspects of the data related to globalization.

The focus here, as suggested above, is on the flows among and between areas of the world (as well as barriers to them). That means that the focus is not on the areas themselves - the global North and South, the nation-states of the world, regions, etc. - but rather that which flows among and between them. Nevertheless, all of those areas come up often in these pages, if for no other reason than that they are often the beginning or end-point of various flows. We have tried to cover many areas of the world and nation-states in these pages, but the US looms large in this discussion for several reasons. First, it is the world leader in being both the source of many global flows and the recipient these days of many more, and much heavier, flows (of goods from China, etc.). Second, we are led by both its historical dominance and contemporary importance to a focus on the role of the US in globalization (although recent significant declines lead to the notion that we are now entering the "post-American" age). Third, the predispositions, and the resources at the disposal, of two American authors lead to a focus on the US, albeit one that is at many points highly critical of it and its role in

globalization. Although there is a great deal of attention on the US, the reader's focus should be on the flows and barriers which are found throughout the world and are of general importance globally.

Theory plays a prominent role in this analysis, not only in the framework developed in [Chapter 1](#) and used throughout the book, but also in a number of specific chapters. These include theories of imperialism, colonialism, development, Americanization (and anti-Americanism) in [Chapter 3](#), neoliberalism in [Chapter 4](#), theories of cultural differentialism, convergence, and hybridization in [Chapter 8](#), and global inequality in [Chapters 13](#) and [14](#). We have worked hard to make these theories accessible and to relate them to more down-to-earth examples.

While this is a textbook on globalization, there are some key themes that run through the book. One relates, as mentioned above, to the increasing fluidity of the contemporary global age and how much more fluid it is than previous epochs. Related to this is the similarly metaphorical idea that virtually everything in the contemporary world (things, people, ideas, etc.) is "lighter" than it has ever been. In the past, all of those things were quite "heavy" and difficult to move, especially globally, but that is increasingly less the case. Because things are lighter, more fluid, they can move about the globe more easily and much more quickly. However, it is also the case that many past structural barriers remain in place and many others are being created all the time to stem various global flows (e.g. the wall between Israel and the West Bank and the more recently constructed border fence between Greece and Turkey). Thus, one of the perspectives we would like the reader to come away with after reading this book is of the ongoing relationship between flows and barriers in the global world.

Another key theme is that globalization does *not* equal economic globalization. All too often there is a tendency to reduce globalization to economic globalization. While economic globalization is important, perhaps even the most important aspect of globalization, there is much more to the latter than its economic aspects. While we devote two chapters ([6](#) and [7](#)) to economic globalization, attention is devoted to many other aspects of globalization (e.g. political, cultural, technological, demographic, environmental, criminal, inequalities, and so on) throughout the book. In their totality, these other topics receive far more attention than economics (although, to be fair, all of the other topics have economic aspects, causes, and consequences).

One of the reasons that the multidimensionality of globalization is accorded so much emphasis here is frustration over the near-exclusive focus on economic globalization by both scholars and laypeople. Another is our concern when we hear people say that globalization is not good for “us” and we need to stop, or at least contain, it. We always ask them *which* globalization they want to stop or contain. Do they want to limit or stop the flow of inexpensive imports from China and on offer at Wal-Mart? Of life-saving pharmaceuticals? Of illegal drugs? Of participation in, or the televising of, the Olympics? Of global prohibitions against the use of landmines? Of oil and water? Of online social networking? Of terrorists? Of tourism? Of pollutants? The point is that one might be opposed to some of these (and other) forms of globalization, but no one is, or could be, opposed to all the myriad forms of globalization.

A number of important concepts are introduced throughout this book. Definitions of those concepts in bold typeface are found not only in the text, but also in the glossary at the

end of the book, as well as often more briefly in boxes in the margins of the text.

There are a number of people to thank for their help in the years of work involved in writing this book. First, we would like to thank a number of graduate assistants including Nathan Jurgenson, Jillet Sam, and Michelle Smirnova, who assisted on the first edition of the book. Michelle was especially helpful in the early stages of the writing of this book, while Nathan and Jillet were of great help in the later stages in assisting the first author in getting the manuscript to the publisher. Nathan ably handled the inclusion of the many maps and Jillet was invaluable in hunting down missing sources and information. We would also like to thank the graduate students in various seminars on globalization, especially those in the fall 2008 seminar who read a draft of the first edition and offered numerous ideas on improving it. Then there are the three anonymous reviewers who offered very useful comments on revising this book for its second edition. The people associated with Wiley-Blackwell, including Louise Spencely, developmental editor Claire Cameron, and especially Ben Thatcher, have been extraordinarily helpful. Ben assisted us throughout the entire revision for the second edition, including in the arduous process of securing copyrights. Finally, we would like to thank our long-time editor at Wiley-Blackwell, Justin Vaughan, who has been deeply involved in this project, as well as many others already published or in the works. We owe him much gratitude, including for taking the first author “punting” in Oxford – a truly global and unforgettable experience.

CHAPTER 1

GLOBALIZATION I

LIQUIDS, FLOWS, AND STRUCTURES

Some of the Basics

From Solids to Liquids (to Gases)

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- Liquids and gases

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- Types of flows

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Heavy Structures That Expedite Flows

Heavy Structures as Barriers to Flows

Subtler Structural Barriers

On the Increasing Ubiquity of Global Flows and Structures

Thinking About Global Flows and Structures

Chapter Summary

Globalization¹ is increasingly omnipresent. We are living in a – or even *the* – “global age” (Albrow 1996). Globalization is clearly a very important change; it can even be argued (Bauman 2003) that it is *the most important change in human history*.² This is reflected in many domains, but particularly in social relationships and social structures,³ especially those that are widely dispersed geographically.