



## What's wrong with globalization?

■ Colin Sparks

*University of Westminster, UK*

### ABSTRACT

This article reviews the range of views that are grouped together under the heading 'theories of globalization'. Rather than advocating one from the range of conflicting theories, the article attempts to establish the basic ideas that they have in common. These, mostly very abstract, ideas are then developed in order to arrive at propositions that may be examined in relation to evidence about the contemporary world. It is found that none of the five major planks upon which most theories of globalization rest are accurate. On the contrary, even quite easily available evidence contradicts them. It is therefore concluded that, whatever their popular appeal, theories of globalization are not an accurate guide to the investigation of the world. The distorted consequences that flow from an adherence to a mistaken theory are demonstrated through a consideration of the nature of contemporary migration, which is shown to be an overwhelmingly intra-state, rather than transnational, phenomenon. It is argued that processes like this, and the other developments considered here, are better explained by developing the same kinds of analytic tools that were appropriate to an earlier phase of capitalist development.

### KEY WORDS

autonomy ■ capitalism ■ domination ■ globalization ■ state ■ symbolic exchange

### Introduction

Everyone talks about globalization. It is on the tongues of politicians, businessmen and academics. It is cited in the business pages in the context of the flows of investment and employment around the world. Students flood to courses with 'globalization' in the title. Common sense has it that it is the defining characteristic of contemporary society.

The reasons for this unanimity are obvious. Not only are there vast flows of money, goods, services and people around the world, but these flows are manifestly growing at an astonishing rate. Between 1975 and 2000, the time people spent on international telephone calls rose about

25 times. Their duration rose every year, even during recessions, from 4 billion minutes in 1975 to around 100 billion minutes in 2000 (ITU, 2000: 1). The trend accelerated in the early part of this century and by 2004 it had risen to 145 billion minutes (ITU, 2006).

Passenger numbers on scheduled international flights, excluding special holiday charters, rose from just over 100 million in 1975 to more than 600 million in 2000 (IATA, 2003: 6). The numbers of international tourists also show spectacular growth. In 1975, there were around 200 million international tourist arrivals in the whole world, but by 2000 the number was about 750 million (World Tourism Organization, 2000). Tourism, like air travel but unlike telecoms, is subject to cyclical fluctuations, but there is no doubt about the general trend. By 2004 the figure had reached 763 million (World Tourism Organization, 2005). Much less happily, the number of international refugees rose between 1980 and 2000 from 8.4 million to 12 million (UNHCR, 2003: 3). True, by the end of 2005 the number had fallen back to 8.32 million, but it must be set in the context of a continuing rise in the numbers of 'persons of concern' (UNHCR, 2006: 2–3). By any measure, this is a world in which international communication and movement, if not an everyday commonplace for the entire population, is an increasingly familiar experience for large numbers of people.

Above all, the thesis of the increasing importance of global trade and global capital flows to the world economy looks unassailable. Total world exports of goods and services were worth \$390.5 billion in 1970. By 2000, the figure was \$7,786 billion (IMF, 2003a). Movements of capital similarly grew at an enormous rate over the same period. In the period 1992 to 2000, capital inflows into the USA increased from \$170 billion to \$1,026 billion (IMF, 2003b).

Scholars, however, are, or at least should be, concerned with more than slogans. This article asks what globalization means and what it explains about the world. In particular, it seeks to ask what purchase the theory of globalization gives us on contemporary developments in the mass media. To do this, the work of a number of prominent writers on globalization is reviewed to discover the central elements of the theory. The article then considers what evidence there might be for or against the theory. Finally, the value of the theory of globalization is assessed.

### **Theories of globalization**

It is well recognized that there is no theory of globalization that commands common assent. As Held and his collaborators put it: 'no single

coherent theory of globalization exists' (Held et al., 1999: 436). Giddens told an interviewer that 'it does not have a single specific meaning' (Rantanen, 2005: 67). There is agreement that globalization means greater interconnectedness and action at a distance, but there is a vigorous debate on other theoretical questions. To take one example, theorists are divided over the relation between globalization and that other central concept in social theory, modernity. For Giddens and Appadurai, globalization is constituted through the spread of modernity (Appadurai, 1996; Giddens, 1990). For Robertson, modernity is a process distinct from that of globalization (Robertson, 1992). According to Volkmer: 'modernization refers to nations and states, globalization to communities of an extra-societal kind' (1999: 55). For other writers, Albrow, for example, and, at least implicitly, Bauman, the global age is the period that comes after modernity (Albrow, 1996; Bauman, 1998). Finally, there are writers like Herman and McChesney who use the term 'globalization' to mean something indistinguishable from imperialism (Herman and McChesney, 1997). The second problem is that many of the writers on globalization are social theorists and, as Hesmondhalgh has noted, 'there is an almost spectacular lack of evidence in the work of commentators . . . associated with the globalization theory' (2002: 177). In place of evidence, we find 'opinions, views and prophecies about the direction of the world, and critiques of concepts assumed to be parochial, essentialist and racist' (Friedman, 2001: 15). We need to go beyond this free-for-all to identify the common ground between the different theories and to develop the insights of social theory into propositions about the media that we can subject to an evidential critique.

### **The globalization paradigm**

The first distinction is between 'weak' and 'strong' theories of globalization. Weak theories of globalization use the term, but rest on different assumptions. They are concerned with structures of domination, with the centrality of the economic in social explanation, with the destruction of less profitable forms of cultural production by the large capitalist corporations, and with the articulation between these capitalist corporations and the political and military power of the state. The obvious example from the field of media is the work by Herman and McChesney. Despite the language of globalization, they are better understood as a development of the imperialism paradigm,<sup>1</sup> against which theories of globalization were articulated. We will leave them to one side in this discussion.

