

Globalization and Democracy: A Framework for Discussion

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I. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to distill some questions, concerns and controversial issues, or issue areas, from the recent globalization literature and to provide a systematic overview over ideas and assumptions about the relationship between globalization and democracy.¹

The number of contributions to this literature has exploded over the past few years.² Therefore, anything even remotely approximating a *complete* overview seems out of human reach. But since the law of diminishing marginal returns tends to apply to scholarly products too, even if it could be done such an undertaking would not be very useful. Indeed, a cursory survey of any portion of the literature, more or less randomly selected, reveals that there is a core repertoire of ideas, arguments, and concerns about globalization, and particularly about its likely impact on democracy, that is widely shared and often repeated, as there is also a mixed bag of issues which are controversially debated over and over again.

II. Globalization: the Phenomenon and the Concept

2.1. 'Globalization' has probably been *the* major buzzword of the past decade or so in the social sciences, as well as in a wider public. Beyond

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1 It is thus intended to be a *tool* for further discussion rather than a presentation of any original insights that could become a *subject* of discussion in their own right.

2 For illustration: by August 2001, 550 books and 765 journal articles published in 2000 alone had been registered at the U. S. Library of Congress under the keyword 'globalization' (Busch 2001/2: 5).

this truism, not much seems to be certain about the issue. Just about everything regarding ‘globalization’ remains highly controversial:

- * what it *means*,
- * whether, or to what extent, it *exists*, and
- * what it *does*.

These are not merely academic questions. As everyone knows, controversy about the last question has provoked violent conflicts that have already claimed scores of victims. It is an undeniable *social fact* that to many people today globalization is a question of survival³ – whether the corresponding beliefs are well-founded or not. If only for this reason, the answers to these three questions matter in a very direct, practical way. Moreover, not only does it matter *what* these answers are but also *whether*, and *whom*, they are able to *convince*.

2.2. *Does it exist?* Perhaps the least controversial question today is the second. The *actual existence* of one or more recent and on-going processes deserving the label ‘globalization’ is, in fact, almost uniformly acknowledged in the globalization literature under scrutiny. And beyond academia, only a belief in the existence of such processes can explain the extremely strong feelings the topic manifestly provokes.

Whether this apparent agreement actually reflects a consensus about any specific distinguishable real phenomenon, however, is open to question.

2.3. *What does it mean?* Attempts to define what is meant by the term ‘globalization’ abound, and conceptualizations differ widely, from very narrow to very broad, and from vague and intuitive to quite specific and elaborate.

Much of the academic literature on globalization is remarkably self-conscious and self-reflective in this respect; this is usually an indicator of insecurity and of a lack of a consolidated body of knowledge. For instance, in an article reviewing eight ‘second-generation’ globalization studies all of which were published in the mid-1990s, the authors (Beisheim/Walter 1997: 174 f.) diagnose that the “infants’ diseases” of the concept of globalization have not yet been overcome. They identify as the most notorious deficit of this literature “the lack of even a minimal consensus about the definition and conceptualization of what is to be called

³ A view that is by no means the exclusive domain of “Teutonic doomsters” (Sally 2000: 252). Cf., e. g., George (2003: 23): “If neoliberal globalization is allowed to endure, politics will concern primarily the deadly serious issue of survival”.

‘globalization’”. This has necessarily detrimental consequences for the possibility to compare and assess empirical statements about the actual state of globalization, not to speak of the formulation of well-founded conclusions about causes and effects. Some authors therefore even try to avoid the word entirely when writing about what others would not hesitate to call ‘globalization’.⁴

The metaphor of a “shrinking world” (Plattner 2002), the idea that the world is becoming “one world” in some important sense in which it has not been ‘one’ before (Singer 2002), or the belief that there has recently been an unprecedented increase in across-border interdependence, similarities and integration are commonly connected with the term ‘globalization’. Even a renowned economist such as Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz – in an admittedly non-academic and non-technical book, speaking to the public at large rather than to his scholarly peers – does not offer a more precise definition of globalization than that “Fundamentally, it is the closer integration of the countries and peoples of the world” (Stiglitz 2002: 9). Robertson (2002: 2) adds an important aspect when he suggests that besides the *factual* element of “increasing connectivity” globalization should be conceived as having also a second, *mental* element: namely “the increasingly significant phenomenon of global consciousness”. Still, this does not make the concept of globalization any more precise.

On the conceptual level, then, we do not yet have a satisfactory state of affairs. I do not wish to embark on an extensive conceptual analysis in this paper. But something at least a bit more precise about the concept, its different aspects, and its extension in the real world seems to be needed if a discussion about consequences of globalization is to be made possible.

2.4. One of the most sophisticated, systematic and extensive treatments so far of the *concept* of globalization as well as of contemporary (and historical) *empirical processes* of globalization and of different *views*

4 E. g., Zürn (1998) who prefers “denationalization” instead, as a “more precise” term; Zürn speaks of “social denationalization”, defined as “the shifting of the frontiers of more densified social contexts of action beyond the borders of national societies, without necessarily becoming global from the start”, and “operationalized” as a “relative increase in the intensity and reach of across-border exchange or production processes in the following issue areas: economy, ecology, violence, mobility as well as communication and culture”; his main argument is that “political denationalization” – by way of “the project of complex global governance” which in his view is a “positive utopia” – is needed to accompany and channel the inevitable processes of “social denationalization”.

about them has been elaborated in a remarkable interdisciplinary effort by political scientist David Held, international-relations theorist Anthony McGrew, sociologist David Goldblatt and economist Jonathan Perraton (1999). It may be useful to recall a few of the (many) distinctions they have introduced.

