

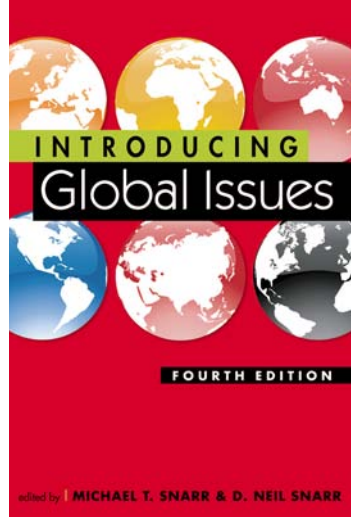
EXCERPTED FROM

# Introducing Global Issues

FOURTH EDITION

edited by  
Michael T. Snarr  
and D. Neil Snarr

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ISBN: 978-1-58826-559-3 pb



LYNNE RIENNER PUBLISHERS

1800 30th Street, Ste. 314

Boulder, CO 80301

USA

telephone 303.444.6684

fax 303.444.0824

This excerpt was downloaded from the  
Lynne Rienner Publishers website  
[www.rienner.com](http://www.rienner.com)

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# Introducing Globalization and Global Issues

*Michael T. Snarr*

- Over 200,000 people are added to the world's total population every day (US Census Bureau 2008b).
- People in more than 200 countries and territories have access to the Cable News Network (CNN 2008b).
- In recent years the number of wars and war deaths has declined (HSC 2006).
- In the developing world there are 820 million hungry people. While this number is higher than a decade ago, the percentage of hungry people has declined (FAO 2006a).
- In 1990, 32 percent of the world's population (1.25 billion people) lived on the equivalent of US\$1 per day. By 2004 that number had dropped to 19 percent (980 million people) (UN 2007).
- An infant living in Africa is thirteen times more likely to die than one living in Europe or North America (PRB 2004).
- More civilians died in the twentieth century as a result of war than in the four previous centuries combined (Small and Singer 1982).
- Approximately 3,700 square miles of the Amazon rainforest were destroyed between August 2006 and July 2007, the lowest rate since 1988 ("Brazil Says" 2007).
- Dramatic numbers of species are becoming extinct worldwide.
- During the past three decades, life expectancy in the developing world has increased by eight years and illiteracy has decreased by nearly 50 percent (UNDP 2003).
- Nearly 3 million people die each year from AIDS (UN 2007).
- Approximately 27,000 children die every day from preventable diseases (UN 2007).

- In the 1990s, more children died from diarrhea than all the people who died due to armed conflict since World War II (UNDP 2003).
- In poor countries, the percentage of children attending primary schools increased from 80 percent in 1991 to 88 percent in 2005 (UN 2007).

Each of the items above is related to a global issue discussed in this book, and many of them affect the reader. But what is a *global issue*? The term is used here to refer to two types of phenomena. First, there are those issues that are transnational—that is, they cross political boundaries (country borders). These issues affect individuals in more than one country. A clear example is air pollution produced by a factory in the United States and blown into Canada. Second, there are problems and issues that do not necessarily cross borders but affect a large number of individuals throughout the world. Ethnic rivalries and human rights violations, for example, may occur within a single country but have a far wider impact.

For the contributors to this volume, the primary goal is to introduce several of the most pressing global issues and demonstrate how strongly they are interconnected. Since these issues affect each and every one of us, we also hope to motivate the reader to learn more about them.

## ■ Is the World Shrinking?

There has been a great deal of discussion in recent years about globalization, which can be defined as “the intensification of economic, political, social, and cultural relations across borders” (Holm and Sørensen 1995: 1). Evidence of globalization is seen regularly in our daily lives. In the United States, grocery stores and shops at the local mall are stocked with items produced abroad. Likewise, hats and T-shirts adorned with the logos of Nike, the Los Angeles Lakers, and the New York Yankees, for example, are easily found outside the United States. In many countries, Britney Spears and other US music groups dominate the radio waves, CNN and MTV dominate television screens, and *Harry Potter* and other Hollywood films dominate the theaters. Are we moving toward a single global culture? In the words of Benjamin Barber, we are being influenced by “the onrush of economic and ecological forces that demand integration and uniformity and that mesmerize the world with fast music, fast computers, and fast food—with MTV, Macintosh, and McDonald’s pressing nations into one commercially homogeneous global network: one McWorld tied together by technology, ecology, communication, and commerce” (1992: 53).

