Chapter 1

Globalization and global politics

ANTHONY MCGREW
This chapter provides an account of globalization and its consequences for our understanding of world politics. Globalization is a long-term historical process that denotes the growing intensity of worldwide interconnectedness: in short, a ‘shrinking world’. It is, however, a highly uneven process such that far from creating a more cooperative world it is also a significant source of global friction, instability, enmity, and conflict. Whilst it has important consequences for the power and autonomy of national governments, it by no means prefigures, as many have argued or desired, the demise of the nation-state or of geopolitics. Rather, globalization is associated with significant transformations in world politics, the most significant of which are the focus of this chapter. In particular the chapter concludes that a conceptual shift in our thinking is required to grasp fully the nature of these transformations. This conceptual shift involves embracing the idea of global politics: the politics of an embryonic global society in which domestic and world politics, even if conceptually distinct, are practically inseparable. It also requires rethinking many of the traditional organizing assumptions and institutions of modern political life—from sovereignty to democracy—since in a globalized world, power is no longer simply organized according to a national or territorial logic. This chapter has two key objectives: to elucidate and elaborate the concept of globalization; and to explore its consequences for our understanding of world politics.
Introduction

Globalization—simply the widening, deepening, and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness—is a contentious issue in the study of world politics. Some—the hyperglobalists—argue that it is bringing about the demise of the sovereign nation-state as global forces undermine the ability of governments to control their own economies and societies (Ohmae 1995; Scholte 2000). By contrast, the sceptics reject the idea of globalization as so much ‘globaloney.’ They argue that states and geopolitics remain the principal agents and forces shaping world order (Krasner 1999; Gilpin 2001). This chapter takes a rather different approach—a transformationalist perspective—arguing that both the hyperglobalists and sceptics alike exaggerate their arguments, thereby producing misleading interpretations of contemporary world politics. This transformationalist perspective acknowledges that far from leading to the demise of the sovereign state, globalization is associated with the emergence of a conspicuously global politics in which the traditional distinction between domestic and international affairs is no longer very meaningful. Under these conditions, ‘politics everywhere, it would seem, are related to politics everywhere else’, such that the orthodox approaches to international relations—which are constructed upon this very distinction—provide at best only a partial insight into the forces shaping the contemporary world (Rosenau in Mansbach, Ferguson, and Lampert 1976: 22).

Since it is such a ‘slippery’ and overused concept, it is hardly surprising that globalization should engender such intense debate. Accordingly, this chapter begins by reviewing the concept of globalization before exploring its implications for the study of world politics. The chapter is organized into two main sections: the first will address several interrelated questions, namely: what is globalization? How is it best conceptualized and defined? How is it manifest today, most especially given the events of 9/11 and the 2008–9 global financial crisis? Is it really all that new? The second section will explore the ways in which globalization is producing a form of global politics that is highly skewed in favour of the most powerful to the exclusion of the majority of humankind.

Making sense of globalization

Over the last three decades the sheer scale and scope of global interconnectedness has become increasingly evident in every sphere, from the economic to the cultural. Worldwide economic integration has intensified as the expansion of global commerce, finance, and production binds together the economic fortunes of nations, communities, and households across the world’s major trading regions and beyond within an emerging global market economy. As the credit crunch of 2008 illustrates, the integration of the world economy is such that no national economy is able to insulate itself from the contagion effect of turmoil in the world’s financial markets. Instability in one region, whether the collapse of the Argentinean economy in 2002 or the East Asian recession of 1997, very rapidly takes its toll on jobs, production, savings, and investment many thousands of miles away, while a collapse of confidence in US banks is felt everywhere from Birmingham to Bangkok.

Every day over $2 trillion flows across the world’s foreign exchange markets. No government, even the most powerful, has the resources to resist sustained speculation against its currency and thereby the credibility of its economic policy (see Ch. 27). Furthermore, governments have to borrow significant sums in world bond markets. Their creditworthiness determines the availability and cost of such borrowing. In the aftermath of the 2008–9 financial crises, many governments, including the UK and USA, confront real reductions in public spending in order to protect their creditworthiness in world bond markets.

Transnational corporations now account for between 25 and 33 per cent of world output, 70 per cent of world trade, and 80 per cent of international investment, while overseas production by these firms considerably exceeds the level of world exports, making them key players in the global economy controlling the
location and distribution of economic and technological resources.

New modes and infrastructures of global communication have made it possible to organize and mobilize like-minded people across the globe in virtual real time, as expressed in coordinated worldwide protests in early 2003 against military intervention in Iraq and the 45,000 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), from Greenpeace to the Climate Action Network, not to mention the activities of transnational criminal and terrorist networks, from drugs cartels to Al Qaeda.

With a global communications infrastructure has also come the transnational spread of ideas, cultures, and information, from Madonna to Muhammad, both among like-minded peoples and between different cultural groups—reinforcing simultaneous tendencies towards both an expanded sense of global solidarity among the like-minded and difference, if not outright hostility, between different cultures, nations, and ethnic groupings.