2.4.1. They propose, first of all, a conception of globalization that is more differentiated than most others, taking into account *four spatio-temporal dimensions* (op. cit.: 15–16):

- * extensity (“a *stretching* of ... activities across frontiers”),
- * intensity (“a detectable *intensification* ... of interconnectedness”),
- * velocity (“a *speeding up* of global interactions and processes”), and
- * impact propensity (“the *impact* of distant events is magnified”).

This yields the following *definition of globalization* as

“a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions – assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact – generating transcontinental or inter-regional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power” (Held et al. 1999: 16).

2.4.2. Secondly, for the purpose of discussions about the relation between globalization and democracy, another of their analytical distinctions also seems potentially useful: To facilitate operationalization, they propose to break down the object of the last of their four conceptual dimensions, “impact propensity”, into *four kinds of impacts*:

- * decisional (on the relative costs and benefits of given options),
- * institutional (on the ‘chooseability’ of certain options; ‘agenda-setting’),
- * distributive (on the relative material and political positions of groups), and
- * structural (on behavioral and organizational patterns) (op. cit.: 18).

2.4.3. Thirdly, Held et al. also identify *three different currents of opinion* about the reality of contemporary globalization processes:

* The *hyperglobalist* view is characterized by the belief that globalization is a real phenomenon consisting not only in quantitative, but also in considerable *qualitative changes* in international and transnational relations and interactions, *and* that this inevitably leads to “a new epoch of human history” because it entails a dramatic modification of the structures and institutions of national and international political systems as they exist today. Hyperglobalists tend to see *economic* forces as the motor of these changes, which are then deemed bound to trigger *cultural* and *political* globalization as well, with the ultimate consequence of *the*

demise of the territorially delimited 'nation-state'.⁵ While hyperglobalists are identified by these shared *empirical beliefs*, they may have very different *normative attitudes* about globalization.⁶

* The *sceptical* view, on the opposite end of the spectrum, basically holds that “globalization is a myth”. Recent developments in across-border transactions are interpreted in terms of *quantitative increases at best*, but not as the qualitative alterations hyperglobalists claim to have detected. Besides, sceptics point out that the widening and deepening of international links is not new to human history, and that there have been epochs in which international interdependence may have been even higher than today. In any case, they note, the densification of interaction patterns today is not ‘global’ at all, but highly selective and asymmetrical, thus *reinforcing existing inequalities and exclusions*. Globalization sceptics, moreover, argue that the possible greater connectivity facilitated by *economic* liberalization and by the relativization of physical distances through *technological* advances cannot be expected to be (and in fact is not) merely accepted and adopted by governments and peoples. Rather, it provokes social and political reactions, some of which are pulling in the opposite direction, i. e., towards fragmentation, regionalization and the erection of new borders. Finally, and perhaps most controversially, globalization sceptics *reject* the thesis “that the power of national governments or state sovereignty is being undermined by economic internationalization”.⁷

Hence, the sceptical view about globalization tends to combine an *empirical* scepticism – about the real occurrence of globalization in

5 Held et al. 1999: 3–5; as representatives of this view, they mention, among others, Jean Guéhenno, Kenichi Ohmae and Susan Strange who have all become known particularly for arguing that because of globalization processes the era of the sovereign, territorially defined state is coming to an end. Particularly outspoken in this direction also: Cerny 1995.

6 Note, however, that although not all empirical hyperglobalists must have the same attitude, conversely, all those who today share a very strong attitude *against* globalization (such as the activists of ATTAC, for instance, but also quite a few academic commentators) must apparently also share hyperglobalist *empirical* beliefs, as otherwise their notorious sense of urgency and sometimes even desperate activism against globalization could hardly be accounted for.

7 Ibid.: 6–7; Held et al. name a considerable number of representatives of this view who emphasize different aspects and all agree with some, if not with all of the above assertions; most prominent among them are perhaps: Huntington, Hirst/Thompson, Krasner, Krugman, Scharpf, and Weiss.

a strict sense – with a *normative* scepticism – about the desirability (particularly: the moral desirability) of those processes that, under the allegedly mistaken label of ‘globalization’, do in fact take place, and above all about their ability to contribute to the desired improvement of an international situation seen by many as morally wanting.

* And, finally, there is the *transformationalist* view. This view, unsurprisingly, holds a middle ground between the two extremes. If hyperglobalism is, roughly, the view that (i) globalization exists and (ii) its future course is foreseeable and inevitable, and if globalization sceptics reject (i) and therefore also have no use for (ii), the transformationalist position is basically defined by the rejection of (ii) despite agreement with (i). In other words, transformationalists acknowledge that we are currently witnessing a new kind of processes on a global scale that have the capacity to induce relevant transformations in the international system (and have to some extent already done so), thus presenting challenges for theory and practice alike. But they do not believe that the trajectory these processes will take is inevitably predetermined and independent of the *choices* real actors – particularly: political actors – will be making, nor do they claim to know what these choices and, thus, what the future course of the world system will be.

As is to be expected, the great majority of academic authors (more precisely: of those academic authors concerned with the overall prospects of globalization rather than with the specific details of special, particularly economic, issues) belongs to this class.⁸ It is therefore an extremely broad category, encompassing a great diversity of specific premises, hypotheses, and predictions that complement in each case the narrow common ground characterized by the two *empirical* beliefs mentioned above, which define this view. Consequently, the *normative* attitudes towards globalization in general as well as towards currently on-going processes of globalization in particular also vary widely in this group.

