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[Flew, Terry](#)

(2018)

Post-globalisation.

Javnost, 25(1-2), pp. 102-109.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2018.1418958>

POST-GLOBALISATION

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This paper argues that the period from the mid 2000s to the present marks the end of “peak globalisation”, and that we need to move beyond globalisation paradigms and consider the implications for communication and media studies of being in a period of post-globalisation.

This does not mean that globalising forces have necessarily declined, but that we need to be more alert to how nation-states and national cultures are shaping as well as being shaped by such forces.

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KEYWORDS globalisation; post-globalisation; nationalism; cosmopolitan identities; global media policy

The Return of Populist Nationalism

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The 25th anniversary of *Javnost* comes at a time when the field of global communication and media studies may be set for its most significant changes since the early 1990s. The time at which this journal was founded (1992) was a period in which scholars were beginning to seriously discuss the end of the nation-state, challenged by multinational corporations, global financial networks, multilateral trade agreements, the rise of supranational political entities such as the European Union, and the challenge to traditional nationally based political authority by global civil society movements. Communications media were central to all of these changes, and the rise of the global Internet was seen as a catalytic force promoting the shift from territorially bound “legacy media” to convergent media moving seamlessly around the world through the global infrastructure of digital networks.

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Twenty years on, the dominant themes of our time are the rise of political populism, the resurgence of nationalism in a variety of forms, crackdowns on civil society organisations in countries such as Hungary, Poland, Russia, Egypt and China, crises of refugee migration in Europe, the U.S., Australia and elsewhere, and moves away from multilateralism. Whether such developments are the consequence of the end of neoliberalism, the rise of racism, growing public doubt about the role of experts, a social media-fuelled decline in civic tolerance or a grassroots democratic resurgence against unaccountable elites is much debated. Two of its most significant manifestations in 2016 were the decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union on the basis of a narrow referendum result in June—the so-called “Brexit” referendum—and the election of Donald Trump as U.S. President in November on an “America First” nationalist platform. Significantly, Trump’s first major action on coming to office in January 2017 was to withdraw the United States from the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), a binding multilateral trade and investment agreement that his predecessor, Barack Obama, had been negotiating with 12 other nations in the Asia-Pacific region.

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While the long-term trends can be hard to discern, it is notable that the business media has been drawing attention to the limits of globalisation. *The Economist* observed in its 2 March 2017 edition that:

The new nationalists are on the march in Europe and America. They argue that globalisation has benefited the elites and penalised the ordinary workers and that governments should put America/Britain/France first ... The world may have entered a third phase of the post-1945 economy, after the Bretton Woods phase (fixed exchange rates and recovery) from 1945–early 1970s and the globalisation phase from 1982–2007. Each phase ended in a crisis (stagflation in the 1970s, a credit crunch after 2008). The next era could see globalisation in retreat for the first time since 1945. ↴

The *Harvard Business Review* similarly warned its readers that:

Public sentiment about globalization has taken a sharp turn. The election of Donald Trump, Brexit, and the rise of ultra-right parties in Europe are all signs of growing popular displeasure with the free movement of trade, capital, people, and information. Even among business leaders, doubts about the benefits of global interconnectedness surfaced during the 2008 financial meltdown and haven't fully receded. (Ignatius 2017)

Peak Globalisation in the 1990s and 2000s

One of the features of debates about globalisation is the awareness that it may not necessary be new. The Roman Empire, the Silk Road, the voyages of Vasco da Gama, Christopher Columbus and James Cook, slavery, colonialism, the Age of Empires ... all of these entailed both the expansion of global trade and commerce, and the extension of political and cultural connections across geographical and continental boundaries. Indeed, Marx and Engels have claimed to being the first theorists of globalisation when they observed, in *The Communist Manifesto* published in 1848, that “the need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the surface of the globe ... [and] its exploitation of the world-market gives a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country” (1983, 22). In communication and media studies, Marshall McLuhan's concept of a global village foresaw that broadcast media “has overthrown the regime of ‘time’ and ‘space’ and pours upon us instantly and continuously the concerns of all other [s]” (McLuhan & Fiore 1967, 16).