Our concern is with 'strong' theories of globalization, which have sufficient common underlying features to constitute a paradigm which is 'strikingly new' (Appadurai, 1996: 27). It is 'iconoclastic' in that it requires us to 'reinvigorate the world' (Tomlinson, 1997: 173). At least from the point of view of media and culture, there are five main elements to this 'strikingly new' paradigm:

- 1 Understanding globalization requires a new methodology that is radically non-reductive. According to Giddens, globalization is a 'complex set of processes, not a single one' (2002: 12–13). Beck argues that: 'the various autonomous logics of globalization – the logics of ecology, culture, economics, politics and civil society – exist side by side and cannot be reduced or collapsed into one another' (2000: 11). The attempt to explain globalization in terms of 'the expansionary logic of capitalism, or of the global diffusion of popular culture, or of military expansion, is necessarily one-sided and reductionist' (Held et al., 1999: 437). Appadurai argues that 'the complexity of the current global economy has to do with certain disjunctures between economy, culture and politics' (1990: 296). In operational terms, it follows that we will be unable to find evidence of any direct relationship between, say, Beck's 'autonomous logics' of media products (culture), their international trade (economics) and the exercise of state power (politics). We would expect to find that 'the composition, the global flow, and the uses of media products are far more complex than [theories of media imperialism] would suggest' (Thompson, 1995: 169).
- 2 Symbolic exchanges, and the international circulation of media products, are today central to the functioning of the global world in the way that the exchanges of raw materials and manufactured commodities were central to earlier epochs. The development of cheap and rapid technologies of travel and of communication has meant that 'the world, or at least much of the world, is now self-consciously one single field of persistent interaction and exchange' (Hannerz, 1996: 19). Symbolic exchanges are a wide category of different activities, ranging from international financial flows to the sale of TV series, but they have in common the fact that their immateriality means that they can overcome distance and: 'it follows that the globalization of human society is contingent on the extent to which cultural arrangements are effective relative to economic and political arrangements . . . [and] . . . the degree of globalization is greater in the cultural arena than either of the other

two' (Waters, 1995: 9–10). In operational terms, we would expect to find that media companies are more important economically, and spread their activities around the world more extensively and evenly, than are the extractive and industrial behemoths of the earlier epoch: paradigmatically, automobiles, aviation and oil. We would also expect to find that media products display a higher degree of uniformity than do the latter if they are the harbingers of globalization.

- 3 The global epoch is characterized by the fact there is no dominating or controlling centre to the contemporary world: 'the deepest meaning conveyed by the idea of globalization is that of the indeterminate, unruly and self-propelled character of world affairs, the absence of a centre, of a controlling desk, of a board of directors or of a managerial office' (Bauman, 1998: 59). This decentring of the world means that 'the United States is no longer the puppeteer of a world system of images but is only one node of a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes' (Appadurai, 1996: 31). In operational terms, we would expect to find that there are a number of significant production centres ('nodes') for media artefacts that exchange their products reciprocally, and that none of them was so much larger and more important than the others that it could be said to dominate them (be a 'puppeteer').
- 4 In the global epoch, it is no longer viable to talk of isolated 'national' units, either of economic life or of culture. The degree of interconnectivity is such that, in the case of media artefacts, the circuits of meaning production are increasingly detached from the specific tastes of given national audiences. In the place of coherent national cultures, 'hybrid cultures and transnational media corporations have made significant inroads into national cultures and national identities' (Held and McGrew, 2002: 36). The products that circulate globally are neither 'Western' in content nor part of an apparatus of domination. On the contrary: 'contemporary syntheses can be constructed from symbolic and material resources that originate almost anywhere on earth' (Lull, 2001: 137). In operational terms, we should find widely circulated media products that are free from the markings of particular national cultures, and which are in their central organization hybrid.
- 5 The global epoch is marked by the erosion of the power of the 'Westphalian' state system, in economics, in politics and in culture (Beck, 2000: 4). The state has been undermined by both international organization and new local movements. As a consequence

'the military, economic and cultural self-sufficiency, indeed self-sustainability, of the state – any state – ceased to be a viable prospect' (Bauman, 1998: 64). These developments have been particularly influenced by the evolution of media technologies: 'electronic mediation transforms pre-existing worlds of communication and conduct . . . [and] . . . neither images nor viewers fit into circuits or audiences that are easily bound with local, national or regional spaces' (Appadurai, 1996: 3–4). Operationally, we should be able to identify the weakening of state-centred media institutions on the one hand, and on the other the emergence and strengthening of both global and local media.

If these are the main elements of the globalization paradigm, and if the propositions that have been inferred from them follow logically from the premises, then the task is to ask whether these propositions are true.

### **Autonomous logics**

The globalization paradigm argues that in the contemporary world the international circulation of cultural artefacts and practices is independent of political or economic pressures. There is no question but that the international circulation of cultural artefacts was closely tied up with political and economic considerations for most of the 20th century. The Motion Picture Association of America is a good example of how culture and economics have long been closely associated. This body engages in political lobbying designed to gain favourable terms from the governments of foreign countries, and in recognition of that role it dubs itself 'the little State Department'. There is no sign of any sudden break in the last 25 years or so when the old habits of close co-ordination between politics, economics and culture have suddenly been abandoned and replaced by an autonomous logic of motion picture export. To take a relatively recent example, in February 2004 the US and Australian governments signed a free trade agreement, and the MPAA issued a press statement reading in part that: 'Ambassador Zoellick is to be commended for securing a first-rate Agreement that provides full protection for American films and TV programs' (MPAA, 2004).

In fact, the contemporary epoch is marked by an ever-closer interpenetration of broadcasting and economics. In the past, there were substantial broadcasting institutions which, while they operated within economic constraints, were to a large measure driven by cultural or

political considerations. The most obvious example of a broadcaster whose logic was once cultural and political is the BBC – a notorious example of an organization that has become more commercial over the last 20 years. Broadcasting in India provides another example of a once dominant broadcaster, Doordarshan, which was driven by cultural and political logics rather than commercial considerations, but which has over the last decade become increasingly driven by an economic logic (Page and Crawley, 2001). Economic factors have become more important in determining the logic of broadcasting in many other cases, notably the former communist countries of Europe and, of course, in China.