People—with their cultures—are also on the move in their tens of millions—whether legally or illegally—with global migration almost on a scale of the great nineteenth-century movements but transcending all continents, from south to north and east to west, while over 600 million tourists are on the move every year.

As globalization has proceeded, so has the recognition of transnational problems requiring global regulation, from climate change to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Dealing with these transnational issues has led to an explosive growth of transnational and global forms of rule-making and regulation from G20 summits in 2009 responding to the global financial crisis to the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Change Conference. This is evident in both the expanding jurisdiction of established international organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund or the International Civil Aviation Organization, and the literally thousands of informal networks of cooperation between parallel government agencies in different countries, from the Financial Action Task Force (which brings together government experts on money-laundering from different countries) and the Dublin Group (which brings together drug enforcement agencies from the European Union, the USA, and other countries).

With the recognition of global problems and global interconnectedness has come a growing awareness of the multiple ways in which the security and prosperity of communities in different regions of the world are bound together. A single terrorist bombing in Bali has repercussions for public perceptions of security in Europe and the USA, while agricultural subsidies in the USA and the EU have significant consequences for the livelihoods of farmers in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

We inhabit a world in which the most distant events can rapidly, if not almost instantaneously, come to have very profound consequences for our individual and collective prosperity and perceptions of security. For those of a sceptical persuasion, however, this is neither far from a novel condition nor is it necessarily evidence of globalization if that term means something more than simply international interdependence, that is linkages between countries.

What, then, distinguishes the concept of globalization from notions of internationalization or interdependence? What, in other words, is globalization?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over the last three decades the sheer scale, scope, and acceleration of global interconnectedness has become increasingly evident in every sphere from the economic to the cultural. Sceptics do not regard this as evidence of globalization if that term means something more than simply international interdependence, i.e. linkages between countries. The key issue becomes what we understand by the term ‘globalization’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conceptualizing globalization

Initially, it might be helpful to think of globalization as a process characterized by:

- a stretching of social, political, and economic activities across political frontiers so that events, decisions, and activities in one region of the world come to have significance for individuals and communities in distant regions of the globe. Civil wars and conflict in the world’s poorest regions, for instance, increase the flow of asylum seekers and illegal migrants into the world’s affluent countries;
- the intensification, or the growing magnitude, of interconnectedness, in almost every sphere of social existence from the economic to the ecological, from the activities of Microsoft to the spread of harmful microbes, such as the SARS virus, from the intensification of world trade to the spread of weapons of mass destruction;
- the accelerating pace of global interactions and processes as the evolution of worldwide systems of transport and communication increases the rapidity or velocity with which ideas, news, goods, information, capital, and technology move around the world. Routine telephone banking transactions in the UK are dealt with by call centres in India in real time, whilst at the outset of the recent financial crisis stock markets across the globe displayed a synchronized collapse within hours rather than in weeks as in the Great Crash of 1929;
- the growing extensity, intensity, and velocity of global interactions is associated with a deepening enmeshment of the local and global in so far as local events may come to have global consequences and global events can have serious local consequences, creating a growing collective awareness or consciousness of the world as a shared social space, that is globality or globalism. This is expressed, among other ways, in the worldwide diffusion of the very idea of globalization itself as it becomes incorporated into the world’s many languages, from Mandarin to Gaelic.

As this brief description suggests, there is more to the concept of globalization than simply interconnectedness. It implies that the cumulative scale, scope, velocity, and depth of contemporary interconnectedness is dissolving the significance of the borders and boundaries that separate the world into its many constituent states or national economic and political spaces (Rosenau 1997). Rather than growing interdependence between discrete bounded national states, or internationalization, as the sceptics refer to it, the concept of globalization seeks to capture the dramatic shift that is under way in the organization of human affairs: from a world of discrete but interdependent national states to the world as a shared social space. The concept of globalization therefore carries with it the implication of an unfolding process of structural change in the scale of human social and economic organization. Rather than social, economic, and political activities being organized solely on a local or national scale today, they are also increasingly organized on a transnational or global scale. Globalization therefore denotes a significant shift in the scale of social organization, in every sphere from economics to security, transcending the world’s major regions and continents.

Central to this structural change are contemporary informatics technologies and infrastructures of communication and transportation. These have greatly facilitated new forms and possibilities of virtual real-time worldwide organization and coordination, from the operations of multinational corporations to the worldwide mobilization and demonstrations of the anti-globalization movement. Although geography and distance still matter, it is nevertheless the case that globalization is synonymous with a process of time–space compression—literally a shrinking world—in which the sources of even very local developments, from unemployment to ethnic conflict, may be traced to distant conditions or decisions. In this respect globalization embodies a process of deterriorization: as social, political, and economic activities are increasingly ‘stretched’ across the globe, they become in a significant sense no longer organized solely according to a strictly territorial logic. Terrorist and criminal networks, for instance, operate both locally and globally. National economic space, under conditions of globalization, is no longer coterminous with national territorial space since, for example, many of the UK’s largest companies have their headquarters abroad and many domestic companies now outsource their production to China and East Asia, among other locations. This is not to argue that territory and borders are now irrelevant, but rather to acknowledge that under conditions of globalization their relative significance, as constraints upon social action and the exercise of power, is declining. In an era of instantaneous real-time global communication and organization, the distinction...
between the domestic and the international, inside and outside the state, breaks down. Territorial borders no longer demarcate the boundaries of national economic or political space.

