

H. Morokhovets, Yu. Lysanets, L. Ostrovska, T. Purdenko  
Poltava State Medical University

## CONTEMPORARY THEORIES OF GLOBALIZATION AND THEIR RELEVANCE TO HIGHER EDUCATION

*Within the framework of modern sociological theory, the ideas about globalization play a central and decisive role. Among the most opposing and colliding contemporary conceptions one should mention the hyperglobalist and skeptical perspectives. Both theories suggest quite different outcomes in regard to the consequences of the process of globalization. Their respective conclusions are of primary importance for understanding the development tendencies in the world in general and higher education in particular.*

**Key words:** globalization, international interactions, global culture, higher education, academic mobility.

*У рамках сучасної соціологічної теорії ідеї глобалізації відіграють центральну й вирішальну роль. Серед найбільш суперечливих сучасних концепцій у статті виокремлено та проаналізовано студії прибічників теорій гіперглобалізму та їхніх опонентів – “скептиків”. Обидві концепції прогнозують досить різні результати щодо наслідків процесу глобалізації. Відповідні висновки мають першочергове значення для розуміння тенденцій розвитку світу загалом і вищої освіти зокрема.*

**Ключові слова:** глобалізація, міжнародні відносини, глобальна культура, вища освіта, міжнародна академічна мобільність.

To begin with, it is necessary to specify that the concept of globalization implies the process of transformation in the spheres of public interaction and spatial structure, involving the conjuncture and integration of all kinds of social activity and communication, networks and transactions, academic mobility and exchange of best practices, global flows of information, finance, population, and the like [2, p. 15]. Globalization is an inescapable phenomenon of expansion, intensification and acceleration in a range of international interactions. As a result, the frontiers between domestic affairs and problems of global significance become progressively blurred. Globalization “poses a distinctive challenge to theoretical work in the social sciences ... namely, the study of national societies and nationstates are brought into focus by the universalizing tendencies and transnational structural transformations bound up with this process” [7 p. 158].

Contemporary globalization theories are extremely instrumental for understanding “the processes of organizing in an increasingly interconnected world ... Beyond state theory, the globalization perspective may enhance our ability to comprehend the nature and direction of world social change in the new century and enrich the development of social theory more generally” [7, p. 189–190]. Globalization theory was developed in the 1980s, and the first wave is often named the “hyperglobalist” conception for its resolute advocacy of global interdependence and rejection of national economies. For the hyperglobalists, “globalization defines a new age in which people everywhere are increasingly subject to the disciplines of the global marketplace” [2, p. 137]. Among the social and economic consequences, they visualize the all-embracing global market with equation of prices and interest rates. Thus, a market economy is a propulsive force of progress. In this context, globalization is regarded as the elaboration of a unified global market, propelled by profit and competition. For example, French economist Alain Minc applies “mondialisation” and “marché” (“Le marché roi”, the “king-market”, in his words) as equivalent notions, for they both vividly characterize the peculiarities of present reality [2, p. 117].

Moreover, the hyperglobalists stand assured that the process of globalization will trigger the genesis of new forms of social organization. In fact, one of the advocates of this

perspective, K. Ohmae, declares that national states have lost their influence and “the capitalist market has made traditional nation-states all but obsolete” [6, p. 39]. Ohmae considers globalization as an opportunity to renovate the world and provide favorable conditions in order to amplify business interactions and reorganize management structures. The global development of computerization and financial transactions will promote money flows with little restriction on the part of national boundaries. In this context, the key role belongs to multinational corporations as propagators and “producers” of globalization [2, p. 89]. This is precisely why hyperglobalist ideas are often referred to as “economistic”, “with economic changes having political and cultural implications” [2, p. 90]. As a matter of fact, in this rapidly developing world, nation states become nothing but “transitional modes of economic organization and regulation” [5, p. 180] because they are no longer able to master national economies. Thus, as a consequence of economic globalization, the autonomy of nation-states is explicitly discredited and doomed to imminent eclipse. The direct consequence of this conception is the formation of one borderless economic space. The single and unified global economy will inevitably transcend the world separate economic regions [6]. For this reason, the hyperglobalist theory is often referred to as “turbocapitalism” or “supra-territorial capitalism” [1, p. 52]. Therefore, globalization will inevitably result in the transformation of nations into homogeneous global culture. This process is caused by universal absorption of foreign cultures and will be “facilitated further by global electronic communications such as the internet, globalized TV broadcasts, migration, and tourism” [1, p. 112].