8 Held et al. clearly see themselves in this camp. Of the many other authors they mention (Held et al. 1999: 7–9), Manuel Castells and Saskia Sassen probably have the greatest international notoriety. And many more could be named, such as the already mentioned Stiglitz (2002) who strongly emphasizes the importance of *choice* and whose entire book can be read, in a way, as an urgent appeal to stop making the wrong and start making the right choices; or Appiah (2003), Höffe (2000, 2002) and Singer (2002), to mention a few philosophers who write from an ethical point of view based on what seem to be ‘transformationalist’ empirical beliefs.

2.5. The last point that seems relevant to complete the analytical framework regarding globalization is fairly obvious and concerns *issue areas, policy spaces, or functional contexts of interaction*. Manifestly, globalization does not proceed homogeneously across the board. A globalization process in one area must not necessarily be accompanied by, or trigger, globalization in other areas. Hence, in order to assess the consequences of globalization for (part of) a society or the international system, what must be taken into account is not only the extent to which globalization as a whole is taking place but rather, and perhaps more importantly, the *differential pattern of globalization* across different areas in each particular case.

Among the areas most prominently distinguished in the literature as currently being subject to particularly strong and/or relevant globalization processes are:

- * *economy* (exchange, production, capital flows, ...),
- * *communications* (mobility of information, ideas, goods/bads, people, ...),
- * *ecology* (environmental bads; global public goods issues ...),
- * *culture* (beliefs, values, behavioral patterns, moral/legal/social attitudes and institutions, ...),
- * *security* (arms trade; conflict resolution, military interventions, ...),
- * *politics* ('global governance', inter-/supra-national organizations/law, ...).⁹

In *all* these issue areas, globalization can be expected to operate in ways that may be potentially relevant for political democracy (on which more below, in section 4).

2.5.1. So far, *economic issues* have undoubtedly received the greatest attention of globalization scholars – so much so that when the term 'globalization' is used alone, without further specification, a reference to *economic* globalization is usually assumed. There is a widespread belief that, except for communications, the economy is the area in which globalization today is most advanced and where its further advance is inevitable. This, combined with the additional belief that the economic dimension of globalization has the *greatest relative impact on the lives of people everywhere* through the alleged effects of certain policies and developments seen as central elements of economic globalization, seems to be responsible for most existing concerns and attitudes, positive or negative, about globalization.

⁹ Cf., e. g., Zürn 1998 (see n. 4 above), Held et al. 1999, Nye/Donahue 2000, Singer 2002, where all or most of these areas are distinguished and treated separately.

This is, therefore, also the field of the greatest and most heated controversies. Some *economists* have denounced the beliefs and particularly the fears of *non-economists* about the expected consequences of globalization as unfounded, or rather, founded on the untenable, namely on what has polemically been called “Do-It-Yourself-Economics (DIYE)” (Henderson 1998) or “Pop Internationalism” (Krugman 1996). In the view of one commentator who enthusiastically endorses Henderson’s and Krugman’s diagnoses and can stand as a representative of this line of thought, this “sets a trap for the unwary and uninitiated. Sadly, these include the bulk of the decision-making and opinion-forming elites around the world” (Sally 2000: 252–253).¹⁰

It is obviously true that some opponents of economic globalization have mistaken beliefs about economic mechanisms and data. But it would be premature to conclude from this that economic expertise must necessarily lead to a positive assessment of economic globalization, while only the economically illiterate refuse to adopt this viewpoint. Other economists have offered knowledgeable arguments to support at least *some* objections, while dismissing or at least relativizing others (cf., besides Stiglitz 2002, e. g., Frey 2003, Mandle 2003).

In any case, the controversies about economic globalization, its consequences and its desirability, can be seen largely as a continuation in slightly different terms of the secular debates between ‘pure’ economic (classical, neo-, ultra- ...) liberals and others – liberal or not – who either have doubts about the truth, and/or about the applicability to current real circumstances, of the models and theories of economics, or question the allegedly implied priority of efficiency- and gains-oriented goals over other social concerns, or both. Since economic globalization is, in a way, nothing but *economic liberalization writ large*, much of the debate looks like a re-staging of long-fought theoretical battles. However, on a global scale, the consequences of liberalization acquire new dimensions, making them more visible, but also raising the stakes. The former should facilitate the solution of *empirical* controversies; the latter may explain the intensification of *attitudes* and *emotions*, with a danger of provoking ideological blind spots for ‘dissonant’ empirical evidence on all sides.

2.5.2. The perceived relevance of the assorted *other issue areas* in the globalization syndrome pales in comparison with economic issues,

10 Purdy (2002: 143), somewhat less accusatory, has blamed not people but the issue of globalization itself, calling it “an area too forgiving of amateur reasoning”.

although it does not seem objectively true that changes, for example, in the extensity or intensity of the flow of information, environmental hazards, military hardware or cultural products (including alternative worldviews) are necessarily less incisive on the life chances of people than changes in economic conditions.

* The field of *communications and transport* occupies a privileged position because, as is generally assumed, it has provided the (necessary, and perhaps sometimes even sufficient) conditions for globalization in other areas, to begin with. This area is commonly not seen as very problematic; liberals in particular tend to celebrate this variant of globalization. Considerate authors, however, point out the political challenges implied by a number of potential problems from the impacts which the global liberalization of the movement of ideas, goods, and people in an era of drastically reduced transaction costs may cause if left unregulated (just a few keywords for the sake of illustration: rising international inequalities because of the growing so-called *digital divide*, i. e., asymmetric access to information; challenges posed by *mass migration*; health hazards due to the *spread of diseases*; impunity of *criminal acts* committed behind the electronic veil of anonymity of the internet, etc.).