The evidence suggests that the proposition of a radically new epoch in which the circulation of culture increasingly follows an autonomous logic independent of economics and politics is wrong. A much better approximation to what has been occurring is to say that there is a more general, although still incomplete, shift from the political determination of broadcasting towards its economic determination.

### **The centrality of symbolic exchanges**

In discussing the globalization paradigm's claim that symbolic exchanges are more important today than they were in the past, and that they are much more globalized than are political and economic factors, we will restrict ourselves to the narrow case of media artefacts and leave other central symbolic exchanges, notably international finance, aside.

If we take it that the media industry or media products are much more economically important in the current epoch than the production of physical commodities, then the case cannot be sustained. It is true that today there are many more television channels and magazines than there were half a century ago, and in some countries many more newspapers, but the increase in the absolute size of production does not tell us whether or not the industry has become relatively more important. If we look only at the large-scale companies, we find that there is little evidence that the media is a dominant industrial sector. While the global media corporations are very large indeed, with turnovers of millions of dollars and thousands, sometimes hundreds of thousands, of employees, they are not exceptionally large by the standards of contemporary capitalism. Table 1 compares three large media corporations with three large non-media corporations, and one corporation that spans both media and non-media. The three non-

**Table 1** Comparative scales of corporations in 2005

Company	Turnover or gross income (\$ million)	Net assets (\$ million)	Market capitalization (\$ million)	Number of employees
News Corporation	23,859	29,596	57,026	44,000
Viacom	9,610	7,790	30,064	9,500
Time Warner Inc	43,652	875	79,996	87,850
Sony Corporation	56,966	25,113	47,405	151,400
Boeing Company	54,845	11,059	56,204	153,000
General Motors	192,604	15,636	10,982	335,000
Royal Dutch Shell	306,731	97,924	208,868	109,000

Source: FT.com (2006).

media companies were taken as representative of autos, aviation and petrochemicals, which are frequently cited as the key industrial sectors of the 'Fordist' phase of capitalism that dominated the first three quarters of the last century. As can clearly be seen, the media companies have revenues, assets and staff that are slightly smaller than those of the 'old economy'.

If we look at the UK, which is a fairly large, very open, and relatively service-oriented economy, we can get some sense of the overall relationship between the old and the new economic sectors in terms of the degree to which they are internationally traded and hence meet the primary conditions for globalization. In 2004, the UK exported finished manufactured goods (for example, cars, aircraft, petrochemicals and so on) to the value of £101,252 million, rather more than 50 per cent of which were in fact cars, ships and aircraft, and petrochemicals. It exported services (for example, royalties, financial services, licenses and so on) to the value of £99,100 million. Of these services, the royalties and licences earnings of the film and television industry amounted to £6,564 million (Linden, 2005: 36, 44, 52). Media companies constitute a significant sector of the UK economy, at least as measured through international trade, but are very much smaller in scale than the old industries.

A second claim made by the globalization paradigm is that the degree of globalization is greater in the media sector than elsewhere. We may test this by considering the same comparison between the media industries and the old industries we looked at above. The automobile designed in Nagoya or Stuttgart is likely to travel around the world with only minor alterations, and perhaps be produced in more or less the same version in several different countries. The airliner produced in



Seattle or Toulouse will be more or less identical whatever flag is painted on its hull. Petrochemical companies operate around the world extracting, refining and selling more or less the same products everywhere. In the case of cultural products, some (major Hollywood movies and TV dramas) can be sold in many countries with few modifications (notably dubbing or the provision of sub-titles), while others (many magazines for example) can be produced in different versions to the same template in many different countries. Some, like the vast majority of newspapers, however, struggle to find a market outside of their locality, let alone in another country.

There seems little warrant, then for claiming either that symbolic goods are now more important than other forms of production or that they are in some essential way characteristically global in form and can be contrasted sharply with the products of industrial processes. The evidence appears to contradict the globalization paradigm with respect to the centrality of the mass media and their uniquely global character.

### **The absence of a centre**

On the face of it, this is perhaps the most improbable claim made by the globalization paradigm. For most of the last century, the world was characterized by competing centres of power. The contemporary world is marked by the domination of a single superpower, the USA, which has no serious challengers for world leadership. It is difficult to follow Bauman's claim that *no* state is viable today. The USA is overwhelmingly the dominant military force and, despite growing challenges, still the largest single economy.

In the case of the mass media, there are certainly other production centres than Hollywood. Brazil and Mexico in Latin America, Taiwan and Hong Kong in the Chinese cultural sphere, Japan and Korea in East Asia, the UK in a number of specialist programme types and formats: all of these are well known instances of other centres whose products find export markets either in their own region or more widely around the world (Fox, 1997; Sepstrup, 1990; Sinclair et al., 1996; Straubhaar, 1991). In considering the international trade in audio-visual artefacts, we must of course: 'allow for flows within flows, patterns of distribution that do not fit into the familiar and simplistic model that shows the total domination of international television by the United States' (Tracey, 1985: 23). The claim of the globalization paradigm, however, is that the USA is today 'only one node' in a complex system of programme exchanges rather than the dominant force that it once was.

It is difficult to establish exactly the scale and directions of the world trade in media artefacts since the data are notoriously inadequate. We can, however, produce some evidence that, while not entirely conclusive, is certainly more than suggestive as to the truth of the polycentric nature of the world of media production and exchange.

There is, for example, some reasonably detailed material about the UK and European markets. The UK has a strong and well-regarded television industry with a long record of substantial local production. In the UK, as almost everywhere in the world, audience preferences are for domestic products. For many years up to the 1990s, the UK imported and exported television programmes of roughly equal value (Shew, 1992: 79). The evidence suggests that the USA was the dominant supplier, but that a regional market was developing. The developing world constituted a small part of the total.

