

Globalization and the Postmodern Turn

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There's no doubt about it, globalization is the buzzword of the decade. Journalists, politicians, business executives, academics, and others are using the word to signify that something profound is happening, that the world is changing, that a new world economic, political, and cultural order is emerging. Yet the term is used in so many different contexts, by so many different people, for so many different purposes, that it is difficult to ascertain what is at stake in the globalization problematic, what function the term serves, and what effects it has for contemporary theory and politics.

A wide and diverse range of social theorists are arguing that today's world is organized by increasing globalization, which is strengthening the dominance of a world capitalist economic system, supplanting the primacy of the nation state by transnational corporations and organizations, and eroding local cultures and traditions through a global culture. Marxists, advocates of world systems theory, functionalists, Weberians, and many other contemporary theorists are converging on the position that globalization is a distinguishing trend of the present moment. Moreover, advocates of a postmodern break in history argue that developments in transnational capitalism are producing a new global historical configuration of post-Fordism, or postmodernism as a new cultural logic of capitalism (Harvey 1989; Soja 1989; Jameson 1991; and Gottdiener 1995). In significant modern and postmodern social theories, globalization is thus taken as a salient feature of our times.

Yet the conceptions of globalization deployed, the purposes for which the concept is used, and the evaluations of the processes described by the concept vary wildly. For some, globalization entails the Westernization of the world (Latouche 1996), while for others it involves a cover for the ascendancy of capitalism (Ferguson 1992). Some see globalization as generating increasing homogeneity, while others see it producing diversity and heterogeneity through increased hybridization. For business, globalization is a strategy for increasing corporate profits and power, for government it is often deployed to promote an increase in state power, while non-government social organizations see globalization as a lever to produce positive social goods like environmental action, democratization, or humanization. Many theorists equate globalization and modernity (e.g. Giddens 1990; Beck 1992), while others claim that the "global age" follows and is distinctly different from the "modern age" (Albrow 1996). Indeed, for some theorists, we live in a global age or epoch, in which globalization is the defining concept (Axford 1995 and Albrow 1996), while others find claims for the novelty and centrality of globalization exaggerated (Hirst and Thompson 1996).

Yet the ubiquity of the term "globalization" suggests that it is part of a reconfiguring and rethinking of contemporary social theory and politics that is caught up in some of the central debates and conflicts of the present age. It is certainly arguable that during the past decades, the world has been undergoing the most significant period of technological innovation and global restructuring since the first decades of the twentieth century. Part of the "great transformation" (Polyani 1957) to a new stage of technocapitalism has involved a fundamental restructuring and

reorganization of the world economy, polity, and culture for which the term globalization serves as a codeword. It is bound up with debates over postFordism, postmodernism, and a series of other "posts" that themselves signify a fundamental rupture with the past. It is thus centrally involved in debates over the defining features and changes of the present era.

In this article, I will sort out some of the dominant uses of the term globalization and will propose the need for a critical theory of globalization that overcomes the one-sidedness and ideological biases involved in most conceptions. My argument is that the discourse of globalization can be articulated with both theories of the modern and the postmodern because we are currently involved in an interregnum period between an aging modern and an emerging postmodern era (Best and Kellner 1997). In this period of transition, in a borderlands between two epochs, globalization signifies both continuities with the past, with modernity and modernization, as well as novelties of the present and the already here future. I also want to argue that globalization must be seen as a complex and multidimensional phenomena that involves different levels, flows, tensions, and conflicts, such that a transdisciplinary social theory is necessary to capture its contours, dynamics, trajectories, problems, and possible futures.

Theorizing Globalization

Talking cogently about globalization requires, first, that we sort out the different uses and senses of the term and try to specify what processes it is used to describe. In a sense, there is no such thing as globalization per se. Rather the term is used as a cover concept for a heterogeneity of processes that need to be spelled out and articulated. The term is not innocent nor neutral in many of its uses and often serves to replace older discourses like "imperialism" but also "modernization." As a replacement for imperialism, it could displace focus on domination of developing countries by the overdeveloped ones, or of national and local economies by transnational corporations. Moreover, it could serve as a cover to neutralize the horrors of colonialism and could be part of a discourse of neo-imperialism that serves to obscure the continuing exploitation of much of the world by a few superpowers and giant transnational corporations, thus cloaking some of the more barbaric and destructive aspects of contemporary development.