* *Environmental issues* have been among the first to arouse an *awareness of global problems* and of the *need for global solutions* – an awareness that has not simply evolved, but can be attributed largely to a long and patient, consciously waged up-hill battle of specific actors, in the beginning of an almost Quixotic nature: relatively small activist groups of ‘Greens’ in a handful of (mostly, industrialized) countries who only a few decades ago were belittled and ridiculed in a way that in today’s world of the *Stratospheric Ozone Protection Regime*, the *Kyoto Protocol* and the like seems no longer imaginable.

* The mainly, if not entirely unplanned, evolutionary globalization of a wealth of different *cultural elements* (from musical and culinary tastes to legal and social institutions and moral values), in turn, is probably deplored by as many opponents who emphasize its socially *disruptive, alienating and uniformizing* effects as it is praised by advocates who focus on its *progressive, liberating and unifying* potentials.¹¹

11 The vehemence of the controversy triggered by the issue of cultural globalization and its effects is tellingly illustrated by two recent reviews of one and the same book: Tyler Cowen’s *Creative Destruction: How Globalization Is Changing the World’s Cultures* (2002). The book has been searingly disqualified by Clifford Geertz (2003) as containing hardly more than “a stream of small examples and large pronouncements sewn together by insistence and reiteration”; but what really seems to make

* Finally, regarding the *political realm*, we see to some extent a *re-framing in terms of globalization* of the eternal issues of international cooperation, security, and law, as well as of more modern reflections about the possibility and desirability of *supranational* entities, of a suspension of national sovereignty for the sake of *human rights*, or of political *spill-over effects* from transnational activities as well as from *de facto* or *de jure* functional (economic, environmental, communicative, ...) integration. But there is also a new side to the picture.

Regarding politics, *global governance* has clearly been the catchword of the past decade.¹² But it is interesting to note that the *public debate* about the pros and cons of political globalization seems to revolve primarily around the challenges to the traditional state-centered international order posed by *single disruptive events* of great change potential or of great symbolic force. One such event was certainly the abrupt end of the Cold War ca. 1990 which has allegedly offset the world system by depriving it of one of its ‘poles’; another one were the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. By contrast, although these events have certainly not left scholars unmoved, the *academic debate* about political globalization has rather been driven by the diagnosis that the more sustained challenges to the traditional state-centered international order come from the developments induced by globalization processes in other areas (in particular the ones mentioned before) which can be effectively controlled and channeled only by *political measures of global reach*.

The relationship between *globalization and democratic political arrangements* is, obviously, a special issue in this debate.

Geertz furious is that Cowen presents an ‘economic’ analysis of cultural globalization and that, as Geertz sees it, he has a black-and-white view of the world and is entirely uncritical towards what he, but obviously not Geertz, perceives as the white side of it. By contrast, the book has been given a very positive reading by David Sands (*The Washington Post*, Dec. 29, 2002) who seems to like about the book precisely what Geertz detests, namely, its economic approach; in Sands’s view, “the author does use insights drawn from classical economics to expose some of the shallower anti-globalization critiques” and shows that “the vehemence of the modern anti-globalization movement has been matched only by its incoherence”.

12 Cf., e. g., Rosenau/Czempiel 1992, Held 1995, Hirst/Thompson 1996, Zürn 1998, Väyrynen 1999, Nye/Donahue 2000, Singer 2002; cf. also the journal *Global Governance* (since 1995).

III. Three Contexts of Democracy

Nothing can be said here about democracy and the problems of democratization in general. This is a very large topic of its own which has been discussed extensively elsewhere. Only one analytical remark, for the sake of giving more structure to the discussion about globalization and democracy, is warranted:

One can, in principle, identify *three different contexts of democracy* which, quite plausibly, are commonly focussed on when the actual or possible impact of globalization on democracy is discussed:

(1) *existing democracies*: the main question here is how globalization affects their *systemic stability* and the evolution of their *systemic quality*;

(2) *currently non-democratic* (or newly and at best precariously democratic) *states*: obviously, the main issue in this context are effects of globalization on their *prospects for democratization* or *democratic consolidation*; and finally

(3) The *international system* as a whole: here, the discussion revolves not only around the *prospects*, but also around the possible *need* for democratization as a consequence of globalization processes.

It seems convenient to treat these three contexts separately, as they can be expected to be affected largely in different ways by globalization. Each one of them is important and deserves extensive discussion.

Obviously, *globalization sceptics* do not have much to say about any of these three topics. This does not mean that they see no particular challenges for democracy, where it exists, or for democratization, where it doesn't, emanating from the contemporary international situation. They just do not see them in terms of globalization.

Secondly, both *empirical* and *normative hyperglobalists* have no reason to be much concerned about the first and the second context of democracy. What they expect or hope for is an international system in which the nation-states – *all* nation-states – of today, if they still exist at all, will in any case have lost much of their power and their functions. For the democrats among them, therefore, the only urgent challenge is the democratization of the emerging international system to which that power and those functions are to be transferred.

Only *transformationalists* can in principle perceive challenges from globalization in all three contexts, although many of them have in fact

been concerned mostly with the international context and/or one of the other two.

IV. Relations Between Globalization and Democracy

A number of *hypotheses* concerning the relations between globalization and democracy are debated in the literature. They usually come in the form of *arguments* advanced by one side and almost always contested by others, on empirical or normative grounds. A few of the most frequently discussed, and also perhaps the most relevant, of these arguments will now be briefly sketched, in an order structured along the lines of the preceding observations. For easy reference, they are here provided with *names* (most of which are not standard in the literature).

4.1. Established, consolidated democracies

4.1.1. At least three hypotheses concerning the impact of *economic globalization* on relatively consolidated, stable democracies (which, not unimportantly, coincide mainly with the ‘rich’ countries of ‘the West’) are debated:

(1.1) The *incongruence argument*

National democratic institutions are losing their meaning – and with it, also their legitimacy – as the congruence between their existing jurisdictional boundaries and the jurisdictional boundaries required for the effective regulation of globalized economic matters is increasingly lost.