In the 1990s, however, the growth of niche channel satellite broadcasting led to a deteriorating balance of trade in this sector. By 2002, the UK was in deficit in the trade in television programmes to the tune of £553 million. In that year, imports from the USA accounted for 60 per cent of the total by value. The next large source of programming was the Netherlands, at 9 per cent. The European Union together accounted for 24 per cent and the whole of Europe for 35 per cent of the total. The whole of Asia (other than Japan) and Israel, Latin America and Africa accounted for just 2 per cent of the total (Pollard, 2003: 10). What this data clearly indicate is that the US was and remains the dominant exporter of television programming for the United Kingdom. While there is indeed strong evidence of a regional market within Europe, this trade is, apart from the Netherlands, predominantly with the larger countries (France, Germany, Italy). The amount of trade with countries outside of the developed world is tiny.

The domination of UK programming imports by products from the USA might be thought to be a function of the fact that the two countries share some social and political dimensions, not to mention a common language, but as Table 2 shows, the percentage is high in all of the developed countries, at least in volume terms. Economically speaking, it is almost certain that the USA is the dominant player in the international trade in television products and that regional markets, even in rich areas like Europe, are relatively small by comparison.

The importance of the high-income countries, and particularly the USA, is evident if we look at those large media companies that operate on a world scale. Tables 3, 4 and 5 give some facts on the geographical breakdown of the three large media companies examined above.

**Table 2** US programmes as a percentage of imports in 1997

Market	Percentage from USA
Australia	71
Canada	87
France	72
Germany	87
Italy	66
Japan	83
Netherlands	74
Spain	69

Source: Graham and Associates (1999: 17).

**Table 3** Breakdown of assets and sales revenues for News Corporation in 2005

	USA		Europe	Australasia*	Total
	\$m	%	\$m	\$m	\$m
Turnover	12,884	54	7,511	3,464	23,859
Gross assets	33,764	81	3,381	4,768	41,913

\* Australasia comprises Australia, Asia (i.e. including India and China), Papua New Guinea and New Zealand

Source: FT.com (2006).

**Table 4** Breakdown of assets and sales revenues for Viacom in 2005

	USA		International	Total
	\$m	%	\$m	\$m
Turnover	7,466.7	78	2,142.9	9,609.6
Gross assets	79,869.2	97	2,718.2	82,587.4

Source: FT.com (2006).

**Table 5** Breakdown of assets and sales revenues for Time Warner in 2005

	USA		International	Total
	\$m	%	\$m	\$m
Turnover	34,469	79	9,183	43,652
Gross assets	n/a		n/a	122,475

Source: FT.com (2006).

The centre of gravity of each of these companies is in the developed world. More than that, it is clearly in the USA. If we examine the only case of a 'global' media corporation whose centre of gravity is in a large market outside of the USA, namely Bertelsmann, we find that, in round figures in 2002, 31 per cent of its revenues came from Germany, 35 per cent from the rest of Europe, 28 per cent from the USA, and only 6 per cent from the rest of the world (Bertelsmann, 2002). Very far from the media representing an avant-garde case of the globalization of capital and of markets, it seems that at least in these cases it is more firmly tied to the developed world, and particularly to its 'home' country than is warranted by the overall distribution of world production. The activities of large media companies appear to be less globalized than is the world economy as a whole.

Overall, the proposition that the global world is characterized by the absence of a dominant centre does not seem to be borne out by the evidence, at least so far as the media industries are concerned. The trade in television programmes is primarily a trade in US made programmes. There are other exporters, but none of them operate on anything like the same scale as do the US companies: in a reasonably large market like the UK, US imports account for well over 50 per cent of the total. The activities of the global media corporations are dominated by the US market, which is by far the largest source of revenue. If one adds activity in the rest of the developed world, the proportion of their income is very high indeed. There are indeed regional markets for television programmes, but they are relatively small compared with the flow of US programming.

### **Global products**

The claim that the characteristic cultural experience of the global epoch is 'deterritorialized' is a complex one and here we will only discuss entertainment programming. The argument is that the cultural artefacts that circulate globally 'originate almost anywhere on earth'. We have seen how, from an economic point of view, this is hardly a convincing claim, but it could still be the case that the symbolic material out of which these commodities are manufactured can come from anywhere.

In order to examine this, we need first to make a distinction between the 'official' circulation of cultural commodities and the uses to which they are very often put, some of which are distinctly 'unofficial', and often illegal. This latter is the province of the 'Creole', where a cultural artefact that originates in the developed world is appropriated

and changed, if not transformed, by cultural producers in developing countries, who adapt it in ways that fit in better with the local tastes. While this is an important and interesting phenomenon, it is 'pervasively marked by the constraints of inequality' (Hannerz, 1996: 67). In Hannerz's terms, it is the 'centre' that produces and distributes, and the 'periphery' that modifies and adapts. Such a process is clearly distinct from the claim that the artefacts produced by the cultural industries of the developed world embody materials that originate elsewhere and which embody a global consciousness rather than that of a developed country, usually the USA.

We can illustrate this process through looking at Disney, which is a good example since it has been the subject of much previous study. The company takes material that 'originates almost anywhere on earth' and it is certainly the case that it is transformed. This process often involves quite complex issues of 'translation' into animated features from European fairy stories, from Greek myths, from French 19th-century novels, as well as Chinese legends. Quite apart from the issues of language, the debates around such translations involve discussions of authenticity, commercialization, integrity, cultural domination and so on, that are extremely complex and tangential to the issue of what one writer called the 'universal and American spin' that Disney gives products (Chan, 2002: 232). We can avoid these problems, and confront the main issue directly, if we consider a central Disney artefact that originated as a wholly commercial product, in a fully developed country, and which already enjoyed a 'global' presence before it was taken up and transformed. Then we can see exactly what the process of making something into a 'Disney' artefact involved.

