

Globalization – An Old or a New Phenomenon?

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Abstract

This work presents globalization as a historical process. We analyze and present some pieces of work of authors writing about globalization. This work is based on qualification of J. A. Scholte. We divide these authors to different groups according to period, when their works were written. The first group consists of authors who consider globalization as a historical process and this group is divided into two subgroups: authors who talk about globalization as an historical and linear process and authors who see globalization as an historical and cyclical process. The second group consists of authors who claimed that globalization is a process arising in the present. On the basis of this classification we present historical aspects of globalization which, in our opinion, appeared on the different levels in the human past, e.g. in integration processes, in politics, in economics, in society etc. in the antiquity, in the Middle Ages and in the modern times. In this paper we analyze several cases of globalization based on selected indicators. We attempt to determine whether this phenomenon can be characterized as new, old or cyclically repeating. We conclude that aspects of globalization which are characteristic for globalization in the present, appeared in remote past and they repeat in human history cyclically.

Key words: globalization, cyclical phenomenon, new phenomenon, linear phenomenon.

The term globalization frequently appears not only in the field of science but also in the media. Despite the constant usage of the term, its definition is much more complex. Economists, historians, political scientists but also politicians have different approaches to the problem. Consequently, there are various definitions. In our paper we use Anthony Giddens' definition of globalization: "Globalization is intensification of global relations that connects distant localities in such ways that local events are formed by events that happen many kilometers away and vice versa" (Mattová 2003: 18).

Classification of authors who write about globalization

There are different approaches to classifying the conceptualizations of globalization. Baylis and Smith differentiate between realism, liberalism, Marxist theories, and social constructivism while Held and McGrew write about hyperglobalists, sceptics and transformationalists (Mattová 2010: 274 - 279). We base our classification on the work of J. A. Scholte *Globalization: Critical Introduction*, as it suits the purpose of our research best.

Scholte divides authors into three groups according to the period into which they date the origin of the globalization process. Scholte considers the question of the dating of

globalization to be one of the most important questions for research. He asks if globalization is a part of human civilization from its beginnings or if it emerged only a few generations ago. Furthermore, there is another criterion and that is whether it is a phenomenon which in human history is repeated regularly or whether it is a linear process (Scholte 2000: 19). The understanding of globalization in this context is significant for the formulation of a general definition.

There are two groups of authors in Scholte's classification. The first group comprises authors who claim that globalization is a historical process and its aspects can be found in the past. However, this group is further subdivided into two subgroups. One subgroup interprets this historical process as a cyclical trend, the other subgroup sees it as a linear process. The second group consists of authors who understand globalization as a new phenomenon unparalleled in the past.

Globalization as an old and cyclical phenomenon

The first group consists of authors who regard globalization as a process which occurred in previous, important moments of human history and repeated regularly. Scholte places here I. Clark, R. Zevin, R. Wade, P. Hirst and G. Thompson (Scholte 2000: 19).

Hirst and Thompson believe in a hidden continuity of globalization. In their work *Questioning Globalization – Globalization in Questions* they claim that current and highly internationalised economy is unprecedented. Hirst and Thompson also point out the incongruities of current capitalism. There is a large group of people who are excluded from the advantages which are provided by the present establishment. Moreover, their work touches on some serious problems of the countries of the Third world. Furthermore, it tries to provide particular solutions which are to a large degree simplified. In any case, it is interesting particularly for its insights into the future developments (Tabb 2010).

The first group also includes A. G. Hopkins. The anthology *Globalization in World History* examines globalization in its full historical context. Four different forms of globalization are postulated:

Archaic – one that occurred prior to industrialization and national state. Its main participants were kings, soldiers, priests and merchants.

Early – which was conducted in the 17th- 19th centuries and it was closely connected with a new formation of states and expansion of trade. Its main participants were explorers, merchants and slave traders.

Modern- or traditionally 'Westcentric'. This is dated from the 19th century. It was related to industrialization; increase of national state and to the formation of global civil society. Its representatives included imperial colonizers, manufacturers, scientists and activists of governmental organizations.

Postcolonial – is related to the disappearance of colonialism in the 20th century and the formation of supranational organisations. The main representatives of this phase were not only commercial and political elites but also immigrants and virtual networks around Internet (Harrington 2006: 405-407). These periods of time can overlap.

In this work the authors invite historians to contribute to a discussion about globalization. Hopkins claims that it is the first work about this topic written by historians who ask questions which can be answered only by historical research. One of the topics explored is the influence of Islamic culture on the process of globalization. The effort to generalize the essentials of Islam such as the umma and Arabic serves as an example. In addition, this work problematizes the understanding of globalization as the expansion of the West and it argues that there were contacts among China, India, and Japan long before the Europeans came. In the last part the authors also analyse the American form of globalization, its formation and its development up to the current form (Hopkins 2002: 46).