The quality of democracy is thus thought to be affected mainly by the *rising irrelevance of majoritarian decision-making* by democratically elected and accountable representatives of clearly circumscribed *demoi* for the determination of the living conditions of – and the distribution of rights and obligations, benefits and burdens among – those same *demoi*. This view is connected to the perception that we are living in an era in which many problems have no national solution and in which, in addition, powerful economic actors operating globally can, on the one hand, dodge their social obligations and, on the other, significantly affect the situational parameters of entire countries with their ‘private’ decisions.

In the strong version which predicts the imminent ‘end of the nation-state’, this is one of the main arguments of hyperglobalists,¹³ which is

13 Not all of which celebrate this finding: cf., e. g., Patrick Buchanan 1998.

contested by globalization sceptics, while it is endorsed only in weaker versions by transformationalists.¹⁴

(1.2) The *'race to the bottom' argument*

Economic globalization triggers a downward spiral of a continuous retraction of relatively more advanced standards in social, labor, environmental protection laws and other kinds of regulations that affect the operating costs of private enterprises, because the globalized competition of states for the allocation of companies gives the latter enormous bargaining power that permits them to some extent to dictate conditions unilaterally, to the detriment of democratic sovereignty.

This is a standard argument of anti-globalizationist as well as of more moderate critics of economic globalization, whereas pro-globalizationists commonly contest its empirical foundation.¹⁵ A sophisticated rejection of the *'race to the bottom'* argument has been presented by Vanberg (2000). He does not deny that economic globalization increases jurisdictional competition, but argues that "competition among jurisdictions can make a valuable contribution" to the "two key tasks that democratic constitutions have to accomplish", namely, to achieve the implementation of measures in "the common interest of all citizens" while, at the same time, effectively constraining arrangements that go against citizens' interests. Vanberg acknowledges, however, that the effect of such jurisdictional competition depends at least partly on whether or not there are "constitutional deficiencies at the international level" which "can be due to the failure to frame competition among jurisdictions by appropriate rules of the game".¹⁶

14 Cf. for the formulation of the argument of the reduction of state power in terms of 'incongruence': Zürn 1998: ch. 8.2.

15 Cf., among others, for the first view George 2003; for the second, Höffe 2002, ch. 15.1; for the third, Sally 2000, Frey 2003. For a balanced assessment, cf. Held et al. (1999, 13): "There is an extensive literature implicating economic globalization in the demise of social democracy and the modern welfare state ... This thesis is contested vociferously by a plethora of recent studies which ... have delivered significant insights into how the social and political impact of globalization is mediated by domestic institutional structures, state strategies and a country's location in the global pecking order ..."

16 Vanberg 2000: 106, 107. This seems to imply that Vanberg does not generally deny the possibility of an international normative *'race to the bottom'*. He just doesn't see it as an inevitable consequence of economic globalization. Rather, he

In general, taking both arguments together, economic globalization is feared by concerned observers to have negative consequences mainly for the effective power of imposition of democratic states, and in particular for the *majoritarian element of democracy*, which in established democracies tends to be relatively weak anyway (Plattner 2002).

The third argument is different, and refers to a more fundamental challenge of economic globalization for existing democracies:

(1.3) The *'two-thirds society' argument*

The structural changes from economic globalization, particularly its effects on employment, are inducing a structural marginalization and exclusion from many spheres of social life of a sizable part of the members of democratic societies, thereby violating fundamental preconditions of democracy, namely, the need for relatively homogeneous living conditions, with more or less equal opportunities for all.

4.1.2. Hypotheses about the impact of *other than economic aspects* of globalization on the quality or stability of existing democracies are rare and not very explicit. Perhaps at least the following two, one positive and one negative, deserve to be mentioned:

(1.4) The *melting-pot argument*

The infusion of new ideas, worldviews, and traditions accompanying communicative globalization and global migration enhance the pluralistic quality of democratic systems and stimulate their capacity of adaptation.

(1.5) The *security-trap argument*

The loss of control over criminals and terrorists implied in the opening of borders and the advance of communication technologies creates a need, for the sake of security, of more controls and monitoring within states and thus a negative effect on the liberal quality of democratic systems.

attributes it to a *political* failure, at the international level, to impose an adequate normative framework for globalization. Apparently, this is not incompatible with the view that *given* such inadequate international conditions, a 'race to the bottom' may be unavoidable. But it shifts the blame, so to speak, from economic to political actors. And it has, of course, implications for what may be required on the level of international politics to protect democratic achievements in a globalizing world.

4.2. *Non-democratic or precariously democratic systems*

4.2.1. The impact *economic globalization* is believed to have on the chances for the democratization of non-democratic – or for the consolidation and stabilization of democracy in newly and precariously democratic – states, most of which happen to be ‘poor’, is mainly of an *indirect* nature, through its expected or already perceived effects on the material and social conditions of the respective populations. One argument in this line, that comes in different versions, depending on which of various possible aspects are emphasized, can perhaps be called, in analogy to argument (1.3) above:

(2.1) The ‘*one-fifth society*’ argument

In poor and/or non-democratic countries, economic globalization tends to exacerbate poverty as well as distributional inequalities, thereby preventing the creation or consolidation of the necessary conditions for democracy.

This argument has two different interpretations:

* On the one hand, in analogy to the ‘two-thirds society’ argument, it may refer to the *normative* foundations of democracy, i. e., to ideas about what makes democracy justifiable and preferable over other types of regimes.

* On the other hand, it may also refer to *empirical* obstacles for democratization (here, in contrast with the ‘two-thirds society’ argument which is usually not meant to express concern over system stability).