A ‘shrinking world’ implies that sites of power and the subjects of power quite literally may be continents apart. As the world financial crisis of 2008 illustrates, the key sites and agencies of decision-making, whether in Washington, Beijing, New York, or London, quite literally are oceans apart from the local communities whose livelihoods are affected by their actions. In this respect globalization denotes the idea that power (whether economic, political, cultural, or military) is increasingly organized and exercised at a distance (or has the potential to be so). As such the concept of globalization denotes the relative denationalization of power in so far as, in an increasingly interconnected global system, power is organized and exercised on a transregional, transnational, or transcontinental basis while—see the discussion of political globalization—many other actors, from international organizations to criminal networks, exercise power within, across, and against states. States no longer have a monopoly of power resources, whether economic, coercive, or political.

To summarize: globalization is a process that involves a great deal more than simply growing connections or interdependence between states. It can be defined as:

A historical process involving a fundamental shift or transformation in the spatial scale of human social organization that links distant communities and expands the reach of power relations across regions and continents.

Such a definition enables us to distinguish globalization from more spatially delimited processes such as internationalization and regionalization. Whereas internationalization refers to growing interdependence between states, the very idea of internationalization presumes that they remain discrete national units with clearly demarcated borders. By contrast, globalization refers to a process in which the very distinction between the domestic and the external breaks down. Distance and time are collapsed, so that events many thousands of miles away can come to have almost immediate local consequences while the impacts of even more localized developments may be diffused rapidly around the globe.
If globalization refers to transcontinental or transregional networks, flows, or interconnectedness, then regionalization can be conceived as the intensification of patterns of interconnectedness and integration among states that have common borders or are geographically proximate, as in the European Union (see Ch. 26). Accordingly, whereas flows of trade and finance between the world’s three major economic blocs—North America, Asia Pacific, and Europe—constitute globalization, by contrast, such flows within these blocs are best described as regionalization.

Box 1.2 Globalization at risk? The financial crisis of 2008

Whilst the causes of the financial crisis of 2008 remain hotly debated, there is a general consensus that both in terms of its scale and severity the crisis posed the greatest risk to the effective functioning of the entire world economy since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Without unprecedented internationally coordinated intervention by the governments of the world’s major economies, confirmed at the 2009 G20 summits in London and Pittsburgh, the crisis could have degenerated into an economic catastrophe much worse than that of 1929. As the crisis unfolded throughout 2008 and 2009, it precipitated an unprecedented contraction in global economic transactions from international bank lending to foreign investment, trade in commodities and manufactures and transnational production. Whether this contraction prefigures a significant trend of economic deglobalization or is simply a temporary adjustment to the current global market downturn has yet to be established definitively. The ‘great correction’ of 2008 has put economic globalization at risk. Paradoxically, in doing so it has reinforced tendencies towards political globalization as governments seek to coordinate their economic strategies to prevent a slide into a global depression or towards protectionism. Moreover, for emerging powers, such as China, India, and Brazil, economic globalization remains essential to sustaining economic growth and national prosperity. Whilst economic globalization is at risk as a consequence of the ‘great correction’ of 2008, the outcome may be more of a moderation of its pace and intensity, by comparison with more recent historical trends, as opposed to a process of deglobalization, i.e. a reversal of such trends.

Key Points

- Globalization denotes a tendency towards the growing extensity, intensity, velocity, and deepening impact of worldwide interconnectedness.
- Globalization is associated with a shift in the scale of social organization, the emergence of the world as a shared social space, the relative deterritorialization of social, economic, and political activity, and the relative denationalization of power.
- Globalization can be conceptualized as a fundamental shift or transformation in the spatial scale of human social organization that links distant communities and expands the reach of power relations across regions and continents.
- Globalization is to be distinguished from internationalization and regionalization.