Yet as a replacement term for modernization it can also rob this previously legitimating ideology of the connotations that the processes (i.e. modernization which has a positive ring to it) are necessarily bringing progress and improvement, are part of an inexorable trajectory of progress and modernity. Compared to the discourses of imperialism (negative, critical) and modernization (positive, legitimating), the discourse of globalization is on the surface neutral. It thus displaces discourses of modernization (good) and imperialism (bad), covering over their evaluative components with a seemingly neutral term. And yet it too is bound up with highly ideological discourses of the present age being used by some to represent an entirely positive process of economic and social progress, technological innovation, more diverse products and services, a cornucopia of information and growing cultural freedom, and a higher standard of living. Pro- globalization boosters include champions of the market economy, which with the triumph of Thatcherism-Reaganism in the 1980s became a dominant ideology, Bill Gates (1995) and avatars of the "information superhighway" and new technologies, and other political and economic elites, supported by their academic promoters and perhaps sociological analysts who

exaggerate the inexorable and irresistible trajectory of globalization while covering over its more troubling aspects.

For its critics, however, globalization is bringing about the devastating destruction of local traditions, the continued subordination of poorer nations and regions by richer ones, environmental destruction, and a homogenization of culture and everyday life. These critics include Marxists, liberals, and multiculturalists who stress the threat to national sovereignty, local traditions, and participatory democracy through global forces, environmentalists who fear the destructive ecological effects of unchecked globalization, and conservatives who see globalization as a threat to national and local cultures and the sanctity of tradition.

The term globalization is thus a theoretical construct that is itself contested and open for various meanings and inflections. It can be described positively or negatively, or, as I shall suggest, multivalently to describe highly complex and multidimensional processes in the economy, polity, culture, and everyday life. A critical theory of globalization attempts to specify the interconnections and interdependencies between different levels such as the economic, political, cultural and psychological, as well as between different flows of products, ideas and information, people, and technology. Critical theory describes the mediations between different phenomena, the systemic structure which organizes phenomena and processes into a social system, and the relative autonomy of the parts, such that there are both connections and disjunctions between, say, the economy and culture. Concerned to relate theory to practice, critical theory also attempts to delineate the positive potentials for greater freedom and democratization, as well as the dangers of greater domination, oppression, and destruction (Kellner 1989). Grounded in historical vision, critical theory stresses the continuities and discontinuities between past, present, and future, and the possibility of constructive political action and individual and group practice, grounded in positive potentials in the current constellation of forces and possibilities (Best 1995).

The already highly complex articulations of the discourse of globalization is rendered more complicated because globalization is not only a replacement term for imperialism and modernization, but it is caught up in the modernity/postmodernity debates as well. Some theorists are claiming that globalization is replacing concepts like modernity and postmodernity as the central thematic of contemporary theorizing (Featherstone and Lash 1995; Waters 1995; and Albrow 1996), though others have assimilated the discourse, variously, to both the modernity and postmodernity problematics. For some, globalization thus constitutes a continuation of the problematic of modernization and modernity, while for others, it signifies something new and different and is bound up with the postmodern turn, or an altogether novel and as yet untheorized global condition. Yet here too, totally different valorizations of the modern, postmodern, and globalization process are possible. For some theorists, globalization is seen as a process of standardization in which a globalized media and consumer culture circulates the globe creating sameness and homogeneity everywhere, thus bringing to light the bland and boring universality and massification in the modern project. Postmodernists champion, by contrast, the local, diversity, difference, and heterogeneity, and sometimes claim that globalization itself produces hybridity and multiplicity, arguing that global culture makes possible unique appropriations and developments all over the world with new forms of hybrid syntheses of the global and the local, thus proliferating difference and heterogeneity (Hall 1991).

Postmodernists also argue that every local context involves its own appropriation and reworking of global products and signifiers, thus producing more variety and diversity.

In the following discussion, I want to argue against all one-sided and partial positions that see globalization either as a necessary and positive vehicle of progress and diversity, or as a force of insipid homogenization and destruction. Both of these positions are obviously one-sided so, as in many cases where we encounter one-sided and opposed positions, we should move to a higher level to develop a critical and dialectical theory of globalization which articulates both its progressive and regressive features, as well as its fundamental ambivalence that mixes old and new, innovation and destruction, and the global and local.

Globalization: Economy/State/Culture

The term "globalization" is thus often used as a code word that stands for a tremendous diversity of issues and problems and that serves as a front for a variety of theoretical and political positions. While it can serve as a legitimating ideology to cover over and sanitize ugly realities, a critical globalization theory can inflect the discourse to point precisely to these phenomena and can elucidate a series of contemporary problems and conflicts. In view of the different concepts and functions of globalization discourse, it is important to note that the concept is a theoretical construct that varies according to the assumptions and commitments of the theory in question. Seeing the term globalization as a construct helps rob it of its force of nature, as a sign of an inexorable triumph of market forces and the hegemony of capital, or, as the extreme right fears, of a rapidly encroaching world government. While the term can both describe and legitimate and normalize capitalist transnationalism, and transnational government institutions, a critical theory of globalization does not buy into ideological valorizations and affirms difference, resistance, and democratic self-determination against forms of global domination and subordination.