One good example that illustrates these points is Winnie the Pooh, which has been a central Disney property for 40 years. The two original books, *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner*, were published in London in 1926 and 1928 respectively. Contrary to popular belief, these were not originally stories told in private by a doting parent to a drowsy child. They were commercial fiction, produced by a career writer (A.A. Milne) and a career illustrator (E.H. Shepard). They produced the works as the result of a professional collaboration that was aimed at a market that both originators understood from extensive prior experience. The books were an immediate success, in both the UK and the USA, and were constantly reprinted. By 1992, they had been translated into 32 languages, including Esperanto and Latin (Thwaite, 1992: 109). The authors were quick to exploit the success, in radio, Christmas cards, nursery prints, birthday books, project books and so on (Thwaite, 1990:

295ff). In order to make them more marketable commodities, both Milne and Shepard were happy to make changes to their originals. These were, from the start, thoroughly commercial artefacts that were exploited in a huge variety of ways and sold around the globe. There are no issues of 'authenticity' or of 'exploitation' to concern us in this case.

In the 1960s, Disney acquired most of the rights to these two books. There have since been three theatrical release films, a television series using new narrative material, and a deluge of Pooh-related merchandising. From our point of view, the significant facts concern not the change in the owner and manner of exploitation of the same intellectual property, but the transformations it underwent in the process. In fact, Disney's Pooh is different from Milne's Pooh in at least six ways. The change from Shepard to Disney is a visual change. Disney's Pooh is cartoonized, clothed, anthropomorphized (his nose and eyebrows particularly) and made into a figure in the US animation tradition. The sound is distinctive as well. The books, of course, had no accent, but most of the characters in Disney's version have US accents, notably Pooh and Tigger but also, at least in some films, Christopher Robin. The director of the first film, Wolfgang Reitherman, told the *Daily Mail*, which was leading a xenophobic campaign against it, that they had selected the voices because: 'The Mid-West accent is the generally accepted neutral accent at which we aim as it is acceptable to the whole American market' (quoted in Thwaite, 1992: 165). The place is shifted from a weakly marked UK to a strongly marked US suburbia, particularly in the short video animations. In one, Christopher Robin plays with a football. Which sort of football? Well, you can guess. The original version was famously cavalier about language: Christopher Robin was 'bisy' and would be 'backson'. The Disney version is ferociously educationally correct – culminating in an 18-volume 'Grow and Learn' library of texts based on the characters. Disney also plays havoc with the narrative structure. The most notable of numerous alterations is that Tigger does not appear in the original until the second story in the second book, but in the Disney version he is present from the start: the stories are often billed as 'Winnie the Pooh and Tigger Too'. Closely aligned with these narrative changes are changes in character. The most obvious is the introduction of Gopher, but the shift in the central relationship from that between Pooh and Piglet to that between Pooh and Tigger is the most significant change. Gender, almost invisible in the original, is very strongly marked in Disney's Kanga.

It is quite clear that there has been a shift in the underlying cultural unconscious that informs the whole. The original books are,

unquestionably, straight out of the comfortable world of the British middle classes. The sensibility at play is that of the magazine *Punch* for which both original creators regularly worked. The films, videos and mountain of merchandise are, equally unquestionably, straight out of Middle America. We can illustrate the extent to which the new versions are the product of an American sensibility very simply: one of the books spun off from the videos is *Winnie the Pooh's Thanksgiving*. Thanksgiving is not yet a holiday in the UK. This transformation has been central to the way in which Disney's Pooh has become a global cultural commodity. It is a different, American, artefact from the (unquestionably imperialist) English original.

The changes that take place when cultural artefacts which originate elsewhere in the world are taken up by the cultural industries of the developed countries are not arbitrary. Nor are they intended to produce a product that will appeal to some deterritorialized sensibility. They are reshaped to fit what their new owners believe will appeal to the sensibilities of the particular market place in which they are operating. That is most likely to be the USA, given the scale and wealth of that market, but it can also be that of the UK, or Germany, or France, or any other rich and powerful country with a developed culture industry. The process is the mirror image of the 'creolization' that Hannerz discussed. We can apply what he said about the 'cultural entrepreneurs of the periphery' exactly to the process we have been discussing by changing only one word: 'The cultural entrepreneurs of the **centre** carve out their own niche, find their own market segment, by developing a product more specifically attuned to the characteristics of their local consumers' (misquoted from Hannerz, 1996: 74).

### **The erosion of the state**

The fifth element of the globalization paradigm is the erosion of the power of the 'Westphalian' state system. These once powerful bodies are being replaced by the direct interaction between the global and local. The unmediated interaction between these two spaces defines the global age. It explicitly excludes the level of the state. Plenty of people discuss the 'global/local nexus' and 'glocalization', but no one writes about the global/national/local triad (Robertson, 1994; Wilson and Dissanayake, 1996: 3).

It seems to be clear that the model of the state as the guarantor of national economic life is no longer viable. This is, perhaps, the most important truth in the entire globalization paradigm and it has very

considerable ramifications for how we think about the world. There is, however, another way of looking at the state. The classical sociological formulation of the nature and role of the state runs thus:

Ultimately, one can define the modern state sociologically only in terms of the specific *means* peculiar to it . . . namely the use of physical force . . . the state is a relation of men dominating men, a relation supported by means of legitimate (i.e. considered to be legitimate) violence. (Weber, 1918/46: 77–8)

From this perspective, claims for the erosion of the state by the process of globalization look much more contestable.

Legitimate violence can be exercised in two ways: against other states, and against the citizens of a state. In other words, states wage wars and states jail citizens. We do not need to rehearse the contemporary use of violence between states in any detail to accept that there is no evidence of a decline in this function of the contemporary state. It is true that military expenditure around the world fell quite sharply in the period after the end of the Cold War, but it rose by 34 per cent in the period 1996–2005. The expenditure is concentrated in a few countries: the USA accounts for 48 per cent of world military expenditure, and together with Japan, the UK, France and China, accounts for nearly 70 per cent of the total (SIPRI, 2006). While it may be true that some states are less able to project their power on an international stage, it is clear that a small group of large states continue to have the will and ability to do exactly that.