Contemporary globalization

According to John Gray, the cataclysmic attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001 heralded a new epoch in world affairs, ‘The era of globalization is over’ (Naim 2002). In response to the perceived threat of globalized terrorism, governments sought to seal their borders. Moreover, in response to the global financial crisis many governments have become more interventionist, protecting key national industries from foreign and trade competition. As a consequence, the intensity of economic globalization (whether measured in terms of trade, financial, or investment flows) has undoubtedly diminished by comparison with its peak at the turn of this century. This has been seized upon by those of a sceptical persuasion (see Box 1.3) as confirmation of their argument (Hirst and Thompson 2003). Sceptics conclude that not only has globalization been highly exaggerated but also that it is a myth or ‘conceptual folly’ that conceals the reality of a world which is much less interdependent than it was in the nineteenth century, and one that remains dominated by geopolitics and Western capitalism (Hirst and Thompson 1999; Gilpin 2002; Rosenberg 2000, 2005). By contrast, for many of a more globalist persuasion, the very events of 9/11 and the financial crisis are indicative of just how globalized the world has become in the twenty-first century. What is at issue here, at least in part, are differing (theoretical and historical) interpretations of globalization.

One of the weaknesses of the sceptical argument is that it tends to conflate globalization solely with economic trends; it sometimes invokes a form of economic reductionism. As such it overlooks non-economic trends and tendencies or treats them as insignificant. However, contemporary globalization is not a singular process: it is manifest within all aspects of social life, from politics...
to production, culture to crime, and economics to education. It is implicated directly and indirectly in many aspects of our daily lives, from the clothes we wear, the food we eat, the knowledge we accumulate, through to our individual and collective sense of security in an uncertain world. Evidence of globalization is all around us: universities are literally global institutions, from the recruitment of students to the dissemination of academic research. To understand contemporary globalization therefore requires a mapping of the distinctive patterns of worldwide interconnectedness in all the key sectors of social interaction, from the economic and the political through to the military, the cultural, and the ecological.

As Box 1.4 illustrates, globalization is occurring, albeit with varying intensity and at a varying pace, in every domain of social activity. Of course it is more advanced in some domains than others. For instance, economic globalization is much more extensive and intensive than is cultural or military globalization. To this extent contemporary globalization is highly uneven. Making sense of it requires asking: the globalization of what? Contrary to the sceptics, it is crucial to appreciate that globalization is a complex multidimensional process: patterns of economic globalization and cultural globalization are neither identical nor reducible to one another. In this respect, drawing general conclusions about globalizing tendencies simply from one domain produces a somewhat partial and inaccurate interpretation. As noted, in the aftermath of 9/11 and the financial crisis of 2008 the slowdown in economic globalization was heralded by sceptics as evidence of the end of globalization. This interpretation ignores the accelerating pace of globalization in the military, technological, and cultural domains. Moreover, what is highly distinctive about contemporary globalization is the confluence of globalizing tendencies across all the key domains of social interaction. Significantly, these tendencies have proved remarkably robust in the face of global instability and military conflicts.
If patterns of contemporary globalization are uneven, they are also highly asymmetrical. It is a common misconception that globalization implies universality: that the ‘global’ in globalization implies that all regions or countries must be similarly enmeshed in worldwide processes. This is plainly not the case, for it very markedly involves differential patterns of enmeshment, giving it what Castells calls its ‘variable geometry’ (Castells 2000). The rich OECD countries are much more globalized than many of the poorest sub-Saharan African states. Globalization is not uniformly experienced across all regions, countries, or even communities since it is inevitably a highly differentiated process. Among OECD and sub-Saharan African states, elites are in the vanguard of globalization while the poorest in these countries find themselves largely excluded from its benefits. Globalization exhibits a distinctive geography of inclusion and exclusion, resulting in clear winners and losers not just between countries but within and across them. For the most affluent it may very well entail a shrinking world—jet travel, global television and the World Wide Web—but for the largest slice of humanity it tends to be associated with a profound sense of disempowerment. Inequality is deeply inscribed in the very processes of contemporary globalization such that it is more accurately described as asymmetrical globalization.

Given such asymmetries, it should not be surprising to learn that globalization does not prefigure the emergence of a harmonious global community or an ethic of global cooperation. On the contrary, as 9/11 tragically demonstrated, the more the world becomes a shared social space, the greater the sense of division, difference, and enmity it may create. Historically, violence has always been central to globalization, whether in the form of the ‘New Imperialism’ of the 1890s or the current ‘war on global terror’. Beyond the OECD core globalization is frequently perceived as Western globalization, stoking fears of a new imperialism and significant counter-tendencies, from the protests of the anti-globalization movement to forms of economic or cultural protectionism as different ethnic or national communities seek to protect their indigenous culture and ways of life. Rather than a more cooperative world order, contemporary globalization, in many respects, has exacerbated existing tensions and conflicts, generating new divisions and insecurities, creating a potentially more unruly world. More recently it is associated with a historic power shift in world politics since it has been the critical factor in propelling China, India, and Brazil to the rank of major economic powers. This power transition is eroding several centuries of Western dominance of the global order. The emergence of the G20, as opposed to the G8, as the key global arena in which global responses to the 2008 financial crisis were coordinated, attests to the dramatic redistribution of economic power consequent upon the most recent phase of globalization.