For the editors of this book, globalization took on a more personal face in 2007 when we took a group of students to Mexico. As we sat on a bus bound for the pyramids of Teotihuacán, just outside of Mexico City, we met

a Canadian named Jag. We learned on the bus ride that Jag was a Hindu from India who lived in Montreal. His job was to assist the newly formed Inuit (Eskimo) government of Nunavut, a new Canadian territory created through negotiations with the Canadian government. Think about it: a Hindu Indian living in French-speaking Montreal, assisting the Inuit government, and visiting a pyramid built by the Teotihuacán peoples, while vacationing in Mexico City—now that's globalization!

Technology is perhaps the most visible aspect of globalization, and in many ways is its driving force. Communications technology has revolutionized our information systems. CNN reaches hundreds of millions of households in over 200 countries and territories throughout the world. "Computer, television, cable, satellite, laser, fiber-optic, and microchip technologies [are] combining to create a vast interactive communications and information network that can potentially give every person on earth access to every other person, and make every datum, every byte, available to every set of eyes" (Barber 1992: 58). Technology has also aided the increase in international trade and international capital flows, and has enhanced the spread of Western, primarily US, culture.

Thomas Friedman, in his boldly titled bestseller *The World Is Flat*, argues that the world is undergoing its third phase of globalization: "Globalization 3.0 is shrinking the world from a size small to a size tiny and flattening the playing field at the same time" (2005: 10). Whereas in the past globalization was characterized by companies becoming more global, this third phase is unique due to "the newfound power for *individuals* to collaborate and compete globally" (2005: 10; original emphasis). For instance, radiologists in India and Australia interpret CAT-scan images from the United States, telephone operators in India answer calls for major US corporations, and Japanese-speakers at call centers in China serve Japanese customers. Thus the playing field is being leveled and individuals and small companies from all over the world, including poor countries, can now compete in the global economy.

Of course, Earth is not literally shrinking (nor flat), but in light of the rate at which travel and communication speeds have increased, the world has in a sense become smaller. Many scholars assert that we are living in a qualitatively different time, in which humans are interconnected more than ever before: "There is a distinction between the contemporary experience of change and that of earlier generations: never before has change come so rapidly . . . on such a global scale, and with such global visibility" (CGG 1995: 12). Or as Friedman puts it, "There is something about the flattening of the world that is going to be qualitatively different from other such profound changes: the speed and breadth with which it is taking hold. . . . This flattening process is happening at warp speed and directly or indirectly touching a lot more people on the planet at once" (2005: 46).

This seemingly uncritical acceptance of the concept of globalization

and a shrinking world is not without its critics, who point out that labor, trade, and capital moved at least as freely, if not more so, during the second half of the nineteenth century than they do now. Take, for example, the following quote, which focuses on the dramatic changes that have taken place in the past three decades to make the world more economically interdependent: “The complexity of modern finance makes New York dependent on London, London upon Paris, Paris upon Berlin, to a greater degree than has ever yet been the case in history. This interdependence is the result of the daily use of those contrivances of civilization . . . the instantaneous dissemination of financial and commercial information . . . and generally the incredible increase in the rapidity of communication” (Angell 1909: 44–45). If this statement were to appear in a newspaper today, no one would give it a second thought. But it was written at the start of the twentieth century—illustrating the belief of some critics that globalization is not a new phenomenon.