Contemporary globalisation theories typically associate the term with the post-1945 political and economic order. The creation of multinational institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the institutions of the United Nations, and a binding network of multilateral treaties and agreements enabled sustained growth in international trade, investment and the movement of people, at least until the “oil shocks” and economic crises of the 1970s. But there was not a crisis of the liberal ideas that underpinned globalisation during this period. On the contrary, the hegemony of liberal ideas was strengthened during the 1970s and 1980s. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the transformation of the communist regimes of Eastern Europe led to the conclusion that we were indeed at what Francis Fukuyama (1992) termed the “End of History”, marked by the triumph of liberal democracy and market capitalism. The rapid opening up of the China to global economic forces in the post-Mao period gave a turbo boost to global networks of production as well as global markets, although this did not mean that a turn to capitalist economics was synonymous with the demise of communist party-states and the global triumph of liberal democracy.

The 1990s and early 2000s were in retrospect the period of “high globalisation”. In the academic world, authors such as Castells (1996), Beck (2000), Giddens (2002), Held (2004)

95 and others identified technologies of the Internet and digital media, the growth in multilateral institutions and agreements, the creation of supranational entities such as the European Union, and the rise of global social movements and a global civil society as marking an era of *strong globalisation*. In this framework, globalisation marks a qualitative (not simply quantitative) shift in the economic, political and cultural dynamics of contemporary societies, to the point where we were moving into a new era, marked by the declining significance of nation-states, the rise of a shared global culture, increasingly hybridised cultural identities
100 and a fully integrated global capitalist economy.

McGrew and Held (2002, 1) defined globalisation as “a shift or transformation in the scale of human organisation that links distant communities and expands the reach of power relations across the world’s regions and continents” while Beck (2000, 15)
105 described “globality [as] an unavoidable condition of human intercourse at the close of the twentieth century”. In his 2002 BBC Reith Lectures, Giddens (2002, 19) referred to globalisation as “a shift in our very life circumstances... [and] the way we now live” while Friedman (2005, 9) identified globalisation as the consequence of the “inevitable integration of markets, nation-states and technologies”. He referred to the “Golden Straitjacket” that now presented itself to national governments, where openness to economic globalisation as the inevitable price to be paid for economic prosperity, so that “your economy grows and your politics shrink” (Friedman 2001, 106). For “Third Way” political leaders such as former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, the need to “stop and debate globalisation” was as pointless as debating “whether autumn should
110 follow summer.... the character of this changing world is indifferent to tradition” (quoted in Goodhart 2017, 7). As Goodhart has observed, a consensus had emerged in countries such as the United Kingdom that the politics of left versus right was being replaced by a politics of openness versus closure, modernity versus tradition and cosmopolitanism versus nationalism.

120 There is a great deal of economic data that supports the claims around accelerated
AQ3 globalisation in the 1990s and 2000s. As noted in Flew (forthcoming), foreign direct investment grew by 678 per cent and sales by foreign affiliates by 358 per cent between 1990 and 2007, while global GDP grew by 236 per cent and exports by 349 per cent over this period. The World Bank (2016) has observed that world trade as a percentage of global GDP doubled from 30 per cent in 1973 to a peak of 60 per cent in 2005 (World Bank 2017), but it has since declined, albeit narrowly.

The 1990s and early 2000s were a period in which the world economy became more globally integrated, and the international activities of the world’s largest corporations expanded more rapidly than their home country operations. But the globalisation argument in communication and media studies was never simply, or perhaps even primarily, about economics. It focused particularly upon the ways in which global communications technologies, the circulation of media and information, and large-scale movements of people intersected to generate new forms of global connectivity, hybridised and increasingly non-territorially based forms of cultural identity, and the possibility of deterritorialised, post-national forms of political and cultural citizenship. Cultural globalisation was seen as “a complex, accelerating, integrating process of global connectivity” with multiple dimensions, with particularly important connections to global media and communications (Tomlinson 2007, 352).

AQ4 With regard to news media, the “CNN Effect” was a term used to refer to the role being played by global satellite news services in mobilising international actors, and creating the possibility of a global public sphere (Bahador 2007). Similarly, the circulation of film,
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television, music and other cultural and entertainment forms from India, Brazil, Hong Kong, South Korea, Mexico, Egypt and other “second-tier” media capitals was seen as complicating both the idea that media were primarily associated with a national “imagined community”, and the idea that national cultures and identities were under threat from Western cultural imperialism. The large-scale movement of people around the world was combined with what Scholte (2005, 240) termed “the pluralisation of identities under contemporary globalisation”, and the rise of non-territorial identities, or attachments and affiliations based on age, class, disability, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion or other forms of being and belonging that enabled “collective solidarity with fellow human beings anywhere on earth” (Scholte 2005, 242).