By comparison with previous periods, contemporary globalization combines a remarkable confluence of dense patterns of global interconnectedness, alongside their unprecedented institutionalization through new global and regional infrastructures of control and communication, from the World Trade Organization (WTO) to transnational corporations. In nearly all domains contemporary patterns of globalization have not only surpassed those of earlier epochs, but also displayed unparalleled qualitative differences—that is in terms of how globalization is organized and managed. The existence of new real-time global communications infrastructures, in which the world literally is transformed into a single social space, distinguishes very clearly contemporary globalization from that of the past. In these respects it is best described as a thick form of globalization or globalism (Held, McGrew et al. 1999; Keohane and Nye 2003).

As such, thick globalization delineates the set of constraints and opportunities that confront governments, conditioning their freedom of action or autonomy, most especially in the economic realm. For instance, the unprecedented scale of global financial flows at over $2 trillion per day imposes a significant discipline on any government, even the most economically powerful, in...
Chapter 1  Globalization and global politics

the conduct of national economic policy. Thick globalization embodies a powerful systemic logic that constitutes the circumstances in which states operate and thereby the limits to state power. It therefore has significant consequences for how we understand world politics.

Consider a political map of the world: its most striking feature is the division of the entire earth’s surface into almost 200 neatly defined territorial units, namely sovereign states. To a student of politics in the Middle Ages a map of the world dominated by borders and boundaries would make little sense. Historically, borders are a relatively recent invention, just as the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of the West in the nineteenth century defined a new age in world history, so today the microchip and the satellite are icons of a globalized world order. It is also associated with a shift in economic power from the West to the East with the rise of China and India.

Box 1.6  The three waves of globalization

Globalization is not a novel phenomenon. Viewed as a secular historical process by which human civilizations have come to form a single world system, it has occurred in three distinct waves.

In the first wave, the age of discovery (1450–1850), globalization was decisively shaped by European expansion and conquest.

The second wave (1850–1945) evidenced a major expansion in the spread and entrenchment of European empires. By comparison, contemporary globalization (1960 on) marks a new epoch in human affairs. Just as the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of the West in the nineteenth century defined a new age in world history, so today the microchip and the satellite are icons of a globalized world order. It is also associated with a shift in economic power from the West to the East with the rise of China and India.

Box 1.7  The Westphalian Constitution of world politics

1 Territoriality: humankind is organized principally into exclusive territorial (political) communities with fixed borders.

2 Sovereignty: within its borders the state or government has an entitlement to supreme, unqualified, and exclusive political and legal authority.

3 Autonomy: the principle of self-determination or self-governance constitutes countries as autonomous containers of political, social, and economic activity in that fixed borders separate the domestic sphere from the world outside.

A world transformed: globalization and distorted global politics

Consider a political map of the world: its most striking feature is the division of the entire earth’s surface into almost 200 neatly defined territorial units, namely sovereign states. To a student of politics in the Middle Ages a map of the world dominated by borders and boundaries would make little sense. Historically, borders are a relatively recent invention, as is the idea that states are sovereign, self-governing, territorially delimited political communities or polities. Although today a convenient fiction, this presumption remains central to orthodox state-centric conceptions of world politics as the pursuit of power and interests between sovereign states. Globalization, however, calls this state-centric conception of world politics into question. Taking globalization seriously therefore requires a conceptual shift in the way we think about world politics.

The Westphalian Constitution of world order

The Peace Treaties of Westphalia and Osnabruck (1648) established the legal basis of modern statehood and by implication the fundamental rules or constitution of modern world politics. Although Pope Innocent referred to the Westphalian settlement at the time as ‘null, reprobate and devoid of meaning for all time’, in the course of the subsequent four centuries it has formed the normative structure or constitution of the modern world order. At the heart of the Westphalian settlement was agreement among Europe’s rulers to recognize each other’s right to rule their own territories free from outside interference. This was codified over time in the doctrine of sovereign statehood. But it was only in the twentieth century, as global empires collapsed, that sovereign statehood and with it national self-determination finally acquired the status of universal organizing principles of world order. Contrary to Pope Innocent’s desires, the Westphalian Constitution by then had come to colonize the entire planet.

Constitutions are important because they establish the location of legitimate political authority within a
polity and the rules that inform the exercise and limits of political power. In codifying and legitimating the principle of sovereign statehood, the Westphalian Constitution gave birth to the modern states-system. It welded the idea of **territoriality** with the notion of legitimate sovereign rule. Westphalian sovereignty located supreme legal and political authority within territorially delimited states. Sovereignty involved the rightful entitlement to exclusive, unqualified, and supreme rule within a delimited territory. It was exclusive in so far as no ruler had the right to intervene in the sovereign affairs of other nations; unqualified in that within their territories rulers had complete authority over their subjects; and supreme in that there was no legal or political authority beyond the state. Of course for many, especially weak states, sovereignty—as the legitimate claim to rule—has not always translated into effective control within their territories. As Krasner recognizes, the Westphalian system has for many states been little more than a form of ‘organized hypocrisy’ (Krasner 1999). Nevertheless this never fundamentally compromised its influence upon the developmental trajectory of world politics. Although the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights modified aspects of the Westphalian Constitution, in qualifying aspects of **state sovereignty**, it remains the founding covenant of world politics. However, many argue that contemporary globalization presents a fundamental challenge to the Westphalian ideal of sovereign statehood and in so doing is transforming world order.