Some skeptics caution that, while interdependence and technological advancement have increased in some parts of the world, this is not true for the vast majority of third world countries (the terms “third world,” “the South,” “the developing world,” and “the less-developed countries” are used interchangeably throughout this book in reference to the poorer countries, in contrast to “the first world,” “the North,” “the developed world,” and “the more-developed countries” in reference to the United States, Canada, Western Europe, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand). For example, Hamid Mowlana argues that “global” is not “universal” (1995: 42). Although a small number of people in third world countries may have access to much of the new technology and truly live in the “global village,” the large majority of populations in the South do not. Research on access to computer and cell phone usage illustrates this point. Tables 1.1 and 1.2 show findings from a forty-seven-country survey of these indicators of globalization. Table 1.1 clearly shows large differences in the numbers of people who use computers. Further, there is little indication that the gap will close significantly in the near future. Table 1.2 tells a moderately different story for cell phones. The gap between haves and have-nots certainly exists, but it is not as extreme as for computer use, and is closing much more rapidly.

In most of the poorer countries of Africa and Asia, the number of cellular mobile subscribers per 1,000 people is in single digits. In contrast, in many of the developed countries, nearly half of all people use this technology (UNDP 2004). A good example of this contrast was seen in the recent war in Afghanistan. While ultramodern US jets flew above Kabul, many Northern Alliance troops entered the city on horses and bicycles.

Similarly, one can argue that the increased flow of information, a characteristic of globalization, goes primarily in one direction. Even those in the South who have access to television or radio are at a disadvantage. The

**Table 1.1 Percentage of People Who Use Computers, Selected Countries, 2002–2007**

	Percentage Who Use Computers, 2007	Percentage Change, 2002–2007
South Korea	81	+9
United States	80	+7
Canada	76	+1
Japan	66	+15
Lebanon	61	+11
China	40	+5
Nigeria	37	+14
Russia	36	+17
India	28	+6
Indonesia	11	–1
Pakistan	9	+2
Tanzania	6	+1
Bangladesh	5	–3

Source: Pew Research Center (2007), available at <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/258.pdf>.

**Table 1.2 Percentage of People Who Own Cell Phones, Selected Countries, 2002–2007**

	Percentage Who Use Cell Phones, 2007	Percentage Change, 2002–2007
South Korea	97	+4
Japan	86	+13
Lebanon	84	+22
United States	81	+20
China	67	+17
Nigeria	67	+56
Russia	65	+57
Canada	60	+12
India	60	+48
Tanzania	42	+32
Bangladesh	36	+26
Pakistan	34	+29
Indonesia	27	+19

Source: Pew Research Center (2007), available at <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/258.pdf>.

globalization of communication in the less-developed countries typically is a one-way proposition: the people do not control any of the information; they only receive it. It is also true that, worldwide, the ability to control or generate broadcasts rests in the hands of a tiny minority.



While lack of financial resources is an important impediment to globalization, there are other obstacles. Paradoxically, Benjamin Barber, who argues that we are experiencing global integration via “McDonaldization,” asserts we are at the same time experiencing global disintegration. He cites the breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, as well as the many other ethnic and national conflicts (see Chapter 3), as evidence of the forces countering globalization. Many subnational groups (groups within nations) desire to govern themselves; others see threats to their religious values and identity and therefore reject the secular nature of globalization (Barber 1992). As a result, Hamid Mowlana argues that globalization “has produced not uniformity, but a yearning for a return to non-secular values. Today, there is a rebirth of revitalized fundamentalism in all the world’s major religions, whether Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Shintoism, or Confucianism. At the same time the global homogeneity has reached the airwaves, these religious tenets have reemerged as defining identities” (1995: 46).

None of these criticisms mean that our contemporary world is not different in some important aspects. There is widespread agreement that communications, trade, and capital are moving at unprecedented speed and volume. However, these criticisms do provide an important warning against overstating or making broad generalizations about the processes and effects of globalization.

## ■ Is Globalization Good or Bad?

There are some aspects of globalization that most will agree are good (for example, the spread of medical technology) or bad (for example, increased global trade in illegal drugs). Events during the 2001–2002 war in Afghanistan revealed the dramatic contrast between friends and foes of globalization. Due to the Taliban’s rejection of many aspects of Western culture, some Afghans apparently buried their TVs and VCRs in their backyards. When Kabul was captured by the Northern Alliance, it was reported that one Afghani anxiously retrieved his TV and VCR in order to view his copy of *Titanic* (Filkins 2001). Judging whether or not globalization is good, however, is complex.