By comparison, the skeptics adhere to a much more moderate position in their attitude to the nature of globalization. They strongly disagree with the fact that globalization “is a new epoch in human history defined as an irreversible, inevitable and necessary privileged process” [6, p. 26]. For example, Hirst and Thompson insistently apply the notion “internationalization” as a substitute for “globalization” [3, p. 46]. Thus, they observe the modern world as “internationalized” instead of “globalized”. In contrast to the hyperglobalist perspective, the proponents of the skeptical conception defend the role of nation-states as an active force of the transnational process of globalization. As a matter of fact, they regard the hyperglobalists’ reasoning as vague and empirical. The skeptics contend that global identity simply cannot substitute for national cultures. In their opinion, globalization as an embodiment of cultural homogenizing is nothing more than an exaggerated myth [3, p. 171]. Basically, the skeptics reject the notion of de-nationalization: “People are less mobile than goods, money or ideas; in a sense they remain nationalized, dependent on passports, visas, and residence qualifications” [3, p. 32]. The skeptics discard the idea of a single global economy and conclude that “the world is breaking up into several major economic and political blocs” [3, p. 32]. The scholars of this academic trend contend that globalization is not a “historically unprecedented process, but one with a long history” [5, p. 77]. They assert that if one takes a close look in retrospect at global flows of finance and labour in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the present economic situation in the world “is much less significant. If compared with the classical Gold Standard (Etalon-or) era, today’s world economy is significantly less integrated than at that time” [3, p. 147]. Therefore, the level and capacity of globalization is intrinsically overstated, and “current processes show, at best, a regionalization” [3, p. 148].

The expansion in the number of multinational corporations emphasized by the hyperglobalists is not considered of primary importance within the framework of skeptical theory. The skeptical theoreticians assert that multinational corporations will still be inseparably associated with their domestic states, thus providing benefits for these nationstates. Moreover, the skeptics contend that the third world countries will not get involved into the global economy and crucial social changes at all. On the contrary, “the third world is becoming

increasingly marginalized” [4, p. 93]. As far as the consequences of globalization are concerned, the skeptics state that nation-states are still relevant in managing economic flows and “governments are not merely passive victims of internationalization. On the contrary, states still have an important role to play in the regulation of cross-border economic activity” [1, p. 18]. Thus, the hyperglobalist position eliminates, while the skeptical one advocates the future supremacy of sovereign national states.

Thus, the two opposing standpoints described above reveal the crucial difference in relation to the phenomenon of globalization. According to the hyperglobalist theory, as a result of increasing economic globalization, “denationalization” via multinational networks and the rise of transnational governance are indispensable. The hyperglobalist conception delineates globalization as a new stage of history in which “traditional nation-states have become unnatural, even impossible business units in a global economy” [6, p. 28]. Capital mobility and multinational corporations are the central notions underlying the indivertible development of the global economy as a consequence of hyperglobalist theory. The hyperglobalists regard commercial activity as a crucial stimulus for the world economy, while for the skeptics national governments must still maintain state regulation and are responsible for any advancement. As it has already been shown, the most competitive point between the hyperglobalists and the skeptics is the interpretation of the role of national states. Whereas hyperglobalists prioritize markets and neglect the nation-state, the skeptics vindicate the autonomy of national states.

It is necessary to mention that some scholars suggest an alternative approach to globalization theory. For example, William Robinson asserts that “the hyperglobalist and skeptical perspectives suffer from two underlying problems: they are unacceptably teleological, comparing current processes of globalization to ideal types” [7, p. 159]. Therefore, he considers these two conceptions as unreliable and insufficiently elaborated to a certain degree, or, as explained by Robinson himself, “misframed”: “Either the nation-state (and the inter-state system) is seen as retaining its primacy as the axis of international relations and world development – the “strong state” thesis, or the state is seen, as in the “weak state” or diverse “end of the nation-state” theses, as no longer important” [7, p. 157]. In this context, Robinson moves beyond the aforementioned “global-national” opposition developed by the hyperglobalists and the skeptics and manages to develop his own views on the future of sociological theory. Consequently, the scholar anticipates the approach of absolutely new social concepts, first of all such as the “transnational state”. According to Robinson, the incipient transnational state is on its way of development and acquiring the regulatory power.

Thus, the theory of globalization influences social sciences in essential ways, most of all, in terms of reorganization of society. One of the most significant shifts in social theory associated with the process of globalization is the ostensible demise of the nation-state. It compels to reconsider conventional views and traditional ideas in the context of theoretical works concerning states and national cultures. The historically established notion of the nation-state gradually undergoes a specific process of transcendence towards its transnational scale. One can easily observe how the process of globalization influences and transforms scientific thought of the present, the ways it modifies both the terminological and conceptual framework of modern sociological theory.

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