

# Globalization: A Double-Edged Sword in the Post-Cold War Landscape

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## Abstract

This essay is divided into several parts to discuss globalization. The first half defines globalization, explores its dimensions, and examines the current phenomenon, particularly in the post-Cold War era. The second half utilizes three different case studies to illustrate the problems associated with globalization. Ultimately, this paper critiques globalization for amplifying individual egoism and leading to dehumanization across various dimensions.

## Keywords

Globalization, Hegemony, Alienation, Multinational Corporations, MNC, Cultural Tensions

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## 1. Introduction

Globalization is a term widely used in contemporary society. When considering the question, “What is globalization?” it becomes evident that there are as many answers as there are individuals who have addressed it, resulting in a multitude of definitions. Previous reviews have demonstrated that globalization is a complex concept; as Martell (2016) noted, it is a “controversial” term. Furthermore, the concept of globalization is often used arbitrarily in everyday life and social science research, leading to a lack of consensus. Some scholars have even suggested abandoning the term altogether, advocating for the decomposition and differentiation of concepts that are more easily grasped (Ritzert & Dean, 2018). The diversity of values and levels of understanding among people makes it impossible to arrive at a singular definition of globalization.

## 2. Definition of Globalization

Numerous researchers have contributed to the understanding and definition of

globalization. To construct a comprehensive theoretical framework and methodology for this specific discipline, it is essential to review the perspectives of various scholars.

Giddens (1990) posited that the strengthening of social ties on a global scale can link places in unique ways, where events in one area frequently affect those far away, and vice versa. Beck (2000) suggested that the influence of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), multinational corporations (MNCs), and terrorism gradually erodes the power of sovereign nation-states in favor of supranational actors and various forms of power, dimensions, and networks.

Moreover, scholars emphasize a set of processes driving the transformation of the spatial organization of social relations and transactions (Held et al., 1999). Scholte (2005) argued that globalization, as it relates to social geography, is being reconfigured by the increasing connections among humans across the planet and beyond. For instance, MNCs disperse their supply chains globally to secure comparative advantages.

Bhagwati (2004) defined globalization as the integration of a country's economy into the international economy through trade, direct foreign investment, short-term capital flows, international labor mobility, and the flow of technology. From C. Wright Mills' perspective, Treviño (2013) stated that "the circulation of people, lifestyles, things, and ideas throughout the world" constitutes the essence of globalization.

According to Mooney & Evans (2007),

"The terms, both slogan and organizing principle, suggest that the phenomenon of globalization is a bidirectional process. In contrast to the imposition of a neoliberal economic and political order imposed by global elites, globalization from below captures the overlapping politics of contention and resistance amongst marginalized communities, social and labor movements, environmentalists and many others: global power begets global resistance. (p. 117)".

Globalization is defined differently across various theoretical and preceptive approaches, by contextualizing Giddens' emphasis on the interconnectedness of social ties, Bhagwati's focus on economic integration as well as the bidirectional nature of globalization highlighted by Mooney & Evans, along with Treviño's perspective on the circulation of people and ideas, we can better illustrate how these definitions resonate with Steger's six dimensions: politics, culture, environment, economics, religion, and ideology (Steger & James, 2019). This connection not only underscores the complexity of globalization but also demonstrates how political, cultural, economic, environmental, religious, and ideological dimensions interact to shape global relations. Integrating these insights will enhance our understanding of globalization as a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by diverse forces.

Consequently, different scholars have provided observations from diverse perspectives to interpret globalization. In summary, they have identified six key di-

mensions of globalization: politics, culture, environment, economics, religion, and ideology (Steger, 2003).

### 3. What Happened After the 1990s?

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, its republics lost Soviet aid and implemented reforms to open up import-export and foreign investment markets to improve their economies. Under the neoliberal framework of the Washington Consensus, advocated by the United States in 1989, capitalism, as represented by the U.S., began to dominate major global economies (Callinicos, 1994; Gordon, 1988; Hirst, 1997; Hoogvelt, 1997; Held & McGrew, 2002). In response to rising energy costs from the oil crisis, European and American companies shifted capital and technology to Asia, resulting in significant economic development in many Asian countries. Concurrently, the Internet transitioned from military to civilian use, becoming widespread globally.