The Internet and globalisation were seen as working in tandem to promote not only more global forms of consciousness, but also cosmopolitan and post-national forms of identity. Activist movements related to socialism, feminism, LGBT rights, religious freedoms and environmental concerns are underpinned by what Scholte termed “partial cosmopolitanism” (2005, 220), as the registering of non-territorial identities as a political force requires a politics of recognition that crosses national boundaries. The development of the Internet was seen a force for cosmopolitanism, as it promotes the formation of networks and shared identities across territorial boundaries, as access to online content can itself be seen as a human rights issue. The Internet can also be seen as a global public good, as its effective operation requires the cooperation of national governments to observe rules, norms and protocols related to its effective operation. For authors such as sociologist Beck, the power of the nation-state was in decline and “those who play only the national card in the global meta-game will lose”; states could only make themselves relevant again by themselves “becom[ing] transnationalised and cosmopolitanised” (2005, 9).

The Retreat from Peak Globalisation

In retrospect, 2007 can be seen as the year in which globalisation trends began to move back from a peak. This is generally attributed to the chain of events from the collapse of the U.S. secondary mortgage market in the second half of 2007 to the failure of Lehmann Brothers, the subsequent European debt crisis, and the global economic downturn in the second half of 2008.

This is often described as the crisis, and possibly end of the era, of neoliberal capitalism, but it is also worth noting other, non-economic factors driving a retreat from globalisation. 2007 was also the year in which the Russian political leadership decisively distanced itself from the West, with Vladimir Putin denouncing a unipolar world at the European Security Conference in February, while newly elected President Andrei Medvedev used the Davos Forum a month earlier to proclaim as distinctly Russian form of “sovereign democracy”. In China, the global economic downturn forced the state to accelerate the long-anticipated economic transition from export-led growth to enhancing domestic consumption in order to avoid high unemployment. The lasting legacy of this period was the massive investment in the high-speed rail grid that now connects most of China’s urban centres, providing a catalyst for further large-scale infrastructure commitments such as the Belt and Road Initiative.

Aspects of the globalisation discourse were always overstated. Dicken (2015, 116) observed that the percentage of assets held outside of home countries by the world’s

largest transnational corporations (TNCs) had increased from 51.6 per cent in 1993 to 67.8 per cent in 2012. While this indicates a considerable degree of international expansion, it also demonstrates that a large amount of the activities of the world's largest companies remain within their home countries. The data itself needs closer scrutiny, as the companies with the largest share of assets held overseas are typically in the mining and extractive industries and/or from relatively small countries: companies headquartered in The Netherlands and Switzerland have more assets held offshore than those from the United States or Japan, for instance. Insofar as there has been an "offshoring" of global manufacturing, its impact needs to be considered alongside the rise in service industries, which are typically less likely to be broken up into global production networks.¹

The debate about whether TNCs are now more powerful than nation-state governments has existed in some or other form since the early 1970s, and there is certainly some truth in the observation that TNC control over economic resources and flexibility around investment decisions gives them considerable leverage in their dealings with national governments. At the same time, the rise of state capitalism as an alternative to Western neoliberal economics has been noted (Kurlantzick 2016), with China being the emblematic case of a state-led market economy which has significantly outperformed the Western nations in the 2000s and 2010s. The 2010s have also seen a growing assertiveness on the part of particular national governments towards Western TNCs, particularly with regard to media and the Internet. China's banning of Google in 2010 has been the best-known case in the media and communications sectors, but there have also been actions such as Russia's blocking of LinkedIn in 2016, and the blocking of Wikipedia in Turkey in 2017.

Flaws in the Globalisation Paradigm

Actions such as those above indicate that there are limits to the "borderless" nature of the internet that can be set by national governments, whatever we may think about such actions from the point of view of human rights such as the freedom to communicate. More generally, even where Internet users have access to content from around the globe, they are highly likely to gravitate to local sources of information and entertainment content, particularly where English is not the primary language (Taneja and Wu 2014). In this respect, patterns of Internet usage echo earlier studies of broadcast media and news, which find that rising economic prosperity is typically associated with local audiences developing a stronger preference for national content. This pattern arises in part because the quality local material improves as it finds itself in competition with "Global Hollywood" and the international news agencies. We are not, therefore, heading towards a homogeneous global culture, whether in the form of a "Global Village" or the spectre of cultural imperialism.