The last author who can be placed in this category is I. Wallerstein, one of the most outstanding sociologists of these days. He claims that the current discussion about globalization is "a gigantic misunderstanding of current reality" (Wallerstein 2005: 45). He does not consider the phenomenon of globalization to be something new but rather something evolving for at least the past 500 years of our history. Wallerstein assumes that the source of the current economic system arose in the 16th century and is connected with the division of labor between mercantilistic trade states of north-western Europe and corn areas of the eastern Baltic Sea Region. He sees globalization as repeating regularly in human history. Moreover, he states that the period from 1945 up to the present is a typical Kondrat cycle of capitalist world economy. This period has two phases. The first is the phase of economic growth (1945 to 1967/ 1973). During the second phase economic stagnation and depression prevail and this still lasts (Wallerstein 2005: 45-64).

He pays attention to the current crisis in his work *Utopistics*. In this book he does not try to create a society in an idealistic manner but he wants to show a realistic view of future development. Furthermore, in this book he deals with many problems such as the formation of the nation-state which he considers to be an integral part of the capitalist world economy and an essential element of its systematization (Wallerstein 2006: 17), criminality, ethnic conflicts and ethnic groups as phenomenon of state denationalisation, nationalism, democratization of arms and migration. In addition, he speaks about the start of the new Kondrat wave in the 21st century in which "economy will achieve repeated growth of production and employment, the possibilities of investment and capital accumulation will re-establish" (Wallerstein 2006: 61). And this will start competition among the US, the European Union and Japan.

Although, each one of the authors considers globalization to be an historic, cyclical process, they place its formation into different periods. Hirst and Thompson do not state a specific point in time of its formation. However, they state that globalization coincides together with the formation of capitalism. Wallerstein clearly claims that this process has started about 500 years ago. On the other hand, Hopkins dates the process formation to the year 400. The authors also stress different aspects of globalization. While Wallerstein, Hirst and Hopkins emphasize economics, Hopkins stresses various social issues. In addition, Wallerstein focuses on the international division of labor and international trade, and, at the same time, he looks at the role of technology in the process.

Globalization as a linear process

The second group of scholars also considers globalization to be an historical phenomenon. However, unlike the first group, this second group thinks that it is a linear, not cyclical process. They date the beginning of globalization to the period from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Scholte considers R. Robertson as the main representative of this school of thought. M. Porter and Chase-Duna also belong to this category of authors (Scholte 2000: 19).

We have decided to include Scholte in this category as well. He distinguishes three phases of globalization. The first phase began 500 years ago. The second one began in the second half of 19th century. The third one began about 1960 and lasts up to now. This periodization comes from the understanding of globalization as an enlargement into supraterritorial places. These phases can overlap. Moreover, Scholte claims that globalization and its enlargement are getting faster. Later, Scholte pays attention to particular phases in more detail. In this closer analysis he takes communication, trade, politics, organizations and thinking into consideration.

Scholte writes about the emergence of global ideas in the first phase. It happened by gradual development of the idea of one world from the religious ideas in Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam to modern secular humanism. Around 1850 the second phase of globalization began. He calls this phase early globalization and it lasted till 1950. It is

connected with the emergence of overterritorial communication, the spread of telegraphic connection and radio communication via air. He says: "the beginnings of this early globalization are connected with systematic worldwide distribution, price formation and with the sale of various commodities" (Scholte 2000: 67). Accompanying this was the globalization of money and finances. Furthermore, companies which change their national character and try to promote their production and products spread to the whole world. The U.S. company Colt stands as a perfect example of this monetary globalization. Colt opened its manufacturing plant in Great Britain. German Siemens opened theirs in Russia and Japanese Kikkoman in the USA. Such global entrepreneurship created a demand for international regulatory organizations such as the International Telegraph Union, General Postal Union or International Criminal Police Organisation. It was also in this period that the worldwide Olympic Games were started.

Scholte calls the last period of globalization absolute globalization. It started around the year 1960. It is not only the period of electronic communication, satellites, optic cables, television, Internet, expansion of global markets, activities of international organizations which interfere in everyday life but also the period of ecological problems and efforts to find solutions (Scholte 2000: 62-88)

The second significant author whom we have placed into this group is J. Gray. He argues in his work *Al Kajda and What Does It Mean to be Modern* that current globalization is connected with Americanization and it began with the Cold War (Gray 2005: 52). However, more important is his work *Hopeless Illusions*. In this work he states that "globalization is nothing more than the global spread of science and technologies. Globalization began at the latest in the last third of the 19th century" (Gray 2002: 11). He considers globalization to be the next phase of industrial revolution. He claims that globalization similarly like industrial revolution brings revolutionary changes.

