

## New dimensions of globalization

*The Globalization Reader, Fourth Edition.* Edited by Frank Lechner and John Boli, Chichester, West Sussex, UK, Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2011, 542 pp., \$44.95/paper.

Since Marshall McLuhan first introduced the idea of a “global village” in 1960, the concept of globalization has been continually evolving. In this revised and updated edition, editors Frank Lechner and John Boli have assembled one of the most comprehensive discussions on globalization available. There are new readings on the following topics: global governance (global regulations aimed at solving problems between states or regions when there is no way to enforce compliance); global sports (soccer and baseball); migration; the recent global financial crisis; global health; American evangelicals (the backbone of a transnational religious movement); and tropical deforestation. Coverage is included on the topics of economic globalization, the role of media and religion in cultural globalization, and the link between environmentalism and the globalization of social problems. Social change across economic, political, cultural, and experiential dimensions is also covered. A wide variety of provocative and in-depth perspectives are presented from current debates, as well as a diverse sample of high-quality, readable scholarly work on the topic.

*The Globalization Reader* is divided into eleven sections that flow in an easily readable and reasonable arrangement: 1) Debating Globalization; 2) Explaining Globalization;

3) Experiencing Globalization; 4) Globalization and the World Economy; 5) Globalization and the Nation-State; 6) Global Governance; 7) Globalization, INGOs (International Nongovernmental Organizations, e.g., the International Campaign to Ban Landmines) and Civil Society; 8) Globalization and Media; 9) Globalization and Religion; 10) Global Environmentalism; and lastly 11) Alternative Globalization and the Global Justice Movement. According to the editors, “Alternative Globalization” displaces the antiglobalization label that came out of the 1999 protests directed at the World Trade Organization conference in Seattle. In their view, it is the kind of globalization promoted by the transnational corporations, global finance, and the elite capitalist classes, and is the major source of inequality, exploitation, and oppression in the world today. The book also provides examples of what it takes to build sustainable working global societies: democracy, human rights, employment, food security, and equity between rich and poor countries, among others. Each section has a list of questions at the end that help lead to a summary of the main points in each category. While there are many fascinating topics covered in the book, limited space only allows inclusion of the most pertinent sections in this review.

*Debating Globalization*—This section illustrates the contrasting positions regarding the merits and direction of globalization. John Micklethwaite and Adrian Wooldridge, journalists for *The Economist*, present a positive view by arguing that globalization produces greater economic efficiency and prosperity while at the same time extending the “idea

of liberty.” Amartya Sen, winner of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics, recognizes the benefits of global integration but also notes the importance of creating institutions that can more equitably distribute its benefits. Critics William Robinson, Samuel Huntington, and Benjamin Barber share a fear of the unrestrained capitalist system; in particular, Barber’s “Jihad” vs. “McWorld” section, which describes forces that serve to both fragment and unite mankind simultaneously. Other authors advocate preserving traditional cultural distinctions above everything else. Lechner and Boli note that the debates express “a common global consciousness, if not a global consensus.”

*Explaining Globalization*—A broad explanation of this theme is presented with readings from four major perspectives: 1) World System Theory, in which the whole system is geared toward capital accumulation by competing firms (with cycles of growth and decline), stressing the role of transnational corporations and classes as the prime movers in the contemporary global system; 2) Neorealism, Liberalism, and Neoliberal Institutionalism, in which independent states pursue their interests of security and power while constrained by the power of others (but with new organizations critically influencing world politics, there is no clear hierarchy of issues common to all states so the use of force has become less effective; in short, there are many centers of power but no single power hierarchy); 3) World Polity Theory, in which a “world polity,” or set of cultural rules, specify how institutions around the world address common problems, and; 4) the World Culture

Theory, which envisions a world society consisting of a complex set of relationships among multiple units in the “global field.” Each of these concepts is expanded in a way that will appeal to sociologists, political scientists, students, and others.

*Experiencing Globalization*—This section emphasizes that there is no one unique experience of globalization—that people participate and respond in different ways. There are commonalities in the experience of globalization, and it is real to almost everyone, but much depends on one’s vantage point. Several of these are cited; for example, the case of the global sushi industry. Japan maintains the cultural control of the product, yet it is comprised of New England blue fin tuna and the dish is commonly sold in Chinese restaurants. A comparison of the Hong Kong McDonald’s experience with the U.S. experience provides another example. Seven of the world’s busiest McDonalds are in Hong Kong, but fast food there was originally perceived as a snack rather than a meal as in the United States. Further, in contrast to the United States, the best-selling items on McDonald’s Hong Kong menu are fish sandwiches and plain hamburgers; Big Macs are the favorites of children and teenagers. And, rather than using self-provisioning for napkins and condiments, these items are dispensed one at a time by a crew member. An example is also presented in musical terms: Yousou N’Dour is an internationally

renowned musician grounded in the social issues of his Senegalese culture, but he is also open to global musical influences. He has collaborated with Paul Simon, Sting, Axelle Red, and others.

*Globalization and the World Economy*—Economic globalization has been far-reaching and intensive since WWII. World trade has increased more than a thousand-fold in that timeframe, with soaring foreign investment and global corporations dominating many sectors. Technology has enabled traders to track global financial information and shift assets instantaneously, and barriers such as tariffs on goods and services have been removed. Developing countries, in particular the “BRIC” group of Brazil, Russia, India, and China, now plays a more significant role. In this more integrated system events quickly ripple through the rest of the world, as demonstrated by the U.S. economic housing crisis in 2007 (housing prices had also ballooned in many other countries) and the current EU debt crisis. Hardest hit have been small countries such as Ireland and Iceland with heavily leveraged banks. In many countries, governments cut interest rates, bailed out banks, flooded capital markets with low-interest loans, launched economic stimulus packages, and expanded compensation to deal with rising unemployment.

*Global Governance*—The world faces many problems and there is no one government that can tackle

them alone. This section highlights some of the institutions attempting to tackle the various issues, such as national financial troubles that impact global markets, environmental issues like global warming, and new developments in the governance of global health (the Gates Foundation is one “nonstate” entity used as an illustration). The merits of the wide range of efforts undertaken to solve the various problems are subject to debate, but the editors do manage to present a balanced view of the issues and convey a full understanding of them. The editors stress that the term “global governance” itself is intentionally vague to broadly cover the collective activities in the world, from the prerogative of individual nations to the global domain: “The various efforts to find effective solutions for common problems in the form of new norms, agreements, or institutions, all in the absence of an authoritative policy-making center or body.”

For the reader with an open mind interested in exploring the issues related to globalization in greater depth, I highly recommend this thought-provoking and at times controversial book. A variety of opinions are impartially presented on a very important topic. □

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