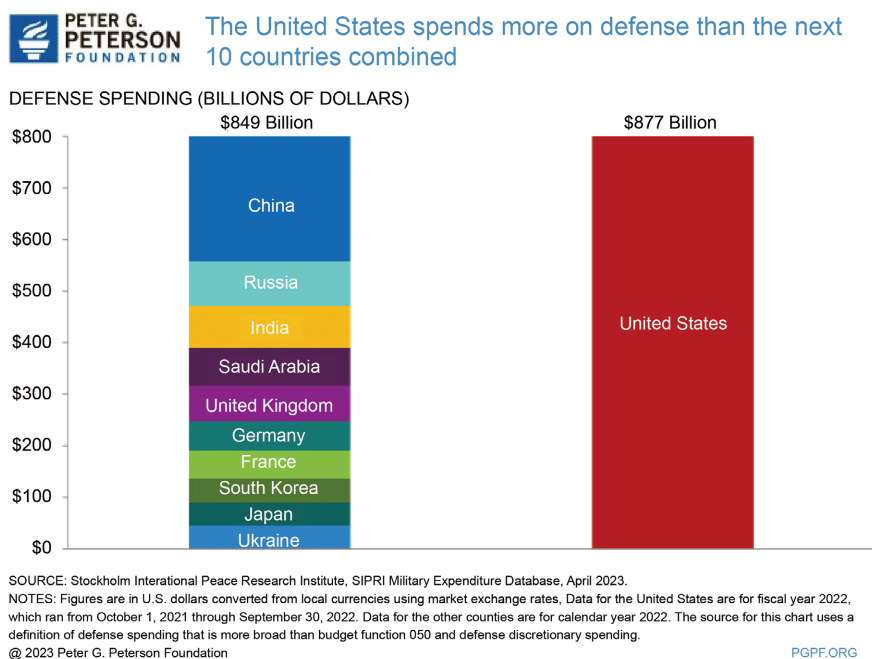
However, as Ero & Mutiga (2023) noted, the spread of democracy across the African continent led to the ousting of those who violated democratic norms, resulting in over a decade of political and economic instability in most African nations. While the West benefited from globalization and economic development, Heywood (2011) cautioned against ignoring the fact that many African countries remain mired in economic and conflict-related issues, potentially exacerbated by globalization.

To illustrate the multifaceted implications of post-1990 globalization on different levels and their interrelations, this paper examines three distinct case studies: the military operations of the U.S. Navy SEALs, the economic strategies of Japanese multinational corporations like Casio, and the cultural tensions exemplified by the rise of Chinese nationalism.

Case 1: The U.S. Navy SEALs, a special force of the U.S. Navy, are renowned for their exceptional combat capabilities and professionalism (Hooker, 2023). They are deployed to 75 countries to carry out missions in the interests of the United States. Few would contest that, apart from the U.S. military, no other nation's military can currently achieve such a level of globalization. Heywood (2011) echoes Machiavelli's assertion that human nature is characterized by greed, cunning, and malice, leading to unavoidable conflict. Thus, the SEALs' missions can be viewed as manifestations of national self-interest. The SEALs benefit from the U.S.'s significant military investment, abundant resources, and advanced military technology; U.S. military expenditures reached USD 877 billion in 2022, constituting nearly 40% of global military spending (Dyvik, 2023) (Figure 1).

Additionally, the scientific and technological prowess of the United States provides robust support for SEAL operations. Technologies such as drone reconnaissance, satellite navigation, and advanced communications equipment enhance the SEALs' operational capabilities worldwide. In the context of globalization, SEAL operations rely heavily on the U.S.'s global intelligence network. U.S. intelligence agencies and informants around the world supply timely and accurate intelli-

gence, enabling the SEALs to formulate effective action plans and make informed decisions. This global intelligence structure facilitates rapid and precise mission execution.



**Figure 1.** US military expenditure.

The globalization of the SEALs also reflects U.S. sovereign power. As the leading political and economic force globally, the U.S.'s military globalization supports its hegemony. The SEALs' operations not only protect vital strategic interests but also uphold the U.S.'s global influence.

However, the SEALs' global operations have sparked controversy. Firstly, many missions are conducted secretly and without borders, raising questions about the legality of entering other countries. Secondly, the lethal nature of SEAL missions has prompted ethical concerns regarding the legality of their operations. Lastly, these missions often result in civilian casualties, leading to moral questions surrounding potential war crimes. According to [Hooker \(2023\)](#), 91 civilians and 26 soldiers were killed by SEALs in Pakistan in 2011, resulting in a diplomatic crisis.