A critical theory of globalization is necessarily transdisciplinary and describes the ways that global economic, political, and cultural forces are rapidly penetrating the earth in the creation of a new world market, new transnational political organizations, and a new global culture. The expansion of the capitalist world market into areas previously closed off to it (i.e. in the communist sphere or developing countries who attempted to pursue their own independent line of development) is accompanied by the decline of the nation-state and its power to regulate and control the flow of goods, people, information, and various cultural forms. There have, of course, been global networks of power and imperialist empires for centuries, accompanied by often fierce local resistance by the colonized entities. National liberation movements disrupted colonial empires of power and created a "Third Way" between the capitalist and communist blocs, especially in the period after World War Two, marked by the success of a large number of anti-imperialist revolutions. But as we approach the end of the twentieth century, it would seem that neither decolonization nor the end of the Cold War has loosened the hold of transnational systems of domination.

In addition to the development of a new global market economy and shifting system of nation-states, the rise of global culture is an especially salient feature of contemporary globalization. Accompanying the dramatic expansion of capitalism and new transnational political organizations a new global culture is emerging as a result of computer and communications

technology, a consumer society with its panorama of goods and services, transnational forms of architecture and design, and a wide range of products and cultural forms that are traversing national boundaries and becoming part of a new world culture. Global culture includes the proliferation of media technologies that veritably create Marshall McLuhan's dream of a global village, in which people all over the world watch political spectacles like the Gulf War, major sports events, entertainment programs, and advertisements that relentlessly promote capitalist modernization (Wark 1994). At the same time, more and more people are entering into global computer networks that instantaneously circulate ideas, information, and images throughout the world, overcoming boundaries of space and time (Gates 1995).

Global culture involves promoting life-style, consumption, products, and identities. Transnational corporations deploy advertising to penetrate local markets, to sell global products, and to overcome local resistance. Expansion of private cable and satellite systems have been aggressively promoting a commercial culture throughout the world. In a sense, culture itself is being redefined for previously local and national cultures have been forces of resistance to global forces, protecting the traditions, identities, and modes of life of specific groups and peoples. Culture has been precisely the particularizing, localizing force that distinguished societies and people from each other. Culture provided forms of local identities, practices, and modes of everyday life that could serve as a bulwark against the invasion of ideas, identities, and forms of life extraneous to the specific local region in question. Indeed, culture is an especially complex and contested terrain today as global cultures permeate local ones and new configurations emerge that synthesize both poles, providing contradictory forces of colonization and resistance, global homogenization and new local hybrid forms and identities.

Globalization also involves the dissemination of new technologies that have tremendous impact on the economy, polity, society, culture, and everyday life. Time-space compression produced by new media and communications technologies are overcoming previous boundaries of space and time, creating a global cultural village and dramatic penetration of global forces into every realm of life in every region of the world. New technologies in the labor process displace living labor, make possible more flexible production, and create new labor markets, with some areas undergoing deindustrialization (i.e. the "rustbelt" of the Midwest in the United States), while production itself becomes increasingly transnational (Harvey 1989). The new technologies also create new industries, such as the computer and information industry, and allow transnational media and information to instantaneously traverse the globe (Morley and Robins 1995). This process has led some to celebrate a new global information superhighway and others to attack the new wave of media and cultural imperialism.

Yet the very concept of globalization has long been a contested terrain described in conflicting positive and negative normative discourses. It is perhaps the early theorists and critics of capitalism who first engaged the phenomenon of the globalization of the capitalist system. Not surprisingly, the defenders of capitalism, such as Adam Smith, saw the process positively, whereas Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels had more critical perceptions. Producing one of the first major discourses of globalization, Smith saw the European "discoveries" of the Americas and the passage to the East Indies as creating a new world market with highly significant consequences. Smith wrote:

Their consequences have already been great; but, in the short period of between two and three centuries which has elapsed since these discoveries were made, it is impossible that the whole extent of their consequences can have been seen. What benefits, or what misfortunes to mankind may hereafter result from these events, no human wisdom can foresee. By uniting, in some measure, the most distant parts of the world, by enabling them to relieve one another's wants, to increase one another's enjoyments, and to encourage one another's industry, their general tendency would seem to be beneficial. To the natives, however, both of the East and West Indies, all the commercial benefits which can have resulted from these events have been sunk and lost in the dreadful misfortunes which they have occasioned. These misfortunes, however, seem to have arisen rather from accident than from any thing in the nature of those events themselves. At the particular time when these discoveries were made, the superiority of force happened to be so great on the side of the Europeans, that they were enabled to commit with impunity every sort of injustice in those remote countries. Hereafter, perhaps, the natives of those countries may grow stronger, or those of Europe may grow weaker, and the inhabitants of all the different quarters of the world may arrive at that equality of courage and force which, by inspiring mutual fear, can alone overawe the injustice of independent nations into some sort of respect for the rights of one another. But nothing seems more likely to establish this equality of force than that mutual communication of knowledge and of all sorts of improvements which an extensive commerce from all countries to all countries naturally, or rather necessarily, carries along with it (Smith 1962, Vol. 2: 141).