Gray claims that the free market and its worldwide enlargement are the principal myths of our times. He thinks that the global free market is led to its doom by globalization. Free market can be created only in a central economy and in a strong state. This idea continues by the statement that democracy and free market contradict each other (Chomsky 2007: 54)

The last author who belongs to this group is N. Chomsky. His work consists of many books and studies in which he depicts himself as a persuasive debater and critic of the U.S. politics and activities of supranational corporations. He understands globalization as the last stage of capitalism. He dates the emergence of globalization from the end of the 19th century. According to him, globalization is closely connected with the emergence and development of capitalism. In his lectures, he identifies globalization with Americanization. He is also very critical of insufficient support of poor countries by the U.S. Moreover, he mentions another kind of help - soldierly help" (Chomsky 2006: 9-69). This kind of help he criticizes most of all.

When we compare the authors of this group we can again find differences in dating globalization. Scholte puts the genesis of globalization 500 years ago. Chomsky dates globalization from the end of the 19th century. Gray dates it up to the origin of the Cold War. This could be caused by different attitudes to globalization itself. Scholte connects globalization with the process of enlargement into supraterritorial areas. He uses various standpoints. He takes communication, trade, politics, organizations and thinking into consideration. The other two authors are more concrete. According to Chomsky, globalization is related to capitalism. On the other hand, Gray sees close connection between globalization and the spread of science and technology. However, all three authors understand globalization as a linear process.

Globalization as a new phenomenon

The last group of theories considers globalization as a new phenomenon. In his categorization Scholte suggests that "global relations started with airplanes and personal computers" (Scholte 2000: 19) whereby we experienced the first global revolution and sudden leap into a new reality. Scholte places into this category authors such as P.F. Drucker, A. King and B. Schneider.

A. King and B. Schneider in their work *The first global revolution* deal with the findings of the Roman Club. The authors consider the present as a period of changes. They state that the cause for these changes were advances in microelectronics and molecular biology' (King-Schneider 1991: 14). In individual chapters they deal with problems of population growth, environment, progress in science and technology, economic changes, and the increasing interdependence of nations. They consider years from 1989 to 1990 to be the major period of changes, individual events influencing each other (King-Schneider 1991: 17).

Professor U. Beck belongs to this group as well. He clearly states in his book *The Power and Counterweight in Global Age* that "globalization is a new game with expired rules and basic concepts of the old game" (Beck 2007: 27). According to Beck, the old game comprises national states. With the beginning of globalization there is "new space and new scope of treatment". Politics is not only free from boundaries but also it is denationalised. Those who do not accept the new game will be simply displaced. A state is one of the players in the world game. Participants of the international system include international organizations, corporations and terrorist organizations. Moreover, he claims that capital keeps a tight grip on power. However, it has its counterweight in civil society. The period in which work was the opponent of capital was replaced by a period in which consumers and consumption stand against capital. In the last part of the book he says that the grand ideas of European modernism like nationalism, communism, socialism and neoliberalism are depleted. He argues that "the next grand idea could be self-critical cosmopolitanism" (Beck 2007: 393).

The last author who considers globalization to be a new phenomenon is A. Giddens. He thinks that we live in a time of an historical transition when certain changes affect all localities (Giddens 2000: 11). The world is spinning out of control and new risks are especially associated with technological innovations. In his work *Runaway World* he writes that globalization comes from the West and brings with itself a mark of American political and economical power and in its consequences it is not balanced (Giddens 2000: 14). However, the West is equally affected by this process as is the rest of the world. Giddens states that globalization is in some respects not only new but also direct and revolutionary (Giddens 2000: 21). However, he does not consider it to be only an economic phenomenon but also a political, technological and cultural phenomenon. Furthermore, he does not consider it to be one process. According to him, it rather is a complicated set of processes. He speaks about four dimensions of globalization: the system of nation-states, the world military stability, the international division of labor and the world capitalist economy (Giddens 1998: 67). He sees many positives but also many negatives in globalization. Global warming and temperature fluctuations serve as perfect examples of these negatives. Moreover, he regards family crisis as a negative, too.

Unlike the previous groups in which we can notice different ways of dating globalization, all authors in this last group agree that globalization is a new phenomenon, although they may stress different factors in its emergence. King and Schneider argue that globalization is related to technological discoveries and their impact on society. Beck states that globalization is connected to the erosion of the nation-state. Giddens is more radical. He can see globalization everywhere around us, so his point of view is the most complex of all the authors.

The globalization process is generally difficult to characterize and define. Experts on this issue come from different disciplines which can also influence their interpretation of this

problem. We consider the historical approach as the most appropriate as it seems to account for most aspects of globalization not only in the present but also in the larger history of mankind.

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