There are two other notable flaws in the globalisation argument. One relates to population movements and their cultural implications. For the most part, cultural globalisation theorists have been highly critical of the cultural imperialist arguments, observing that exposure to content from other parts of the world does not equate with adopting the ideas, values and beliefs of that culture. But it has also been argued that such assumptions about culture as also negated by the growing mobility of people around the world, and the increasingly multicultural nature of national societies. There is a degree of truth in this, but we need to be careful not to overstate the trends, or to see them as historically

235 **AQ6** unprecedented. Miller and Castles (2003) have made the point that mass migration in the
 ▲ period from 1815 to 1914 was in fact proportionately greater than that of 1945–2000, and
 while it certainly changed national cultures, it did not negate the idea of there being
 national cultures.

240 Data from the United Nations also indicates that international migrants account for
 about 3 per cent of the world's population in 2010, and that this figure has stayed in a
 range of 2.5–3.5 per cent since it began to be calculated by the UN (Berg and Besharov
 2016). Moreover, 10 countries received over 50 per cent of international migrants. The
 245 impacts of large-scale migration vary between those where the notion of post-national dia-
 sporas is most plausible (United States, Germany, Canada, France, United Kingdom, Austra-
 lia), those where they are guest workers largely isolated from the dominant national culture
 and polity (Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, Singapore), and those where migration was driven
 by political changes in the broader region (India, Russia, Ukraine). Accounts of large-scale
 migration and its broader cultural implications run the risk of extrapolating inappropriately
 from the experience of a small number of developed nations.

250 The second major flaw has been around understanding the relationship between
 nation-states and international institutions, treaties and agreements. In a lot of this work,
 there is evidence of a spatial fallacy, whereby laws and institutions are either national,
 and grounded in the authority and legitimacy of the nation-state, or international and over-
 255 seen by supranational agencies. In reality, international laws work most effectively when
 they are harmonised with those of nation-states, and where national governments consider
 themselves to be bound by the jurisdictional authority of such entities. This is not to deny
 that the rise of global digital platform giants such as Apple, Google, Facebook, Microsoft,
 Amazon, Netflix, etc. are challenging traditional norms and principles of media policy.
 Robert Picard and Victor Pickard have captured these tensions in their recent call for prin-
 260 ciples-based media policy that responds to the challenges of a global and digitally con-
 verged media environment, observing that

265 domestic policies can address some issues, but global policy is progressively more
 germane to address communication challenges. Establishing policy principles to guide
 both domestic and international decisions is crucial if effective, coordinated, and socially
 beneficial policies are to be developed. (Picard and Pickard 2017, 1)

270 Nation-states will inevitably remain core players in any form of new supranational “grand
 bargain” around media policy and regulation. If we take the example of Internet govern-
 ance, it has evolved around a complex mix of international laws and binding agreements,
 national regulations, legal judgements, industry self-regulation and self-governance within
 the large digital platform companies. Any application of international norms and agree-
 275 ments remains very much dependent upon local regulations, and there has not been a
 wholesale transfer of sovereign powers from nation-states to international institutions.
 Indeed, the question we now face is whether there is a turn away from the sort of multila-
 teralism implied in global media governance, and towards a global “Splinternet”. In this
 scenario, the Internet is experienced differently by users across national jurisdictions, and
 the big global Internet players face an ever more complex array of diverse, conflicting
 and possibly contradictory laws and regulations across territorial boundaries. The question
 280 of how to maintain the functionality of global networks, and the opportunities for freedom
 of expression that the global Internet has enabled, in the face of growing pressures for
 nation-state regulation, will be a key one for media policy-makers over the coming years.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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NOTE

1. One point to be made is that the distributional impacts of globalisation need to be considered alongside aggregate economic outcomes. It has often been observed, for instance, that offshoring of manufacturing is particularly likely to affect male workers with lower levels of education in First World economies, who cannot easily move into service sector jobs. Insofar as manufacturing was often clustered in particular regional centres, whereas new jobs associated with globalization are most commonly in major cities, there is also an uneven regional impact. The significance of these trends has become particularly apparent with the rise of populism in the 2010s, as older males, people with lower levels of education and non-metropolitan populations have been particularly inclined to support populist challenges to the political-economic status quo, such as the One Nation Party in Australia, the UK Independence Party (UKIP) in Britain and Donald Trump in the United States.

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