The basic idea behind this second line of argument can roughly be outlined as follows: Non-democratic systems are characterized, among other things, by often extremely unequal opportunities for economic success, as key positions and property are held by the protagonists and clients of the respective regime, who regularly comprise only a small minority of the population (some 20%, at the most). For many reasons – economic, political, and judicial conditions –, this well-positioned minority stands to gain with economic globalization, while the less fortunate great majority, poorly educated and employed in non-competitive industries, in agriculture, in the extraction of natural resources, or not employed at all, is likely to be negatively affected. In such circumstances, the stakes for the more prosperous, who are usually identical with the more powerful, are high; hence, impulses for democracy cannot be expected to come from their side. Nor can they be expected to come from the other side, since the circumstances in which the great majority finds itself does not foster the development, above all, of the *attitudinal* preconditions of democracy, such

as: moderate expectations, the toleration of opposing views and conflicting interests, a willingness to compromise, or trust in institutions.¹⁷

In short, the argument maintains that democracy is a political arrangement that makes *great demands – normative and empirical – on citizens and officials alike*, and that the effects of economic globalization in a non-democratic or precariously democratic context will make the satisfaction of these preconditions less rather than more likely.¹⁸

This is, of course, another one of the main arguments of opponents of economic globalization. And it too is contested, on several grounds. *Objections* usually are not directed against the hypothesis linking certain social and material conditions in a society (poverty, extreme inequalities, poor education and public services, ...) to its democratic prospects. Rather, what is denied is that economic globalization actually does have the alleged negative effects on these conditions in the countries at issue:

* Some authors argue that during the recent period of economic liberalization and globalization, poverty and income inequalities in these countries not only have not risen, but have in fact declined. A weaker version of this argument is that the records on the development of poverty and inequalities at least are not entirely clear.¹⁹

17 This refers to a version of what in German is known as *Schönwetter-Demokratie*: ‘fair-weather democracy’.

18 Cf. most forcefully Pogge 2001a, 2001b. One of Pogge’s original ideas is that the “borrowing privilege” and the “resource privilege” internationally granted to all governments, whether democratic or *de facto*, and often creating huge liabilities for democratic successors of “authoritarian predators”, are a feature of the international economic order which is an obstacle to democratization and a constant incentive for potential dictators. In order to reduce these incentives, by reducing the incentives for *others* to make deals with dictators, Pogge proposes, among other things, that democratic states should declare in their constitutions that they will *not* feel bound by any contract an eventual temporarily dictatorial government signs in their name; cf. on this idea particularly Pogge 2001a, 2001c.

19 Cf., e. g., Frey 2003; however, see World Bank, UNDP and other ‘official’ data provided, e. g., in Grindle 2000, Stiglitz 2002, Okin 2003 or *Le Monde Diplomatique* 2003. For illustration: UNDP and BID data for Latin America – a relatively ‘privileged’ world region, compared with Africa and parts of Asia and the Middle East – estimate that around the turn of the millenium about half the population (up to 80% in some countries) lived on less than 60 USD a month, and about one fourth even belonged to the ‘extremely poor’ who live on less than 30 USD a month. Cf. Okin (2003) for an informative overview over the complexities of poverty assessments, the recent shift in conceptions of poverty in development economics (leading,

* Others, in turn, do not contest the coincidence of economic globalization and the deterioration of economic and social conditions, but deny that the former as such can be made responsible for the latter. Instead, they tend to see *political failure* as the primary cause of the predicament.

A strong variant of this last objection can even be regarded as a self-standing argument in favor of economic globalization:

(2.2) *The liberalization argument I*

The liberalization entailed in economic globalization is conducive to, and probably necessary for, the reduction of poverty on a global level – provided an adequate and effective regulatory framework is established to prevent undesired effects (such as asymmetric liberalization, monopolies, the permanent marginalization of certain groups, a massive loss of employment in some sectors without the creation of new possibilities elsewhere, ...).

This is an argument in favor of economic globalization that has been accepted even by critics of globalization as it has actually occurred.²⁰

In the same vein, the importance of the mitigation of the effects of asymmetric liberalization and unregulated globalization, not only for economic development, but ultimately for the capacity of the state to create solid conditions for democracy, has recently been emphasized, for example, by the sociologist and former President of Brazil, Fernando Henrique Cardoso:

“If you asked me about my most frequent complaints in the conversations I had with the leaders of the North during my eight years as head of the Brazilian government I would not hesitate to single out the demand for access to markets and the hope for mechanisms that would make short-term capital flows more predictable. My interlocutors were and continue to be not very responsive to such complaints

among other things, to the new method of *Participatory Poverty Assessment* at the World Bank), and numerous references to relevant recent scholarship on global poverty. One of the most prominent critics of currently used poverty measures, as well as of economic globalization as a cause of growing poverty, has been Thomas Pogge; a sample of his many publications on these questions (with data): Pogge 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Pogge/Reddy 2003; Reddy/Pogge 2003; the data Pogge and Reddy criticize specifically are those presented in Chen/Ravallion 2000 or in the World Bank Research Report on *Globalization, Growth, and Poverty* (2002), among others. To my knowledge the most extensive discussion of the many interrelated facets and causal factors of poverty and destitution to date is probably still Dasgupta 1993.

20 Cf. Stiglitz 2002, Mandle 2003; also, particularly against asymmetric liberalization, Frey 2003.

... The persistence of these asymmetries affects the development and the planning capacity of the state in Latin America regarding, among other things, its task to ensure what seems to me the greatest challenge for regional democracies: the universalization of public services ... Without a continuous expansion of social policies I do not see how the goal we all cherish, to bring democracy to maximal fruition, could prosper.” (Cardoso 2003: 5 f.)