Moreover, the externalities arising from SEAL missions, which are primarily driven by U.S. interests, warrant consideration. Such missions can significantly impact local politics, economies, and societies, necessitating thorough assessments and communication from the U.S. government and SEALs to mitigate potential adverse effects. Additionally, Hollywood portrayals of the SEALs often glorify their actions, promoting the notion of the U.S. as a global police force and obscuring the controversies surrounding their missions. This raises questions about whether U.S. national interests supersede international law and the legitimacy of circumventing UN governance. [Agamben \(2005\)](#) critiques democratic regimes for using counter-terrorism as a justification for expanding their jurisdic-

tion globally and for employing the war on terrorism as a means to suppress dissent and monitor populations.

In sum, the operations of the Navy SEALs not only reflect U.S. military dominance but also illustrate the complex interplay of political and ideological dimensions within globalization. By framing military interventions as efforts to promote democracy and stability, the U.S. navigates both support and resistance in the global arena, highlighting the multifaceted nature of globalization itself.

Case 2: The Japanese Economic Miracle, which began in the 1970s, saw Japanese companies benefit from favorable trade and industrial policies, characterized by quality systems and support from Keiretsu affiliations (Keiretsu refers to interdependent business groups with cross-shareholding structures involving bankers, manufacturers, and distributors) (Crawford, 1998; Filev, 2020).

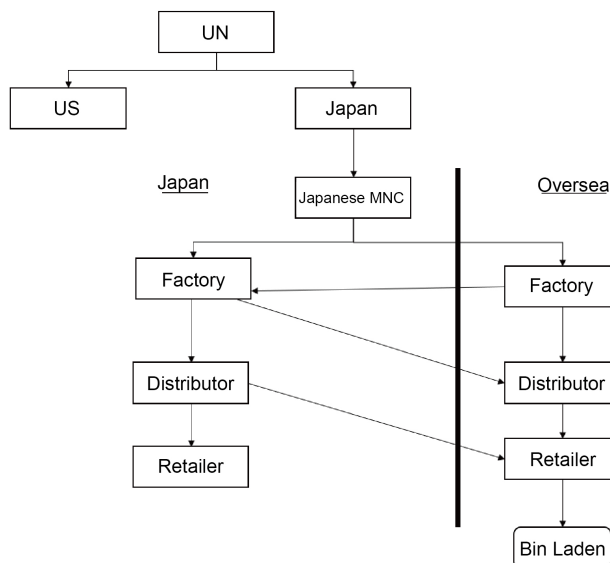
Casio, a Japanese multinational corporation (MNC), has been at the forefront of the global electronics industry for decades. In the 1970s, the Japanese government encouraged companies like Casio to export their products globally, providing essential policy support. This initiative has enabled Japanese firms to expand their operations and foster positive perceptions of Japan.

Japan's robust manufacturing and research and development foundation allows companies to create innovative products across various industries. Like many Japanese products, Casio is renowned for its quality and reliability, which have helped establish a strong global brand reputation.

Casio's global expansion strategy involves establishing production bases in different countries to leverage economies of scale and division of labor. This approach permits Casio to produce goods at significantly lower costs and distribute them worldwide through various channels (Casio, n.d.). Additionally, as a Japanese brand, Casio benefits from the positive associations tied to Japanese technology and quality, leading to widespread recognition and trust in its products (Maheswaran, 1994). This combination of low-cost production and favorable country-of-origin effects has made Casio's electronic watches popular worldwide, even among notorious figures like Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan (Wesolowski, 2020) (Figure 2, Figure 3).



**Figure 2.** Osama Bin Laden and his Casio digital watch.



**Figure 3.** Globalization of Casio.

David Ricardo's theory of comparative advantage posits that producing specific goods at lower opportunity costs benefits all participants in trade (Grieco and Ikenberry, 2003).

The Theory of Comparative Advantage, proposed by David Ricardo, posits that even if one country is less efficient in producing all goods compared to another, both countries can still benefit from mutual trade through specialization. The core of this theory lies in relative cost differences, meaning a country should focus on producing goods for which it has a lower opportunity cost. For example, suppose country A is more efficient in producing both cloth and wine than country B. As long as the proportional efficiency gaps between the two countries differ for various products (such as a greater relative advantage for A in cloth production), trade can still yield benefits for both.

However, Marx's theory of surplus value [Marx \(1863\)](#) reveals the alienation of this framework in practice. Multinational corporations (MNCs) may exploit labor in Third World countries by lowering wages, extending working hours, and neglecting labor conditions, thereby maximizing the extraction of surplus value—the value created by workers that exceeds their wages. This exploitation often relies on institutional loopholes such as weak labor regulations and power asymmetries, for examples lack of government oversight, manifesting in practices like evading minimum wage laws, stripping away social security, and even violently repressing unions. In this context, the so-called “comparative advantage” effectively obscures the global capital's plunder of surplus value ([Marx & McLellan 1995](#)).