Table 1.3 identifies three areas that are affected by globalization—political, economic, and cultural—and gives examples of aspects considered positive and negative. A key aspect of political globalization is the weakened ability of the state to control both what crosses its borders and what happens inside them. In other words, globalization can reduce the state’s sovereignty (its ability to govern matters within its borders). This can be viewed as good, because undemocratic governments are finding it increasingly difficult to control the flow of information to and from

**Table 1.3 Advantages and Disadvantages of Globalization**

Effects of Globalization	Advantages	Disadvantages
Political	Weakens power of authoritarian governments	Unwanted external influence difficult to keep out
Economic	Jobs, capital, more choices for consumers	Exploitative; only benefits a few; gap between rich and poor
Cultural	Exposure to other cultures	Cultural imperialism

prodemocracy groups. Satellite dishes, e-mail, and the World Wide Web are three examples of technology that have eroded state sovereignty. But decreased sovereignty also means that the state has difficulty controlling the influx of illegal drugs and unwanted immigrants, including terrorists.

In the realm of economics, increased globalization has given consumers more choices. Also, multinational corporations are creating jobs in poor areas where people never before had such opportunities. Some critics reject these points, arguing that increased foreign investment and trade benefit only a small group of wealthy individuals and that, as a result, the gap between rich and poor grows both within countries and between countries. These critics point out that the combined wealth of the fifteen richest people in the world is more than the gross domestic product (the total goods and services produced in a given year) of sub-Saharan Africa (Parker 2002). Related to this is the argument that many well-paying, blue-collar jobs are moving from the North to the poor countries of Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

At the cultural level, those who view increased cultural contact as positive say that it gives people more opportunities to learn about (and purchase goods from) other cultures. But critics of cultural globalization see things differently. Samuel Huntington (1998) has argued that the shrinking world will bring a “clash of civilizations.” In this scenario, clashes will occur among many civilizations, including the largely Christian West against Islam. Other critics are concerned with cultural imperialism, in which dominant groups (primarily wealthy countries) force their culture on others. A primary tool of cultural influence is the North’s multibillion-dollar advertising budgets used to influence and to some extent destroy non-Western cultures. The fear of cultural imperialism is certainly a key component in the animosity of some Arabs toward the United States. Other critics are increasingly fearful that more and more national languages will become extinct as foreign languages, especially English, penetrate borders. It is estimated that at least one language is lost every month (Worldwatch Institute 2006). In response to cultural influences, countries like Iran have banned Western music from government radio and television stations in an attempt to stop

unwanted outside influences. Even Western countries like France have adopted policies to regulate unwanted foreign cultural influences.

The degree to which cultural values can be “exported” is the subject of some debate. Huntington argues that “drinking Coca-Cola does not make Russians think like Americans any more than eating sushi makes Americans think like Japanese. Throughout human history, fads and material goods have spread from one society to another without significantly altering the basic culture of the recipient society” (1996: 28–29). Similarly, others, such as Hamid Mowlana, argue that globalization brings only superficial change: “McDonald’s may be in nearly every country, but in Japan, sushi is served alongside hamburgers. In many countries, hamburgers are not even on the menu” (1995: 46). Thus the global product is often altered to take on a local flavor. The term “glocalization” has combined the words *global* and *local* to describe such hybrid products.

In sum, globalization offers a multitude of advantages to people throughout the world, from greater wealth to more choices in consumer products. At the same time, globalization exposes people to greater vulnerability and insecurity. Our jobs become less secure, diseases travel faster, and traditional family structures are weakened (Kirby 2006). It is left to the reader to determine whether globalization is having a positive or negative effect on the issues discussed in this book. Is globalization enhancing human capacity to deal with a particular problem? Or is it making it more difficult? Of course, each individual’s perspective will be influenced by whether he or she evaluates these issues based on self-interest, national interest, a religious view, or a global humanitarian viewpoint. Readers must decide, based on what is most important to them, how to evaluate moral questions of good versus bad. For example, when considering the issue of free trade (Chapter 6), those concerned first and foremost with self-interest will ask, “How does free trade affect me?” For nationalist readers the question will be, “How does free trade affect my country?” For religious readers, the question will be, “How does my religion instruct me on this issue?” Finally, global humanitarians will ask, “What is best for humanity in general?”