### From (state-centric) geopolitics to (geocentric) global politics

As globalization has intensified over the last five decades, it has become increasingly difficult to maintain the popular fiction of the ‘great divide’: treating political life as having two quite separate spheres of action, the domestic and the international, which operate according to different logics with different rules, actors, and agendas. There is a growing recognition that, as former President Clinton described it:

> the once bright line between domestic and foreign policy is blurring. If I could do anything to change the speech patterns of those of us in public life, I would like almost to stop hearing people talk about foreign policy and domestic policy, and instead start discussing economic policy, security policy, environmental policy.  

*(Quoted in Cusimano 2000: 6)*

As the substantive issues of political life consistently ignore the artificial foreign/domestic divide, from the worldwide coordination of anti-globalization protests to national courts enforcing the rulings of the World Trade Organization, the Westphalian Constitution appears increasingly anachronistic. A post-Westphalian world order is emerging, and with it a distinctive form of global politics.

To talk of global politics is to recognize that politics itself is being globalized, with the consequence that there is much more to the study of world politics than conflict and cooperation between states, even if this remains crucial. In other words, globalization challenges the one-dimensionality of orthodox accounts of world politics that conceive it principally in state-centric terms of geopolitics and the struggle for power between states. By contrast, the concept of global politics focuses our attention upon the global structures and processes of rule-making, problem-solving, the maintenance of security and order in the world system (Brown 1992). It acknowledges the continuing centrality of states and geopolitics, but does not *a priori* privilege either in understanding and explaining contemporary world affairs. For under conditions of political globalization, states
are increasingly embedded in thickening and overlapping worldwide webs of: multilateral institutions and multilateral politics from NATO and the World Bank to the G20; transnational associations and networks, from the International Chamber of Commerce to the World Muslim Congress; global policy networks of officials, corporate and non-governmental actors, dealing with global issues, such as the Global AIDS Fund and the Roll Back Malaria Initiative; and those formal and informal (transgovernmental) networks of government officials dealing with shared global problems, including the Basle Committee of central bankers and the Financial Action Task Force on money-laundering (Fig. 1.1).

Global politics directs our attention to the emergence of a fragile global polity within which ‘interests are articulated and aggregated, decisions are made, values allocated and policies conducted through international or transnational political processes’ (Ougaard 2004: 5). In other words, to how the global order is, or fails to be, governed.

Since the UN’s creation in 1945, a vast nexus of global and regional institutions has developed, increasingly linked to a proliferation of non-governmental agencies and networks seeking to influence the governance of global affairs. While world government remains a fanciful idea, an evolving global governance complex exists—embracing states, international institutions, transnational networks and agencies (both public and private)—that functions, with variable effect, to promote, regulate, or intervene in the common affairs of humanity (Fig. 1.2). Over the last five decades, its scope and impact have expanded dramatically, with the result that its activities have become significantly politicized, as the G20 London Summit and recent Copenhagen Summit on Climate Change attest.
This evolving global governance complex comprises the multitude of formal and informal structures of political coordination among governments, intergovernmental and transnational agencies—public and private—designed to realize common purposes or collectively agreed goals through the making or implementing of global or transnational rules, and the regulation of transborder problems. A good illustration of this is the creation of international labour codes to protect vulnerable workers. The International Convention on the Elimination of Child Labour (ICECL), for instance, was the product of a complex politics involving public and private actors from trade unions, industrial associations, humanitarian groups, governments, legal experts, not forgetting officials and experts within the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Within this global governance complex, private or non-governmental agencies have become increasingly influential in the formulation and implementation of global public policy. The International Accounting Standards Board establishes global accounting rules, while the major credit-rating agencies, such as Moody’s and Standard and Poor’s, determine the credit status of governments and corporations around the globe. This is a form of private global governance in which private organizations regulate, often in the shadow of global
public authorities, aspects of global economic and social affairs. In those realms in which it has become highly significant, mainly the economic and the technological, this private global governance involves a relocation of authority from states and multilateral bodies to non-governmental organizations and private agencies.