The other aspect of legitimate violence is that exercised by the state against its own citizens. There is little sign that the state is on the retreat here. In the case of the USA, there were fewer than 200,000 people in state and federal prisons in 1970 and 1,440,655 at the end of 2002, with another 665,475 held in local jails, in which year the total passed 2,000,000 for the first time in history (Sentencing Project, 2003). Admittedly, with more than 700 inmates per 100,000 of the population, the USA is the world leader in incarceration, but the upward trend is visible in other countries as well. Mass imprisonment is a widespread reality in the contemporary world: 126 countries have incarceration rates of 100 per 100,000 of the population or more (Prison Studies, 2004).

While the field of the mass media is a little removed from these harsh realities of the nature of the state, historically there has been a close relationship between the two. It might be the case that more recent developments have undermined these aspects of state power at least. The press and broadcasting were 'children of the modern nation state,



directed towards a national community' unlike satellite television, which has a geographical footprint broader than the state, or the internet, which is boundless by design (Hjarvard, 2002: 71–2). At the same time, the development of supra-national organizations might have led to the growth of supra-national media, for example the global public sphere that Volkmer claims to have identified (Volkmer, 1999: 4).

There seems to be little evidence to support either of these contentions. By far the best developed of the supra-national organizations is the European Union, and this has in common with most international bodies that it is founded by a treaty between states. Despite evolving many of the paraphernalia of a state, there is no sign as yet of the emergence of any supra-national media organizations. Both broadcasting and the press in Europe remain overwhelmingly within the boundaries of existing states. Other international organizations important to the circulation of media artefacts are similarly state-centred. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) for example, states flatly that: 'only States can be members of WIPO' (WIPO, 2004).

While it is true that there is a wide range of broadcasters that operate across national boundaries, it is not the case that they are independent of states. One of the clearest examples of this was the way in which the Turkish government was able to put pressure on the British Independent Television Commission to remove the licences from the satellite channel MED-TV, which supported the political independence of the Kurds (Hasanpour, 2003). Despite the extraordinary growth and impact of satellite television in the Arab world, the fact remains that all of the stations in question, including the famous Al Jazeera, are dependent upon existing states (Sakr, 2001). Even the British ITC was able, on its own initiative, to close down a number of satellite channels broadcasting pornography into the UK from European countries with more liberal laws (ITC, c. 1999). Satellite broadcasters are as much subject to the legal controls of states as are their terrestrial competitors.

There is similarly little evidence that the state is being undermined from below, by the 'local'. It is certainly true, particularly in Europe, that there have been a number of movements, some of them successful, that have undermined the existing states 'from below', but these have been concerned not with abolishing states but with reconfiguring state boundaries to produce what they believe is a better fit between state and 'nation'. In the case of the mass media, there has long been a 'local' media, both in the classical sense of media relating to geographical localities and in the new sense of the local being constituted out of a commonality of experience. In the USA, for example, the vast majority

of the 1476 daily newspapers circulating in 2000 were local papers. It is a mistake, however, to imagine that these instances of local media are in some way counterposed to what are usually called the 'national' media with a scope that runs across the state as whole. In both broadcasting and the press, there are strong pressures towards the consolidation of ownership in local markets, and this is primarily consolidation within the boundaries of one state. The major force restricting this process of 'nationalization' in the ownership of the local market is the regulatory regime enforced by a state. One very clear example of what happens when the state abdicates this regulatory responsibility is provided by Italian television in 1970s and 1980s: there was initially a proliferation of local stations, but the economic logic of broadcasting very quickly consolidated the market into a small number of major networks, today overwhelmingly in the hands of Silvio Berlusconi. Very far from being someone who is hostile to the Italian state, he was, of course, until recently its Prime Minister.

From the point of view of the mass media, then, the picture is the same as that with respect to the classical functions of the state. There is no evidence that either the global or the local is undermining the state. Both the global, or at the very least the supranational, and the local are important dimensions of the mass media, but they exist alongside of the national. There are, of course, tensions between all three of these terms, but the evidence does not support the contention that one is being undermined by the other two.

### **Conclusions**

The leading propositions associated with the globalization paradigm are all substantially wrong. Culture and economics are very closely associated in the contemporary world. There is little evidence either that the culture industries are much greater in scale than other sectors, or that their operations are more globalized than are, for example, automobiles. The USA is still the largest economy in the world by some distance, and it accounts for a very high proportion of the revenues of media corporations. Reflecting the economies of scale to be gained in that huge market, US products dominate the world trade in media artefacts, despite the significant presence of regional and other exchanges. The products that are circulated globally are not 'global' or 'hybrid' in character but primarily tailored to the tastes of their home market, which is most often the USA. Finally, while there are important global and local dimensions to the mass media, there is no evidence that these

two poles are reducing the importance of the state as a definer of cultural production.

As with all mistaken paradigms, adherence to the globalization paradigm obscures central aspects of contemporary reality. To take one example, the globalization paradigm places great emphasis upon diasporas, and devotes considerable attention to the hybrid cultural artefacts that are produced by these groups. There is no doubt that this is an important reality, as the briefest visit to London or New York demonstrates beyond question. In the case of the UK, more than 3.5 million people came to the UK from abroad for more than one year during the decade after 1991, although of course the net change in population was much smaller because there was also a substantial outflow (National Statistics, 2004). The same process took place in the USA, albeit on a vastly larger scale.

The globalization paradigm is correct to identify shifts such as these as extremely significant, but it is blind to two central realities. First of all, these are not new developments. The current population of the USA is overwhelmingly descended from people who made similar journeys 500, 300, 100 or 50 years ago. London, too, has known continual waves of immigration for at least as long. These previous diasporas developed their own cultural institutions just as today's do. Secondly, and perhaps more strikingly, a concentration upon these developments in the metropolitan centres of the advanced world completely misses the nature and scale of the real movement of migration. As Table 6 shows, the really huge migrations of recent times – on a world scale more than one billion people in 20 years – have taken place within countries, not between them. The globalization paradigm, parochially obsessed with the experience of the developed north, is blind to the colossal dimensions of the global phenomenon of human movement.