Smith thus envisaged the emergence of a world market system as one of the most important features of modernity that would eventually benefit the entire world. Although perceiving the injustices of unequal relations of power and force, Smith generally appraised the globalization of the world market as "beneficial." With characteristic honesty, he cited the "misfortunes" of the process of colonization, but optimistically believed that the injustices of the process might be overcome. In "The Communist Manifesto," Marx and Engels followed Smith in seeing the importance of the globalization of the capitalist market, although, of course, they differed in their evaluation of it. Closely following the optic of Smith, they claimed:

Modern industry has established the world market, for which the discovery of America paved the way... [the] need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere... The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian nations into civilization.... In a word, it creates a world after its own image (Marx and Engels 1976: 486ff).

Both the classical liberalism of Smith and classical Marxism thus see capitalism as a global economic system characterized by a world market and the imposition of similar relations of production, commodities, and culture on areas throughout the world, creating a new modern world-system as the capitalist market penetrates the four corners of the earth. For both classical liberalism and Marxism, the bourgeoisie constantly revolutionized the instruments of production and the world market generated immense forces of commerce, navigation and discovery, communications, and industry, creating a new world of abundance, diversity, and prosperity:

In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world literature (Marx and Engels 1976: 488).

This passage points to the resources and positive results of the world market that provide the basis for a higher stage of social organization. But in the Marxian vision, the globalization process is appraised more ambiguously. For Marx and Engels, the world market produced a new class of industrial proletariat that was reduced to abstract labor power, rendered propertyless, and had "nothing to lose but its chains" and a world to win. Marx and Engels believed that the industrial proletariat would organize as a revolutionary class to overthrow capitalism and produce a new socialist society that would abolish poverty, inequality, exploitation, and alienated labor, making possible the full development of the individual and a more equitable division of social wealth. They also envisaged the possibility of a world global crisis which would generate world revolution, enveloping the earth in a titanic struggle between capital and its opponents. Their working class revolutionaries would be resolutely internationalist and cosmopolitan in the Marxian vision, seeing themselves as citizens of the world rather than members of specific nations.

Curiously, the Marxian theory shared the illusions of many market liberals that the development of a world-system of free trade would eliminate nationalism and the nation-state, with both downplaying their importance, in a new world economic system -- be it capitalist or communist. Both Smith and Marx present colonization and the globalization of the market society as inevitable and as the basis of material progress. Both recognize the injustices of the process for the victims of colonization and the use of violence and superior force to subjugate non-Western culture, but both are sanguine about the process and draw distinctions between "barbarian nations" and civilizations that ultimately present globalization as a "civilizing process"-- this would indeed emerge as one of the dominant ideologies of imperialism (which the Marxian tradition otherwise opposes).

Indeed, globalization has also had important political implications. As Giovanni Arrighi documents, colonialization benefitted successively the Italian city-states, Holland, and England, which accrued political power and, in the case of England, world empire through its role in trade, the establishment of colonies, and finance and industry. In the aftermath of World War Two, world-systems theory described "the creation of a system of national states and the formation of a worldwide capitalist system" as "the two interdependent master processes of the [modern] era" (Tilly 1984: 147). Both Marxism and world-systems theory stress the importance of the rise to global dominance of a capitalist market economy that is penetrating the entire globe, while world-systems theory stresses the equal importance of a system of national states.

For several centuries, globalization proceeded on an increasingly rising curve, bringing more and more areas of the world into the world market-system. World War One and its aftermath produced a slowing down of this process, however, first, enmeshing much of the Western world

in a highly destructive war, followed by a period of economic boom and bust, protectionism, growing nationalism, and the failure of internationalist economic and political policy. World War Two once again engulfed much of the world in an even more destructive and global war, though already during the war itself events occurred that would shape the post-War world economic order. At the Bretton Woods conference in 1944, monetary arrangements were undertaken which would help produce a globalized world order. At the end of this meeting, the World Bank and I.M.F. were founded, two major economic institutions that would be at the basis of later arrangements such as GATT and NAFTA. With the end of the war, world trade exploded with a vengeance. National trade barriers were systematically dismantled and eroded, global economic forces penetrated local economies, and a global consumer and media culture traversed the globe. The results have been auspicious:

As we look back fifty years later, we can see that economic growth has expanded fivefold, international trade has expanded by roughly twelve times and foreign direct investment has been expanding at two of three times the rate of trade expansion (Korten 1996: 15).