Coextensive with the global governance complex is an embryonic transnational civil society. In recent decades a plethora of NGOs, transnational organizations (from the International Chamber of Commerce, international trade unions, and the Rainforest Network to the Catholic Church), advocacy networks (from the women’s movement to Nazis on the net), and citizens’ groups have come to play a significant role in mobilizing, organizing, and exercising political power across national boundaries. This has been facilitated by the speed and ease of modern global communications and a growing awareness of common interests between groups in different countries and regions of the world. At the 2006 Ministerial Meeting of the WTO in Hong Kong, the representatives of environmental, corporate, and other interested parties outnumbered the formal representatives of government. Of course, not all the members of transnational civil society are either civil or representative; some seek to further dubious, reactionary, or even criminal causes while many lack effective accountability. Furthermore, there are considerable inequalities between the agencies of transnational civil society in terms of resources, influence, and access to key centres of global decision-making. Multinational corporations, like Rupert Murdoch’s News International, have much greater access to centres of power, and capacity to shape the global agenda, than does the Rainforest Action Network.

If global politics involves a diversity of actors and institutions, it is also marked by a diversity of political concerns. The agenda of global politics is anchored not just in traditional geopolitical concerns but also in a proliferation of economic, social, cultural, and ecological questions. Pollution, drugs, human rights, and terrorism are among an increasing number of transnational policy issues that, because of globalization, transcend territorial borders and existing political jurisdictions, and thereby require international cooperation for their effective treatment.

Paradoxically, the same global infrastructures that make it possible to organize production on a worldwide basis can also be exploited to lethal effect. National security increasingly begins abroad, not at the border, since borders are as much carriers as barriers to transnational organized violence. This has become increasingly evident in relation to ‘new wars’—complex irregular warfare in the global South. Inter-state war has been almost entirely supplanted by intra-state and trans-state conflict located in the global South, or on the perimeters of the West. These so-called ‘new wars’ are primarily located in weak states and rooted in identity politics, local conflicts, and rivalries. They involve complex irregular warfare between military, para-military, criminal, and private forces that rages through, but often around and across, state borders with little discrimination between civilians and combatants. The United Nations estimates, for instance, that thirty-five people die every hour across the globe as a consequence of irregular armed conflict. These ‘new wars’, whether in Bosnia, Darfur, or Venezuela, are curiously modern since they are sustained largely by the capacity of combatants to exploit global networks to provide finance, arms, émigré support, or aid, as well as to facilitate profiteering, racketeering, and shadow economies, such as the diamond or drugs trade, which pays for arms and influence. Despite their apparently localized quality, ‘new wars’ are in fact a manifestation of the contemporary globalization of organized violence. Disorder in one part of the world (as in Darfur in 2006, or in Kosovo and Somalia in the 1990s) combines with global media coverage and the speed of travel to feed insecurity, creating overlapping global security complexes. These complexes bind together the security of societies across the North–South divide. They also highlight a major disjuncture between the distribution of formal military power and the distribution of effective coercive power in the world today. Al Qaeda, the Triads, private military companies, drug cartels, narco-terrorism, and the illicit global arms trade are all examples of the growth of informal organized violence or post-international violence. They pose, as Keohane starkly notes, a profound challenge since ‘States no longer have a monopoly on the means of mass destruction: more people died in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon than in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941’.

(Keohane 2002: 284)
resolution. Politics today is marked by a proliferation of new types of 'boundary problem.' In the past, of course, nation-states principally resolved their differences over boundary matters by pursuing reasons of state backed by diplomatic initiatives and, ultimately, by coercive means. But this militaristic logic appears singularly inadequate and inappropriate to resolve the many complex issues, from economic regulation to resource depletion and environmental degradation to chemical weapons proliferation, which engender—at seemingly ever greater speeds—an intermeshing of 'national fortunes.'

This is not to argue that the sovereign state is in decline. The sovereign power and authority of national government—the entitlement of states to rule within their own territorial space—is being transformed but by no means eroded. Locked into systems of global and regional governance, states now assert their sovereignty less in the form of a legal claim to supreme power than as a bargaining tool, in the context of transnational systems of rule-making, with other agencies and social forces. Sovereignty is bartered, shared, and divided among the agencies of public power at different levels, from the local to the global. The Westphalian conception of sovereignty as an indivisible, territorially exclusive form of public power is being displaced by a new sovereignty regime, in which sovereignty is understood as the shared exercise of public power and authority. In this respect we are witnessing the emergence of a post-Westphalian world order.

Furthermore, far from globalization leading to 'the end of the state', it elicits a more activist state. This is because, in a world of global enmeshment, simply to achieve domestic objectives national governments are forced to engage in extensive multilateral collaboration and cooperation. But in becoming more embedded in frameworks of global and regional governance, states confront a real dilemma: in return for more effective public policy and meeting their citizens' demands, their capacity for self-governance—that is, state autonomy—is compromised. Today, a difficult trade-off is posed between effective governance and self-governance. In this respect, the Westphalian image of the monolithic, unitary state is being displaced by the image of the disaggregated state in which its constituent agencies increasingly interact with their counterparts abroad, international agencies, and NGOs in the management of common and global affairs (Slaughter 2004) (Fig. 1.3).