**Table 6** Recent mass population movements

	1980		2001	
	Urban population	Percent of total	Urban population	Percent of total
China	192.8m	20	466.7m	37
Brazil	81.2m	67	140.8m	82
South Korea	21.7m	57	39.0m	82
Low and middle income countries	1,136.6m	32	2,148.5m	42
Globally	1,741.8m	39	2,890.5m	47

Source: World Bank (2003).

This process of urbanization, of course, is a product of the rapid global economic development that we noted above, but it is not best understood as 'globalization'. It is, rather, a familiar phenomenon from the history of capitalist development – the movement from the country to the city, from agriculture to industry, from peasant to proletarian – that was visible 200 years ago in the first phase of the industrial revolution in Northwest Europe. It is the movement that built Manchester and Detroit and Kyoto and is today building Sao Paolo and Shanghai and Mumbai.

Theories of globalization, as currently advanced by such writers as Giddens, Beck and Appadurai, are so far from providing an accurate picture of the contemporary world that they are virtually useless. More generally, many of the phenomena reviewed here are better understood as aspects of capitalist development, and in particular the imperialist phase of capitalist development, than as the products of some new and distinct social phenomenon called 'globalization'. In this respect, the 'weak' theories of globalization make a better fit with contemporary reality than do the stronger versions. That is not to claim that 'nothing has changed' and we can rest happily on the intellectual achievements of previous generations. Obviously, important things have changed: for example, the relative balance of scale between the US economy and some of its emerging competitors. It is, however, legitimate to claim that many of the issues that were traditionally central to the account of capitalism, like inequality and exploitation, and to imperialism, like the use of state power to coerce economic advantages for the largest and richest societies, remain central to the analysis of contemporary society. To take an obvious example: the best exemplification of a global medium is the internet, which is not currently subject to the constraints we have examined above. But it is not global in reality. A quarter of the world's population, more than one and a quarter billion people, are today without any access to electricity, and that number will rise over the next 25 years (World Energy Outlook, 2002). No electricity, no internet. A theory that is blind to such facts is blind to reality.

### Note

- 1 In this article I use the term 'paradigm', which is loosely derived from Kuhn's work, to describe the underlying assumptions upon which theories rest. It is my contention that despite the vigour of theoretical debate between different currents of globalization theory they share sufficient ground to be said to be operating within the same paradigm. It is the exposition of this paradigm, and its validity or otherwise, that is examined here.

## References

- Albrow, Martin (1996) *The Global Age: State and Society beyond Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Appadurai, Arjun (1990) 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy', in Mike Featherstone (ed.) *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, pp. 295–310. London: Sage.
- Appadurai, Arjun (1996) *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bauman, Zygmunt (1998) *Globalization: The Human Consequences*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beck, Ulrich (2000) *What is Globalization?* Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bertelsmann (2002) *Annual Report January 1 through December 31, 2002*, URL (consulted April 2003): [http://investor.bertelsmann.de/wms/pdf/Geschftsbericht\\_engl..pdf](http://investor.bertelsmann.de/wms/pdf/Geschftsbericht_engl..pdf)
- Chan, Joseph (2002) 'Disneyfying and Globalizing the Chinese Legend Mulan: A Story of Transculturation', in Joseph Chan and Bruce McIntyre (eds) *In Search of Boundaries: Communication, Nation-states and Identities*, pp. 225–48. Westport, CN: Ablex.
- Fox, Elizabeth (1997) *Latin American Broadcasting: From Tango to Telenovella*. Luton: John Libbey Media.
- Friedman, Jonathan (2001) 'Globalization and the Making of a Global Imaginary', in Gitte Stald and Thomas Tufte (eds) *Global Encounters: Media and Cultural Transformation*, pp. 13–31. Luton: University of Luton Press.
- FT.com (2006) URL (consulted March 2007): <http://www.FT.com>
- Giddens, Anthony (1990) *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Giddens, Anthony (2002) *Runaway World: How Globalization is Reshaping our Lives*, 2nd edn. London: Profile.
- Graham, David and Associates (1999) *Building a Global Audience*. London: David Graham and Associates.
- Hannerz, Ulf (1996) *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*. London: Routledge.
- Hasanpour, Amir (2003) 'Diaspora, Homeland and Communication Technologies', in Karim H. Karim (ed.) *The Media of Diaspora*, pp. 76–88. London: Routledge.
- Held, David and McGrew, Anthony (2002) *Globalization/Anti-Globalization*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Held, David, McGrew, Anthony, Goldblatt, David and Perraton, Jonathan (1999) *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Herman, Edward and McChesney, Robert (1997) *The Global Media: The New Missionaries of Corporate Capitalism*. London: Cassell.
- Hesmondhalgh, David (2002) *The Cultural Industries*. London: Sage.
- Hjarvard, Stig (2002) 'Mediated Encounters: An Essay on the Role of Communication Media in the Creation of Trust in the "Global Metropolis"', in Gitte Stald and Thomas Tufte (eds) *Global Encounters: Media and Cultural Transformation*, pp. 69–84. Luton: University of Luton Press.
- IATA (2003) *International Air Transport Authority Annual Report 2003*, URL (consulted Feb. 2004): <http://www.iata.org/NR/ContentConnector/CS2000/SiteInterface/sites/about/file/ar2003web.pdf>
- IMF (2003a) *International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook Database September 2003*, URL (consulted Feb. 2004): <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2003/02/data/dbaselm.cfm>