Yet the results of these developments have been highly uneven. While economic elites and corporations have benefitted tremendously the rewards have been unequally distributed. Gaps between rich and poor, the haves and the have nots, the overdeveloped and underdeveloped regions, have grown exponentially. The wealthier nations continue to exploit the people, resources, and land of the poorer nations, often leaving environmental degradation behind. The debt crisis in which the poorer countries owe the richer ones astronomical sums has increased dramatically since the 1970s. There are more poor people in the world today than ever before; violence on the local, national, and global scale has erupted throughout this century of unmitigated disaster and horror (Aronson 1984); the planet's ecosystem is under siege and the "fate of the earth" lies in immediate jeopardy. For much of the world, life is still "nasty, brutish, and short," and prosperity, health, education, and welfare remain distant dreams for much of the overpopulation of the besieged earth.

Resisting Globalization

The concept of globalization can be disempowering leading to cynicism and hopelessness, that inexorable market forces cannot be regulated and controlled by the state, or that the economy cannot be shaped and directed by the people, thus undermining democracy and countervailing powers to the hegemony of capital (see Hirst and Thompson 1996). A critical theory of globalization, however, recognizes the reality of globalization, its power and effects, but also seeks forces of resistance and struggle that attempt to counter the most destructive aspects of global forces, or which inflects globalization for democratic and locally empowering ends. The present conjuncture, I would suggest, is marked by a conflict between growing centralization and organization of power and wealth in the hands of the few contrasted to opposing processes exhibiting a fragmentation of power that is more plural, multiple, and open to contestation than previously. As the following analysis will suggest, both tendencies are observable and it is up to individuals and groups to find openings for contestation and struggle.

On one hand, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellite nations -- which provided the bulwark of a global alternative to a capitalist market system -- market forces are now largely

unopposed by any system of nation-states, including those that emerged out of opposition to colonial domination, with few corners of the world able to resist the global flow of capital and its products. Indeed, a world market economy disseminates throughout the planet fantasies of happiness through consumption and the goods and services that allow entry into the phantasmagoria of consumer capitalism. A world financial market circulates capital in international circuits that bind together the world in a global market dominated by the forces and institutions of finance capital. Capital thus circles the globe, furnishing new products and fashions while eroding tradition and national economies and identities.

Global economic change often has tremendous local impact. Whole regions are devastated with the shutting down of industrial production, moved to regions with lower wages and less government regulation. Such "deindustrialization" has created vast "rust belts" of previously prosperous industrial regions, as in the case of Flint, Michigan, which suffered major economic decline with the closing of General Motors automobile plants, an episode documented in Michael Moore's film *Roger and Me*. Automation, computers, and new technologies have eliminated entire categories of labor while corporate reorganization has abolished segments of management, producing vast unemployment. Corporations like Nike move from country to country in search of lower labor costs and more docile work forces. More than ever, the world economy is bound together so that hurricanes in Japan or financial irregularities in Britain influence the entire world.

Consequently, globalization involves new connections and the integration of economies and cultures into a world system, overcoming previous divisions and distances. Especially during the period of the Cold War arising after World War Two, the system of modern nation-states divided into two camps -- capitalist and socialist -- producing a shifting series of alliances and conflicts influencing countries from Vietnam to Nicaragua. During this period, nations either pursued the capitalist or socialist model of development -- or in the case of some so-called Third World nations attempted to forge their own path of development. As the term suggests, the Third World nations created by decolonization were often considered to be less important to global affairs than the conflict between the world superpowers and the binaristic Cold War model provided a convenient rubric for economic, political and cultural intervention into Third World affairs, dividing the world into a global field of conflict between the two superpowers with much of the planet caught in the middle.

But with the collapse of the communist system, this period of history came to an end and during the 1990s the capitalist market model of globalization has become dominant and practically uncontested. The analogue of such economic globalization is said to be the triumph of democracy throughout the world with its discourse and institutions of a pluralistic system of checks and balances, parties, elections, and human rights (Fukuyama 1992). For some decades, indeed, democracy has been interpreted as the necessary accompaniment and/or condition of capitalism (Rostow, Friedman, Fukuyama), while a tradition of critical theory documents the tensions and conflicts between democracy and capitalism.

And yet the decline of the power of the nation-state produces a new geopolitical matrix in which transnational organizations, corporations, and forces challenge national and local sites of power and influence. In the wake of political developments such as decolonization, the end of the Cold

War, the formation of new trade agreements and political unions, and the rise of global transnational capitalism, national borders have shifted, resulting in the increased power of transnational institutions. Accompanying such momentous political changes are the increasing prominence of world trade, financial speculations and investment, and global cultural forces that operate outside the confines of the nation-state as a discrete entity.