Global politics is a term that acknowledges that the scale of political life has altered fundamentally: politics understood as that set of activities concerned primarily with the achievement of order and justice is not confined within territorial boundaries. It questions the utility of the distinction between the domestic and the foreign, inside and outside the territorial state, the national and the international since decisions and actions taken in one region affect the welfare of communities in distant parts of the globe, with the result that domestic politics is internationalized and world politics

**Figure 1.3** The disaggregated state
becomes domesticated. It acknowledges that power in the global system is not the sole preserve of states but is distributed (unevenly) among a diverse array of public and private actors and networks (from international agencies, through corporations to NGOs), with important consequences for who gets what, how, when, and where. It recognizes that political authority has been diffused not only upwards to supra-state bodies, such as the European Union, but also downwards to sub-state bodies, such as regional assemblies, and beyond the state to private agencies, such as the International Accounting Standards Board. It accepts that sovereignty remains a principal juridical attribute of states but concludes that it is increasingly divided and shared between local, national, regional, and global authorities. Finally, it affirms that, in an age of globalization, national polities no longer function as closed systems. On the contrary, it asserts that all politics—understood as the pursuit of order and justice—are played out in a global context.

However, as with globalization, inequality and exclusion are endemic features of contemporary global politics. There are many reasons for this, but three factors in particular are crucial: first, enormous inequalities of power between states; second, global governance is shaped by an unwritten constitution that tends to privilege the interests and agenda of global capitalism; third, the technocratic nature of much global decision-making, from health to security, tends to exclude many with a legitimate stake in the outcomes.

These three factors produce cumulative inequalities of power and exclusion—reflecting the inequalities of power between North and South—with the result that contemporary global politics is more accurately described as distorted global politics: ‘distorted’ in the sense that inevitably those states and groups with greater power resources and access to key sites of global decision-making tend to have the greatest control or influence over the agenda and outcomes of global politics. In short, global politics has few democratic qualities. This sits in tension with a world in which democracy is generally valued. Whether a more democratic or just global politics is imaginable and what it might look like is the concern of normative theorists and is the subject of later chapters in this volume (see Chs 12 and 32).

**Key Points**

- Globalization is transforming but not burying the Westphalian ideal of sovereign statehood. It is producing the disaggregated state.
- Globalization requires a conceptual shift in our thinking about world politics from a principally state-centric perspective to the perspective of geocentric or global politics—the politics of worldwide social relations.
- Global politics is more accurately described as distorted global politics because it is afflicted by significant power asymmetries.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has sought to elucidate the concept of globalization and identify its implications for the study of world politics. It has argued that globalization reconstructs the world as a shared social space. It does so, however, in a far from uniform manner: contemporary globalization is highly uneven—it varies in its intensity and extensity between different spheres of activity; it is highly asymmetrical; and it embodies a highly unequal geography of global inclusion and exclusion. In doing so it is as much a source of conflict and violence as of cooperation and harmony in world affairs.

In focusing upon the consequences of globalization for the study of international relations, this chapter has argued that it engenders a fundamental shift in the constitution of world politics. A post-Westphalian world order is in the making as sovereign statehood is transformed by the dynamics of globalization. A conceptual shift in our thinking is therefore required: from international (inter-state) politics to global politics—the politics of state and non-state actors within a shared global social space. Global politics is imbued with deep inequalities of power such that in its current configuration it is more accurately described as distorted global politics: a politics of domination, contestation, and competition between powerful states and transnational social forces.
Questions

1. Distinguish the concept of globalization from that of regionalization and internationalization.
2. What do you understand by the Westphalian Constitution of world order?
3. Why is global politics today more accurately described as distorted global politics?
4. Outline the principal causes of globalization.
5. Review the sceptical argument and critically evaluate it.
6. What are the principal characteristics of the post-Westphalian order?
7. Identify some of the key elements of political globalization.
8. What do you understand by the term 'global governance complex'?
9. Distinguish the concept of global politics from that of geopolitics and international (inter-state) politics.
10. Is the state being eclipsed by the forces of globalization and global governance?
11. Why is globalization associated with the rise of new powers such as China and India?

Further Reading

**Castells, M.** (2000), *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell). This is a now contemporary classic account of the political economy of globalization that is comprehensive in its analysis of the new global informational capitalism.

**Duffield, M.** (2001), *Global Governance and the New Wars* (London: Zed). A very readable account of how globalization is leading to the fusion of the development and security agendas within the global governance complex.


**Hirst, P., and Thompson, G.** (2009), *Globalization in Question*, 3rd edn (Cambridge: Polity Press). An excellent and sober critique of the hyperglobalist argument, which is thoroughly sceptical about the globalization thesis, viewing it as a return to the *belle époque* and heavily shaped by states.


**James, H.** (2009), *Creation and Destruction of Value* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press). The first serious study from a renowned economic historian to explore the comparisons between the collapse of globalization and world order in the 1930s and the prospects for globalization in the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis.


**Online Resource Centre**

Visit the Online Resource Centre that accompanies this book to access more learning resources on this chapter topic at www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/baylis5e/