- IMF (2003b) *International Monetary Fund Global Financial Stability Report 2003: Statistical Appendix*, Table One, URL (consulted Feb. 2004): <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/GFSR/2003/02/pdf/statappx.pdf>
- ITC (c. 1999) *ITC Notes: 'Adult' Services*, URL (consulted July 2003): [http://www.itc.org.uk/itc\\_publications/itc\\_notes/view\\_note.asp?itc\\_note\\_id=49](http://www.itc.org.uk/itc_publications/itc_notes/view_note.asp?itc_note_id=49)
- ITU (2000) *ITU Telecommunication Indicators Update July–September 2000*, URL (consulted Feb. 2004): [http://www.itu.int/itu-d/ict/update/pdf/update\\_2.pdf](http://www.itu.int/itu-d/ict/update/pdf/update_2.pdf)
- ITU (2006) *Key Global Telecom Indicators for the World Telecommunication Service Sector*, URL (consulted July 2006): [http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/statistics/at\\_glance/KeyTelecom99.html](http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/statistics/at_glance/KeyTelecom99.html).
- Linden, Simon (2005) *United Kingdom Balance of Payments: The Pink Book 2005*. London: Office for National Statistics.
- Lull, James (2001) 'Superculture for the Communication Age', in James Lull (ed.) *Culture in the Communication Age*, pp. 132–63. London: Routledge.
- MPAA (2004) *MPAA Statement on the US–Australia Free Trade Agreement*, 9 February, URL (consulted Feb. 2004): <http://www.mpa.org/legislation/index.htm>
- National Statistics (2004) *Migration: 1991 to 2000, Total International Migration: Time Series, Age and Sex*, URL (consulted Feb. 2004): <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=9069&image.x=14&image.y=7>
- Page, David and Crawley, William (2001) *Satellites over South Asia: Broadcasting, Culture and the Public Interest*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Pollard, Mark (2003) *International Service Transactions of the Film and Television Industries, 2002*. London: Office of National Statistics.
- Prison Studies (2004) *World Prison Brief*, URL (consulted March 2004): <http://www.prisonstudies.org>
- Rantanen, Terhi (2005) 'Giddens and the G-Word: An Interview with Anthony Giddens', *Global Media and Communication* 1(1): 63–77.
- Robertson, Roland (1992) *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*. London: Sage.
- Robertson, Roland (1994) 'Globalization or Glocalization?', *The Journal of International Communication* 1(1): 33–52.
- Sakr, Naomi (2001) *Satellite Realms: Transnational Television, Globalization and the Middle East*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Sentencing Project (2003) *Facts about Prisons and Prisoners*, URL (consulted March 2004): <http://www.sentencingproject.org/pdfs/1035.pdf>
- Sepstrup, Preben (1990) *Transnationalization of Television in Western Europe*. London: John Libbey.
- Shew, William (1992) 'Trends in the Organization of Programme Production', in Tim Congdon et al. (eds) *Paying for Broadcasting: The Handbook*. London: Routledge.
- Sinclair, John, Jacka, Elizabeth and Cunningham, Stuart (eds) (1996) *New Patterns in Global Television: Peripheral Vision*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- SIPRI (2006) *Stockholm Institute for Peace Research Yearbook 2006*. Chapter 8. 'Military expenditure'. Chapter summary from *the SIPRI Yearbook 2006: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), URL (consulted July 2006): <http://yearbook2006.sipri.org/chap8>
- Straubhaar, Joseph (1991) 'Beyond Media Imperialism: Asymmetrical Interdependence and Cultural Proximity', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 8(1): 39–59.
- Thompson, John (1995) *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*. Cambridge: Polity.

- Thwaite, Ann (1990) *A.A. Milne: His Life*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Thwaite, Ann (1992) *The Brilliant Career of Winnie-the-Pooh*. London: Methuen.
- Tomlinson, John (1997) 'Cultural Globalization and the Control of Difference', in Ali Mohammadi (ed.) *International Communication and Globalization*, pp. 170–90. London: Sage.
- Tracey, Michael (1985) 'The Poisoned Chalice? International Television and the Idea of Dominance', *Daedalus* 114(4): 17–56.
- UNHCR (2003) *United Nations High Commission for Refugees: Refugees by Number*, URL (consulted Feb. 2004): <http://www.unhcr.ch>
- UNHCR (2006) *2005 Global Refugee Trends*, URL (consulted July 2006): <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/tehis/vtx/statistics/opendoc.pdf?tbl=STATISTICS&id=4486ceb12>
- Volkmer, Ingrid (1999) *CNN: News in the Global Sphere. A study of CNN and its Impact on Global Communication*. Luton: University of Luton Press.
- Waters, Malcolm (1995) *Globalization*. London: Routledge.
- Weber, Max (1918/46) 'Politics as Vocation', in Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (trans. and eds) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, pp. 77–128. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wilson, Robert and Dissanayake, Wimal (1996) 'Introduction: Tracking the Global/Local', in Robert Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (eds) *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, pp. 1–18. London: Duke University Press.
- WIPO (2004) *World Intellectual Property Organization Convention*, URL (consulted Feb. 2004): <http://www.wipo.org/about-wipo/en/members/index.html>
- World Bank (2003) *World Development Indicators 2003: Urbanization*, URL (consulted Feb. 2004): <http://www.worldbank.org/data/wdi2003/pdfs/table%203-10.pdf>
- World Energy Outlook (2002) *World Energy Outlook 2002: Executive Summary*, URL (consulted July 2003): [http://www.worldenergyoutlook.org/weo/pubs/weo2002/WEO2002\\_1sum.pdf](http://www.worldenergyoutlook.org/weo/pubs/weo2002/WEO2002_1sum.pdf)
- World Tourism Organization (2000) *Tourism 2020 Vision*, URL (consulted July 2006): [http://www.world-tourism.org/market\\_research/facts/market\\_trends.htm](http://www.world-tourism.org/market_research/facts/market_trends.htm)
- World Tourism Organization (2005) *Tourism Highlights: 2005 Edition*, URL (consulted July 2006): <http://www.world-tourism.org/facts/menu.html>

### Biographical note

---

**Colin Sparks** is Professor of Media Studies and Director of the Communication and Media Research Institute at the University of Westminster. He has written extensively on the transition in Central and Eastern Europe during the 1990s. His new book, *Development, Globalization and the Mass Media* is scheduled to be published by Sage later in 2007.

Address: CAMRI, University of Westminster, Harrow Campus, Watford Road, Middlesex HA1 3TP. [email: [sparksc@wmin.ac.uk](mailto:sparksc@wmin.ac.uk)]

---