And yet new conflicts also have emerged exhibiting a surge of nationalism and fundamentalism and clashes of cultures (Huntington 1996). It is curious how classical liberalism, Marxism, and modernization theory downplayed the importance of culture and local forms of social association, positing the inexorable advance of the modern economy, technology, and politics which would supposedly level out and homogenize all societies and culture, producing a world global culture. Both capitalism with its world market and communism with its international socioeconomic system and political culture were supposed to erode cultural differences, regional particularities, nationalism, and traditionalism. Thus, both classical liberalism and Marxism promoted or predicted globalization as the fate of the world: For capitalist ideologues, the market was going to produce a global world culture, whereas for Marxism the proletariat was going to produce communism that would eliminate nationalism and create a communist international without exploitation or war. Both saw the significance of national borders being eliminated and both seriously underestimated the endurance of nationalism and the nation-state.

Missing from both Marxist and liberal models has been an understanding of how race, ethnicity, and nationalist sentiment might intersect with class to produce local, political struggles with complex causes. Indeed, from the late 1980s to the present, there has been a resurgence of nationalism, traditionalism, and religious fundamentalism alongside trends toward growing globalization. The explosion of regional, cultural, and religious differences in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia -- as well as explosive tribal conflicts in Africa and elsewhere -- suggests that globalization and homogenization were not as deep as its proponents hoped and critics feared. Culture has thus become a new source of conflict and an important dimension of struggle between the global and the local. National cultures have produced confrontations between Serbs, Muslims, and Croats, Armenians and Azerbaijanis, Mohawk First Nation peoples and Quebecois, and in South Africa struggles between the Umkatha tribe and the African National Congress. Thus, both culture and nationalism turned out to be more enduring, deeper, and fundamental than expected and clashes between the global and local and various national cultures with each other continue in a supposedly globalized world.

It is also in the realm of culture that globalization is most visible and apparent. Global media and information systems and a world capitalist consumer culture circulate products, images, and ideas throughout the world. Events such as the Gulf War, social trends and fashions, and cultural phenomena such as Madonna, rap music, and popular Hollywood films are distributed through global cultural distribution networks and constitute a "global popular" (Kellner 1995). This global culture, however, operates precisely through the multiplication of different products, services, and spectacles, targeted at specific audiences. Consumer and media industries are becoming more differentiated and are segmenting their customers and audiences into more categories. In many cases, this involves the simulation of minor differences of fashion and style as significant, but it also involves a proliferation of a more highly differentiated culture and society in terms of an ever expanding variety and diversity of cultural artifacts, products, and

services.

However, there has also been a significant eruption of subcultures of resistance that have attempted to preserve specific forms of culture and society against globalization and homogenization. Most dramatically, peasant movements in Mexico, guerrilla movements in Peru, labor unions in France, students in Britain and the United States, environmentalists throughout the world, and a variety of other groups and movements have resisted capitalist globalization and attacks on previous rights and benefits. Seven dozen people's organizations from around the world have protested World Trade Organization policies and a backlash against globalization is visible everywhere. Politicians who once championed trade agreements like GATT and NAFTA are now quiet about these arrangements and at the 1996 annual Davos World Economic Forum its founder and managing director published a warning entitled: "Start Taking the Backlash Against Globalization Seriously" (New York Times, February 7, 1996: A15).

On the terrain of everyday life, new youth subcultures of resistance are visible throughout the world, as are alternative subcultures of women, gays and lesbians, blacks and ethnic minorities, and other groups that have resisted incorporation into the hegemonic mainstream culture. British cultural studies has accordingly explored both mainstream hegemonic cultures and oppositional subcultures since the 1970s. It has focused on articulations of class, race, gender, sexual preference, ethnicity, region, and nation in its explorations of concrete cultural configurations and phenomena. More recently, cultural studies has also taken on a global focus, analyzing how transnational forces intervene in concrete situations and how cultural mediations can inflect the influence of such global configurations.

Indeed, a wide range of theorists have argued that the proliferation of difference and the shift to more local discourses and practices define the contemporary scene and that theory and politics should shift from the level of globalization and its accompanying often totalizing and macro theories in order to focus on the local, the specific, the particular, the heterogeneous, and the micro level of everyday experience. A wide range of theories associated with poststructuralism, postmodernism, feminism, and multiculturalism focuses on difference, otherness, marginality, the personal, the particular, and the concrete over more general theory and politics that aim at more global or universal conditions.

It can be argued that such dichotomies as those between the global and the local express contradictions and tensions between crucial constitutive forces of the present moment and that it is therefore a mistake to reject focus on one side in favor of exclusive concern with the other (Cvetkovitch and Kellner 1997). Our challenge to think through the relationships between the global and the local by observing how global forces influence and even structure ever more local situations and ever more strikingly. One should also see how local forces and situations mediate the global, inflecting global forces to diverse ends and conditions, and producing unique configurations of the local and the global as the matrix for thought and action in the contemporary world.