And there is also a second pro-globalization argument from liberalization:

(2.3) The *liberalization argument II*

Since ”the tendency of globalization is to favor liberalism” and the liberal element tends to be weak in new democracies (Plattner 2002: 66) – not to speak of non-democracies –, economic globalization may be conducive to democratization through a liberal demonstration effect and/or a spill-over effect from the economic to the political sphere.

This is the traditional ‘economic liberalization before political liberalization’ argument well known from other discussion contexts, on which therefore nothing more needs to be said here.

4.2.2. Different beliefs and attitudes about *cultural globalization* (cf. above, 2.5.2.) and its effects on democratic potentials have also been condensed into a few explicitly or implicitly held hypotheses such as:

(2.4) The *uniformization argument*

Cultural globalization is primarily taking place in the form of the global transmission of the dominant ‘Western’ culture – its values, ideas, institutions, cultural products in the narrow sense, behavioral and consumption patterns, and even language. This is causing a global uniformization of cultures, to the disadvantage of other traditions. This process is in itself counter-democratic, as it deprives people of important means of self-expression and, ultimately, of self-determination.

This is an argument often voiced by anti-globalizationist activists. It has met with the same pattern of objections as most other anti-globalizationist arguments:

* it is contested, first of all, on *empirical* grounds, by denying the truth of the diagnosis of uniformization (e. g., Frey 2003);²¹

21 That the transmission of cultural elements does not necessarily lead to their global uniformization is also acknowledged in the term ”glocalization” which has been coined ”to deal conceptually with ... sameness-within-difference”, i. e., ”the process by which ideas and practices spread around the world by adapting or ‘finding a place’ in relation to local or particular circumstances” (Robertson 2002: 2, 3).

* and it is contested also on *normative* grounds, by pointing out the *beneficial effects* – not least, on the preconditions for *democracy* – such a ‘spread of ideas and practices around the world’ may have. This is another one of those counter-arguments that seem important enough to deserve their own entry:

(2.5) *The improved choice-menu argument*

The global diffusion of cultural elements gives people everywhere an enlarged menu of options from which to choose. In those areas where ‘uniformization’ does in fact set in, this is the result of the free choice of people and, as such, no reason for criticism or alarm.

This has been forcefully argued, for instance, by Cowen (2002) who holds that “diversity *within* societies” is more valuable than “diversity across societies”.

In turn, this raises a number of questions by itself, which are at the center of the ‘cultural globalization’ controversy and also have some bearing on prospects for democratization:

* Is it true that globalization has brought an increase in the diversity of cultural options within societies?

* Is it not perhaps rather true that, instead of more diversity by way of the addition of ‘foreign’ cultural elements to the existing ‘local’ culture, what actually happens is the ‘crowding out’ of local elements by ‘intruding’ foreign elements, the marginalization of people who desire to keep their original way of living?

* And even if internal cultural diversity increases: is this always a blessing? Is it not sometimes a death blow to a culture if it becomes mixed with elements from another?

* Does this not endanger the ‘coherence’ and internal ‘consistency’ of a culture? And where there is displacement, is it always the more ‘valuable’ cultural elements – whether foreign or local – that prevail?

* Doesn’t the strength, and the power of imposition, of a culture, perhaps precisely because of the process of globalization, nowadays depend on its economic backing rather than on any arguable intrinsic merit?

* Is the ‘Pizza Hut culture’ – a prominent example in Cowen’s book – not a kind of ‘junk culture’ which imposes itself for economic reasons

Cf. also Appiah (2003): “I look forward with confidence to the process of the globalization of a cosmopolitan liberalism”, that is, a “universalistic cosmopolitanism: a celebration of difference that remains committed to the existence of universal standards” (op. cit.: 231, 202).

as well as because of the irrationality of people who crave for anything foreign, no matter how trashy it is?

* On the other hand, if the thesis about the intra-societal increase in diversity is empirically correct, then what does this imply in terms of strains on the affected societies (since it cannot simply be assumed that such a process will have no disruptive consequences)?

* Whether the 'menu of choice' becomes longer, and whether people are actually permitted and/or in a position to choose from that enlarged menu, are quite different things. If (some) people are unable (for economic reasons) or prohibited (politically) to pick any of the new options, can this not result in (at least, transitory) turmoil in the respective societies, which may or may not be good for democratization, depending on circumstances?

* Finally, will growing globalization and the ensuing weakening of collective cultural 'identities' and increasingly felt need for religious reassurance not perhaps trigger a "clash of civilizations" after all (as Robertson 2002: 9 ff. argues)?

As with economic globalization, most of the arguments and controversies about cultural globalization are not entirely new; they just repeat from a new perspective what is known from recent discussions about *multi-culturalism*.²²

4.2.3. Hypotheses concerning relations between the prospects of democratization and globalization in other fields do not seem to play an important role in current debates. In any case, I have not been able to identify any in the reviewed literature.

4.3. *The international system*

The *need* for drastic changes in the international political system as a consequence of – particularly, but not only, economic – globalization is emphasized practically by all authors concerned with political implications of globalization. Both

* *instrumental* arguments (supra-national *decision-making*, *legislation* and *sanctioning mechanisms* are required for the effective regulation of actions with global consequences and the effective solution of problems and fulfilment of functions surpassing the capacity of nation-states) and

22 Cf. particularly Barry 2000 and Kelly 2002 for the debate about the pros and cons of cultural 'uniformization'.

* *moral* arguments (increasingly global effects of decisions require a global democratic sovereign) are advanced in support of this view.

Some of the corresponding arguments and hypotheses are directly implied by what has been said above, on the perceived or expected impact of globalization on states, whether democratic or not.

