

## **Understanding Globalization: Myths, Realities, and Challenges**

### **Introduction**

The word “globalization” functions as a synonym for different phenomena: the nature of modern economies, international politics, the growth of interconnectedness, international financial markets, etc.

Three objectives: [See PowerPoint.](#)

- 1) Outline a new way to think about globalization.
- 2) Outline the three primary forms which globalization takes today.
- 3) Make suggestions about what Christians can say about globalization today.

### **Globalization as Universalism**

At its most basic level, globalization is a way of saying “universalization.” Globalization concerns the universalization of habits, ideas, practices, systems, technology, media, and institutions across the world and in ways which impact billions of people.

- The universalization of legal systems. [See PowerPoint.](#)
- The globalization of war. [See PowerPoint.](#)
- The building of Empires across the globe. [See PowerPoint.](#)
- Universal political ideas. [See PowerPoint.](#)
- Universal religious ideas. [See PowerPoint.](#)

The globalization which most prefigures the globalization of today is the emergence of the world’s first globalized economy in the nineteenth century. It developed for two reasons:

- The intellectual revolution of Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*.
- The decision of a small number of countries to embrace Smith’s ideas about trade.

The growth of global trade created a global economy. [See PowerPoint.](#)

There are two important things to note about this growing economic integration.

- It was driven by countries unilaterally opening themselves to global trade.
- It occurred without any help from international organizations.
- It was underpinned by the Pax Britannica.

### **Globalization in our time**

There is no guarantee that any form of globalization will last. The global economy which emerged in the nineteenth century came to an end when a global war engulfed the world in 1914.

What are the primary features of globalization which mark today’s world?

*First, global economic integration.* Since World War II, there have been efforts to open up trade between nations. This has been partly pursued by nations and groups of nations – what we call Trade Blocs – negotiating with each other under the supervision by international organizations like the World Trade Organization. [See PowerPoints.](#)

This is different from how nations opened markets in the nineteenth century. Trade agreements involve governments negotiating how their citizens economically interact with each other. The process is controlled by governments. All governments are heavily lobbied.

The good news is that this opening to greater trade has reduced poverty across the world. [See PowerPoint.](#)

Two qualifications:

- First, the decline in poverty has been uneven.
- Second, the growth of trade brings disruption in its wake.

*Second, efforts to promote global political integration.*

There are many international political organizations. [See PowerPoint.](#)

- An example of this of the type of political integration that some believe must happen is the European Union.

There appears to be little widespread popular support for the growth of supranational organizations for two reasons:

- These projects invariably involve more centralization of power in the hands of professional politicians and government officials and far less accountability.
- Millions of ordinary people, including millions of ordinary Christians, believe that they belong to a nation and particular national cultures.
- Strategic and Military Alliances are where Peoples and Nations tend to invest their Commitments

Nations have distinct histories and cultures to which people are attached. Many people increasingly view international organizations as threats to freedom. The nation- is seen as protecting ordinary people from the global utopian schemes of intellectuals and the calls by unelected supranational bureaucrats for more power to be concentrated in their hands. Also revealing that security, especially *national security*, is still thought of in terms of alliances between *nations and national interest*. [See PowerPoint.](#)

*Third, the growth in migration throughout the world.*

Why do people migrate?

- 1) Some are genuine refugees fleeing persecution etc. They are very small in number.
- 2) Ethnic minorities moving to countries where they are an ethnic majority.
- 3) Economic migrants who do not believe that they have an economic future in their home countries.

[See PowerPoint.](#)

The consistency of pattern for migration helps to explain why most people choose to migrate.

- People are leaving countries in which property rights, rule of law, and institutions of justice are very weak.

Where are they moving?

- 1) Countries in which there are better protections for property rights, rule of law, and economic freedom; or
- 2) Countries which have better protection of property rights, rule of law, etc., but which also have large welfare states.

Size of movements.

- 1) In 2000, 173 million people lived outside their country of birth.
- 2) In 2017, 258 million people – 1 in every 30 people.
- 3) In 2050 anticipated to be half a billion people.

This presents challenges for the countries which people are leaving.

- 1) They are losing large segments of their youth.
- 2) They are losing people who are willing to take risks.
- 3) They are losing human capital.
- 4) Some governments are happy to see these young people leave because it takes pressure off governments to enact reforms.

There are challenges for countries which are migration destinations. Governments must decide how they fulfil their primary responsibilities to their own citizens while deciding how many and what types of migrants they are willing to admit into the country.

The countries which manage economic migration challenges relatively successfully do five things.

- 1) They have clear and simple migration laws which are enforced consistently.
- 2) They state that they have the right and responsibility to determine how many economic migrants they accept - not international organizations.
- 3) They limit the access of economic migrants to welfare.
- 4) They insist that migrants must assimilate.
- 5) They insist that they will not adapt their laws to the different cultures which migrants may bring with them. Instead, it is migrants who are expected to adapt.

Countries which have successfully dealt with large economic migration inflows tend to follow these five rules.

### **And Christians?**

All these instances of globalization raise complicated questions to which they are no simple answers.

- 1) Poverty.
- 2) Migration

Four general points:

- 1) *There is a division of labor among Christians when addressing these issues.*
  - It is normally the primary responsibility of the laity to wrestle with details of policy issues.
  - It is the prime responsibility of clergy to educate the faithful in the *principles* that they should apply to these issues.
- 2) *Christians can show how to hold together the universal and the particular.*
  - All mankind is one and Christianity is a universal religion. **See PowerPoint.**
  - Love of nation is an act of piety towards those who have gone before us, and as a way of expressing our commitment to the common good of those who share the same national patrimony that we do.
- 3) *This tension is not always easy to manage but it enables us to do two things.*
  - The emphasis on the universal stops patriotism from degenerating in the direction of hatred of other nations.
  - The emphasis on the particular prevents universalism from degenerating into sentimental humanitarianism
- 4) *Christian ethics contains some good resources for thinking about globalization.*
  - The principle of solidarity and migration.
  - The principle of subsidiarity and migration

### **Conclusion**

Globalization is not new

There is nothing permanent about many globalizing phenomena.

In the midst of any globalizing phenomenon, the Church's mission doesn't change.

But we have nothing to fear. One of the truths of Christian faith is that in the midst of so much global change, quote, "The Church [still] believes that in her Lord and Master are to be found the key, the center and the purpose of the whole history of mankind. And the Church affirms . . . that underlying all that changes there are many things that do not change, and that have their ultimate foundation in Christ who is the same yesterday, today, and forever." (Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, paragraph 10).