Indeed, in many various fields and disciplines, theorists are beginning to consider how global, systemic, and macrostructures interact with local, particular, and microconditions and structures. Such dialectical optics attempt to theorize the intersection of the global and the local, how they

interact and mediate each other, and the new constellations being produced by current interactions between these forces. In this way, one overcomes the partiality and one-sidedness of undialectical theories that fail to perceive the ways that the global and the local interact so as to produce new social and cultural configurations.

Analogous to the question of conceptualizing the interactions of the global and the local on the level of theory, debates have emerged over the proper locus and focus of politics today. Some theorists argue that global and national problems require macro- structural solutions, while others argue that the proper sphere of the political is the local and the personal, and not the global or national. Postmodern theories of power, for instance, have stressed how power inhabits local, specific, and micro realms, ignored by modern theories that located powers in centers such as the economy, the state, or patriarchy. Postmodern politics urges local and specific actions to intervene in discursive sites of power ranging from the bedroom to the classroom, from prisons to mental institutions.

Here too the old modern and new postmodern politics seem one- sided. Power resides in both macro and micro institutions; it is more complex than ever with new configurations of global, national, regional, and more properly local forces and relations of power, generating new conflicts and sites of struggle, ranging from debates over "the new world order" -- or disorder as it may appear to many --, to struggles over local control of schools or the environment. Rethinking politics in the present conflicted and complex configurations of both novel and established relations of power and domination thus requires thinking through the complex ways in which the global and the local are interconnected. Theorizing the configurations of the global and the local also requires developing new multidimensional strategies ranging from the macro to the micro, the national to the local, in order to intervene in a wide range of contemporary and emerging problems and struggles. As Roland Axtmann suggests (1997), globalization yields the possibility of new concepts of global citizenship that will make us responsible and participatory in the problems and challenges of the coming global village. To the slogan, "Think globally, act locally," we may thus add the slogan, "Think locally, act globally." From this perspective, problems concerning global environmental problems, the development of a global information superhighway, and the need for new global forums for discussing and resolving the seemingly intransigent problems of war and peace, poverty and inequality, and overcoming divisions between the haves and the have nots may produce new conceptions of global citizenship and new challenges for global intellectuals and activists.

Axtmann also suggests that global citizenship and thus the effects of globalization per se could promote a greater acceptance of diversity, heterogeneity, and otherness rather than globalization just promoting homogeneity and sameness (1997). Yet globalization could produce as well new forms of imperialist domination under the guises of universality and globality. Indeed, there remains the danger that globalization functions as a cloak disguising a relentless Westernization, or even Americanization, of the world, much as did the old modernization theory that to some extent globalization theory inherits and continues. But the resurrection of tradition, ethno-nationalism, religious fundamentalisms, and other forms of resistance to globalization are motivated to at least some extent by a rejection of the homogenization and perhaps Westernization associated with some forms of globalization.

Globalization is thus necessarily complex and challenging to both our theories and politics. But most people these days, including theorists who should know better, operate with binary concepts of the global and the local, the modern or the postmodern, and promote one or the other side of the equation as the solution to the world's problems. For globalists, globalization is the solution and underdevelopment, backwardness, and provincialism is the problem. For localists, globalization is the problem and localization is the solution. But, less simplistically, it is the mix that matters and whether global or local solutions are most appropriate depends on the conditions in the specific context that one is addressing. In a complex, globalized world, there is no easy formula to solve the intransigent problems of the present era, yet there are so many problems on so many levels, that it should not be difficult for people of imagination and good will to find opportunities for intervention in a variety of areas.

Globalization and the Postmodern Turn: Concluding Remarks

Acting in the present age involves understanding the matrix of global and local forces, of forces of domination and resistance, and of a condition of rapid change and a "great transformation" brought about by the global restructuring of capital and multidimensional effects of new technologies. The future is up for grabs, as are characterization of where we now are, where we are going, and what concepts and perspectives best characterize our present dilemma. I have suggested that we are living in a period between the modern and something new for which the term "postmodern" stands as a marker. One could, of course, describe the tensions between global and the local, the modern and the postmodern, and the old and the new, as a process of postmodernization, of increasing complexity, fragmentation, indeterminacy, and uncertainty. Yet it is my position that although a postmodern turn is visible, continuities with the modern are so striking that it is a mistake to posit a postmodern rupture and exaggerate discontinuities.