## ■ Interconnectedness Among Issues

As mentioned above, a primary purpose of this book is to explore the interconnectedness of the various issues discussed here. For example, the chapter on poverty should not be considered separate from the chapter on population, even though these two issues are treated separately. Here are several examples of how issues discussed in this book are interconnected:

- The growth in the world’s population (Chapter 9) has been significantly affected, especially in Africa, by the AIDS crisis (Chapter 12).

- Many of the value judgments concerning trade issues (Chapter 6) are intricately linked to human rights issues (Chapter 4).
- Ethnic conflict (Chapter 3) (as well as other types of conflict) often leads to internal migration as well as international population movements (Chapter 9).
- One of the recommendations for reducing poverty (Chapter 8) is to educate women and give them more decisionmaking power over their lives (Chapter 10).

The interconnectedness of these issues is even more extensive than these examples demonstrate. For instance, while an increase in AIDS will affect population growth, the connections do not end there. AIDS epidemics also lead to increased government expenditures, which can lead to increased indebtedness, which will likely lead to more poverty, and so on. Thus, each global issue discussed in this book has multiple consequences, as well as a ripple effect.

## ■ Key Players

Of the key players or actors involved in these global issues, the most salient are countries. In the following pages you will continually read about the countries of the world and their efforts to solve these various global issues. Often, countries get together and form international governmental organizations (IGOs). The logic is that by cooperating through an IGO—like the United Nations, the World Bank, or the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF)—countries are better equipped to achieve a common goal, like preventing war or alleviating poverty, that they could not accomplish on their own. The reader will notice that IGOs are also mentioned throughout the book.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working on global issues are part of what is called civil society. For instance, in recent decades there has been a dramatic increase in NGOs seeking to make the world a better place (NGOs are sometimes referred to as international nongovernmental organizations [INGOs]). NGOs, as their name implies, work outside the government and comprise individual citizens working together on one or more problems. There are many very well known NGOs working on global issues: the Red Cross, Greenpeace, Amnesty International, World Vision, and Doctors Without Borders are just a few of the thousands that exist. Because these NGOs are often made up of highly motivated people in the middle of a war or refugee camp, they can often achieve results that countries cannot. NGOs have become extremely active on all of the issues discussed in this book, and often cooperate with IGOs and individual countries.

Other nongovernmental actors include businesses, often referred to as transnational corporations (TNCs). Nike, Apple, Toyota, and many other

TNCs have gained increasing power in recent years to affect global issues. Many critics complain that, due to their economic strength and global networks, TNCs exercise too much power.

Finally, individuals can have an impact on global issues as well. Several examples of individuals working to resolve various global issues can be found in the following chapters.

## ■ Outline of the Book

This book has been organized into five parts. Part 1 focuses on conflict and security issues. It considers some of the primary sources of conflict, such as weapons of mass destruction, nationalism, terrorism, and human rights abuses, and some of the many approaches to establishing and maintaining peace. Part 2 concentrates on economic issues, ranging from international trade and capital flows to one of the major concerns that confronts humanity—poverty. Related political and social issues are also examined. Part 3 deals with development issues, such as population, health, and women and children—issues that tend to plague (but are not confined to) the poorer countries. Part 4 focuses on environmental issues, such as the global commons, sustainable development, global warming, and ozone depletion, and on global attempts to solve them. Part 5 discusses possible future world orders, sources of hope and challenges in the coming decades, and innovative actions that are being taken to make a positive impact on global issues.

## ■ Discussion Questions

1. What examples of globalization can you identify in your life?
2. Do you think globalization will continue to increase? If so, in what areas?
3. Do you think globalization has more positive attributes or more negative attributes?
4. Can you think of additional examples of how the global issues discussed in different chapters are interconnected?

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