Most authors do, however, reject the idea of a single ‘world-state’, again on practical or moral grounds, arguing that

* its establishment and maintenance is *politically impossible*, and/or

* it is *practically undesirable* as it would necessarily imply the elimination of systemic competition, i. e., of an important mechanism driving the improvement of political systems, not only between democracy and other regime types, but also between different variants of democratic constitutions (on this topic, cf. particularly Geoffrey Brennan’s contribution to this volume), and/or

* it is *morally undesirable*, as such a world-state would necessarily lack some of the features of democracy – or, more generally, of the features that make a state justifiable.

It is difficult to draw any clearly distinguishable and controversially discussed hypotheses from the large literature dedicated to these questions, as was possible for the previous aspects. Instead, the main thrust of the respective reasoning of a few more or less prominent authors (representative of many others who have expressed similar views) will be presented, to conclude this survey:

(3.1) According to Mark Plattner (2002), the reason why the idea of a ‘global democracy’ or a ‘world state’ is untenable is that the majoritarian element of democracy presupposes a *well-defined citizenship* connected by *mutual bonds* as well as real power and *effective accountability* of elected office-holders. On a larger, global level, these three conditions seem unlikely to be fulfilled.

(3.2) In Otfried Höffe’s view (1999: ch. 6.2), a unitary ‘world state’ is simply unnecessary, since the nation-state as a sovereign entity is neither dead nor obsolete (he gives two empirical and two normative arguments *against* the thesis of the demise of the state). However, in an era of globalization, the system of sovereign states needs to be complemented, he thinks, by “a political order above the single states” (op. cit.: 173) in the form of a “federal, subsidiary global republic” (op. cit.:

Part II).²³ Note that he admits that this proposal does not seem realistically feasible, but declares “philosophy” not responsible for questions of practical realization and implementation (op. cit.: 320; by contrast, explicitly against the neglect of politics by ethics regarding globalization, cf. Dallmayr 2001, 2003).

(3.3) Peter Singer (2002) underscores that a democratic reconfiguration of the international system is not only morally warranted, but needed today for the sake of security and even survival. In his own words:

“... how well we come through the era of globalization (perhaps whether we come through it at all) will depend on how we respond ethically to the idea that we live in one world. For the rich nations not to take a global ethical viewpoint has long been *seriously morally wrong*. Now it is also, in the long run, a danger to their security.” (op. cit.: 13)

“To rush into world federalism would be too risky, but we could ... take a pragmatic, step-by-step approach to greater global governance.” (op. cit.: 200)

“[We face] the task of developing a suitable form of government for that single world. It is a daunting moral and intellectual challenge ... The future of the world depends on how well we meet it.” (op. cit., 201)

(3.4) Fritz Scharpf (1998) argues directly against Plattner’s view, at least as far as the question of legitimacy is concerned. For a democratic system legitimacy can, according to Scharpf, be assessed from an *input-oriented* or an *output-oriented* point of view. *Input-legitimacy*, he argues, cannot work where there is no *demos* with some kind of common identity that makes members willing to accept duties of solidarity, as in the EU or other supranational entities. *Output-legitimacy*, by contrast, only requires that outcomes can be publicly argued for and the power of political actors can effectively be controlled. Under certain circumstances, this is possible even where decisions are not referred to a mandate of the governed, i. e., where they are made technocratically, by *experts*, or through *bargaining*. For assessing the *democratic merits of regional or global systems*, it is therefore advisable to concentrate on output-legitimacy, and forget about input-legitimacy, since that is unattainable anyway. Scharpf argues that the main disadvantage of such systems is not their

23 Cf. for a somewhat similar proposal, though based on different arguments, Frey 2003 who speaks out *against* Kofi Annan’s idea of worldwide solidarity through a ‘global compact’ and *for* a network of overlapping “decentralized, functional and democratic political units”.

basic lack of legitimacy, but their *reduced problem-solving capacity*, which in turn has a delegitimizing effect. A negotiation system, as that of the EU, does not work well where conflicts of interest are too great or existing national institutions are too different to allow harmonization without great costs for any side. Unfortunately, this means that precisely in those issue areas that are hardest-hit by the effects of economic globalization – e. g., those concerning social security or employment – EU member states, for instance, face a severe challenge.

(3.5) Michael Zürn (1998), with his already mentioned "project of complex global governance", is also concerned about legitimacy. He thinks that "the core of the crisis diagnostics in the globalization debate" is that "Globalization eliminates the congruence of economic and political spaces. The decreasing congruence makes government by nation-states ineffective. The lack of effective government creates political fragmentation", and that these diagnostics are fundamentally *wrong* (op. cit.: 291). His project rather "aims at compensating social denationalization by political denationalization, creating a perceived common identity beyond national societies, and gaining democratic quality in multi-level politics too" (op. cit.: 336). Zürn believes in the *theoretical* (though not necessarily in the *political*) *possibility* as well as in the *moral desirability* of this project which he deems necessary for the establishment of "political arrangements that restore the political capacity of effective action and are at the same time democratically legitimated" (op. cit.: 28), in view of "the current dilemma of democracy in a denationalized world (op. cit.: 254): "political legitimation by parliamentary majority decision as its central source seems to be a phenomenon of this ending modernity ... To the extent that governing beyond the nation-state acquires effectiveness, we must look for alternative and complementary procedures for democratic legitimation" (op. cit.: 254). However, he is aware of the fact that "this will make much greater demands on the intellectual capacity, the normative tolerance and the solidarity of individuals than ever before in history" (op. cit.: 363).

At least in this respect, then, the prospects for more and/or better democracy under conditions of globalization look rather gloomy.

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