This is certainly the case with globalization for clearly the process has been going on for centuries and, as the earlier discussion of Adam Smith and Marx suggested, globalization itself is bound up with capitalist modernity and the expansion of the capitalist system and relations of production which continues to be one of the defining features of our present moment. Yet there are also striking novelties in the present age. The rapidity of globalization with its space-time compression, its simultaneous forms of mass communication, its instantaneous financial transactions, and an increasingly integrated world market is surely a novelty. New technologies are changing the nature of work and creating new forms of leisure, including the hyperreality of cyberspace, new virtual realities, and new modes of information and entertainment. Capital is producing a new technoculture, a new form of the entertainment and information society, and everything from education to work to politics and everyday life is dramatically changing.

Yet I do not believe that these novelties are sufficiently great at present to postulate a complete postmodern rupture. Capitalist relations of production still structure most social orders and the hegemony of capital is still the structuring force of most dimensions of social life. Dramatic change and innovation have been part of modernity for centuries, as has technological development and expansion. Yet these phenomena, bound up with globalization in its current phase, have created enough novelties to require a rethinking of social theory and politics in the current situation as a response to new developments in society and culture.

In sum and to conclude: historical epochs do not rise and fall in neat patterns or at precise chronological moments. Perhaps our current situation is parallel in some ways to the Renaissance, which constituted a long period of transition between the end of premodern societies and the emergence of modern ones. Such periods are characterized by unevenly developing multiple levels of change, and the birthpangs associated with the eruption of a new era. In fact, change between one era and another is always protracted, contradictory, and usually painful. But the vivid sense of "betweenness," or transition, requires that one grasp the connections with the past as well as the novelties of the present and future. Thus, it is important to capture both the continuities and discontinuities of the postmodern with the modern, in order to make sense of our current predicament.

Living in a borderland between the modern and postmodern creates tension, insecurity, confusion, and even panic, as well as excitement and exhilaration, thus producing a cultural and social environment of shifting moods and an open but troubling future. The concept of a postmodern turn is aware of the risks and dangers in the current social constellation, as well as the hope of new possibilities and excitement. The postmodern turn is thus deeply implicated in the moods and experiences of the present and is an important component of our contemporary situation (Best and Kellner 1997). The very ubiquity of the discourse of the "postmodern," its constant proliferation, its refusal to fade away, and its seeming longevity -- several decades is a long time for a mere "fad" in our rapidly changing world -- suggest that it is addressing current concerns in a useful way, that it illuminates salient present-day realities, that it resonates with shared experience, and that it is simply an ingrained part of the current critical lexicon that one has to come to terms with, one way or another.

Notes

Attempts to chart the globalization of capital, decline of the nation-state, and rise of a new global culture include the essays in Featherstone 1990; Giddens 1990; Robertson 1991; King 1991; Bird, et al, 1993; Gilroy 1993; Arrighi 1994; Lash and Urry 1994; Grewel and Kaplan 1994; Wark 1994; Featherstone and Lash 1995; Axford 1995; Held 1995; Waters 1995; Hirst and Thompson 1996; Wilson and Dissayanake 1996; Albrow 1996; and Cvetkovich and Kellner 1997. I will draw on these and other studies during the course of this article. Yet I am especially indebted to work with Ann Cvetkovich on a book *Articulating the Global and the Local. Globalization and Cultural Studies* (1997) and to work with Steven Best on *The Postmodern Turn* (1997).

. A web site search on globalization that I did over several weeks in early 1997 indicated that the concept of globalization turned up in most major corporate web sites, as well as many state and local governmental sites, political action group and social movement sites, and a plethora of academic sites, with many of the latter indicating globalization research projects, suggesting that the concept provides cultural capital and economic awards for academics as well as business.

. On postmodern theory, see Kellner and Best 1991 and on the postmodern turn, see Kellner and Best 1997.

. See Polyani (1957: 189) on how market liberals failed to see the importance of the nation state

and nationalism, an oversight shared by Marx. Today, it is mostly transnationalist neo-liberals who continue to downplay the importance of the nation and who champion transnational structures, though this was also long part of the ideology of international communism.

. On deindustrialization, see Bluestone and Harrison 1982 and on postFordism, see Harvey 1989.v. Fukuyama's "end of history" thesis more accurately describes the end of a peculiar period of history; see Fukuyama 1992 and the critique in Derrida 1994.

. See Wolfe 1972; Cohen and Rogers 1983; Bowles and Gintis 1986; and Kellner 1990.

. See the studies in and Hall and Jefferson 1976; Hebdige 1979; Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler 1992; During 1993; and Kellner 1995.

. Such positions are associated with the postmodern theories of Foucault, Lyotard, Rorty, and have been taken up by a wide range of feminists, multiculturalists, and others. On postmodern theory, see the survey in Best and Kellner 1991.

. See the discussion of Foucault, Lyotard, and the chapter on postmodern politics in Best and Kellner 1991 and the discussion of identity politics in Best and Kellner, forthcoming.