Casio capitalizes on low production costs by establishing facilities in various countries, creating employment opportunities. However, research indicates that employees are often exploited, facing issues such as unequal pay, neglect of psychological well-being, and inadequate workplace safety. Given the locations of fac-

tories in developing nations, production processes may harm the environment by disregarding local regulations, depleting resources, or adhering to poor environmental practices (Morimoto, 2005).

In summary, Japanese brands can create compelling business narratives that reflect the policies and technological advancements of the time. The Japanese government's export-oriented policies and Japan's leadership in technological innovation have significantly supported the globalization of brands like Casio (Crawford, 1998).

Thus, while Casio's globalization strategy has led to economic success, it simultaneously raises ethical concerns about labor practices, exemplifying the dual nature of globalization.

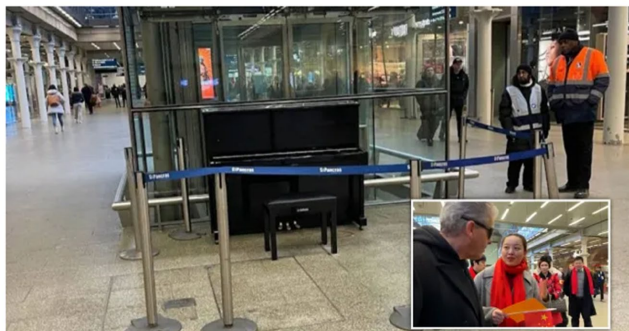
Case 3: The global presence of Chinese influence has become increasingly evident with the rapid growth of China's economy. An incident in 2024 at a London train station involving a UK pianist, Dr. K, exemplifies this influence. He was confronted by a group of Chinese individuals who objected to his filming in public, accusing him of racism for merely identifying their display of a communist flag. While discriminatory language typically includes overtly negative terms, Dr. K's statement merely presented factual observations. The group perceived his remarks as discriminatory, illustrating a heightened sensitivity surrounding national identity. Although police intervened, they appeared to side with the Chinese individuals (King, 2024) (Figure 4).

### Piano at centre of St Pancras argy bargy is sealed off after Chinese TV row



Jasper King

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The piano at centre of St Pancras station is now sealed off following the argument (Picture: Twitter/@Dan\_in\_BKK)

**Figure 4.** The incident between Dr. K and the Chinese in London train station.

As the incident was livestreamed on YouTube, it quickly became a global topic of discussion, excluding China. Dr. K used the idiom, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do," to address the cultural clash, only to be met with confusion, as the Chinese asked, "You're a Roman?"

To sum up, the incident involving Dr. K illustrates how globalization not only facilitates cultural exchange but also intensifies nationalistic sentiments and identity conflicts, revealing the complex challenges that arise in a globally interconnected world.

#### 4. Conclusion

Debates surrounding the advantages and disadvantages of globalization persist. The three cases presented illustrate some benefits and potential issues. While globalization can enhance quality of life, these advantages are often incidental and passive for consumers. As [Adam Smith \(1776\)](#) stated,

“It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own self-interest. We address ourselves not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities, but of their advantages” (p. 19).

This perspective underscores the notion that businesses prioritize egoism over altruism. Consequently, companies may employ marketing strategies that exaggerate and mislead consumers to achieve their objectives. By leveraging division of labor and task decomposition, businesses can manipulate employees without relying on individual skills. The homogeneity of processes can obscure the connection between employees and their work, leading to feelings of alienation, as noted by [Marx \(1932\)](#). [Bauman \(1998\)](#) further argued that work alienation results in routine, devoid of interest and dignity, fostering instability and resentment. Ultimately, employees may find little meaning in their work. [Mills \(1951\)](#) elaborated on how modern organizational structures and bureaucracies strip employees of autonomy, leaving them unable to plan their work. As a result, employees often feel controlled by their companies.

[Ritzer \(2007\)](#) contended that globalization merely spreads nothingness globally, citing examples such as ATMs, chain stores, and banking services that are homogeneous and easily replicated. For instance, McDonald's employs self-ordering machines and apps that eliminate human interaction. While some jobs may still allow for a degree of interaction, they often depend on scripted dialogues.

In conclusion, although globalization offers benefits in various aspects of life, it is crucial to acknowledge the underlying drawbacks. Issues such as dehumanization, amplified egoism, and externalities, as discussed in the cases, pose significant threats to civilization.

#### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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