

# *Analysis on how globalization has eroded the distinction between domestic and international politics*

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**Abstract:** This paper mainly discusses on how the process of globalization has caused challenging influences on the conventionally defined boundaries between domestic and international politics. First, the generally admitted distinctions between the national and the transnational will be outlined by referring to the concept of sovereign state and territoriality. The definition and key features of globalization will then be stated before turning to a specific discussion on global politics. Finally, the impacts that globalization has brought to orthodox political theory will be analyzed. It will be concluded that the conventional presupposition in political studies to define a clear division between the “domestic” and the “foreign”, whether geographically or through institutional building, no longer accords with the trend of globalization.

## **1. Introduction**

Politics in the twenty-first century inevitably becomes an international affair. Global politics is a term that attempts to capture the changes which the process of globalization has caused, especially to certain traditional belief in political theory. This paper aims to demonstrate the impacts that political globalization has brought to the boundary between domestic and international politics.

## **2. The traditional view in domestic and international politics**

From a broad perspective, a state can be defined in line with the term government—the official apparatus of rule (Steinberger, 2013, pp1855). Strayer (1970) understood a state as a ‘society that is featured by political units that persist in time’. For Max Weber, a state can be understood as “a human community with its administrative staff upholds a claim on the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence, within a given territory, in the enforcement of its order”. [1] In this sense, a state is a social or political construction of legitimate coercion with a sovereign entity whose supreme authority stands far above any other kind of authorities in a given country (Steinberger, 2013). It is commonly admitted that territoriality has been considered a core component of modern countries when it comes to the definition of sovereign states since it articulated certain special relationship that does not merely rely on identity, such as family kinship, religion, and clan. [2] According to Robert (2013, p1830), a global system that established on the consensus of state sovereignty is a world that commonly admits mutually exclusive territorial jurisdictions of different countries. Genocide (2013, pp835-836) once

emphasized the central role of the concept of territoriality when discussing the term state regarding to the cases of regional conflicts. For instance, during the wartime, territorial loss can be considered as a signal of a decline of state power. For any state, the test of its sovereignty can take forms of valuing its performance when defending threats outside the country, including territorial disputes, and the effectiveness in implementing law and policies made by government (Steinberger, 2013).

Western political theory has taken the existence of an clear territorial boundary that distinguishes disparate communities for granted for a long time.[3] Rawls (1993) defined those bounded communities as possessing the fundamental structure that is based on “self-sufficient schemes” when cooperating for all the essential goals of human being (cited by Scheuerman). Meanwhile, theorists in political studies have long concentrated on developing defensible normative models of state relations (Nardin & Mapel, 1992) which typically rely on a neat distinction between “domestic” and “foreign” affairs. An essential trait of sovereign states system in modern era for some conventional realists is that the domestic arena should be a privileged site where those normative ideals and principles have a higher possibility to be achieved.[4]

However, most political theories developed so far are still restricted within a “methodological territorialist” logic in which a state is equated to a container of power. (Anthony, 2004, p176). Fundamentally, the trend of globalization has caused challenges to orthodox beliefs. The process of globalization, and the accompanying emergence of global politics, call for “substantial shifts in the ways that we theorize and practise politics” (Scholte, 2000, cited by Anthony).

### 3. Globalization

#### 3.1 The Definition of globalization

Globalization is not only a constitutional trait of the contemporary world (Giddens, 1990), but also a controversial issue in political research. According to contemporary social theory, globalization refers to those essential changes in the spatial and temporal contours of social existence around the world. In consequence, the significance of the role of space suffers a decline for that recent decades have seen a radical speedup in temporal structure of critical forms of human activity. Such that, geographical distance or space undergoes “annihilation” due to the needed time to connect different locations has been reduced. As a result, alterations in human experiences of space and time are becoming inevitable (Scheuerman, 2023).

Based on that, globalization could be unraveled along its three main characteristics, as Scheuerman stated: (1) A phenomenon of deterritorialization—the frequency of worldwide social activities has risen up, without the dilemma caused by geographical limits that participants might face in the past. From this perspective, globalization can take form of the expansive spread of new types of social events without the space constrains of territory; (2) the increase of social communication that transcends the current regional boundaries which are defined practically or theoretically; and (3) the social activity have accelerated, which is embodied in the growing global interactions, both extensively and intensively. Additionally, it creates a widely accepted mind that the world has changed into a shared social space, which is also defined as globalism. That is to say, deterritorialization and the expansion of interconnectedness are tightly related to the speedup in social life, whereas social acceleration can implement varying models.

To certain extent, globalization can be more complex than internationalization—the definition of globalization suggests that the cumulative interconnectedness in present day is fading out the importance of regional boundaries that usually divide the world map into distinct areas, nationally, economically or politically.[5] Tomlinson (1999) argued that interconnectedness should be a more decisive facet of globalization. That is, individuals and communities in domestic area have received a growing impact brought by events or decisions in geographically distant regions of the globe.[6]

Anthony (2004) believed that different types of activities have been effectively “stretched” across political borders as developments or decision making in certain localities can have intended or unintended consequences for distant areas, by the example of how decisions from WTO affect the livelihoods of poorest workers around the world. Evidently, under the context of globalization, “geographical borders no longer demarcate a bounded national political space” (Anthony, 2004, p168). To summarize, the analysis on globalization aims to explain those major changes that are ongoing during the process of organizing and managing humane affairs. The traditional recognition that the world is constituted of national states that are territorially interdependent has been evolved into a collective mind that concerns the world as a socially shared space.

### 3.2 Political Globalization

If it is seen from a political perspective, this phenomenon has undermined the priority of local and national boundaries. IR theory generally focuses on mutual relationships among different countries and thus understands a state as an aggregation that is mainly composed of various kinds of political power (Salvatore & John, 2019). However, tracing back to the first stage of post-Cold War era (1991-2001), a principal theme of international relations had already changed into international affairs due to the combined outcomes caused by globalization and the diffusion of global interconnections (Roland, 2010). Therefore, a reconsideration of the fundamental problems of normative political theory is strongly demanded.

Regarding to the complex origins and dynamics, political globalization cannot be simply equated to a manifestation of great power politics or geopolitics (Anthony, 2004, p174). Instead, political globalization refers to the worldwide and trans-sovereign reach of political authority and governmental systems with corresponding institutions. It is embodied in the process of political interactions that are becoming gradually wider, higher and faster (Anthony, 2004, p168).

The typical phenomenon of contemporary political globalization are fundamentally shaped by the main manifestations of globalization, which could be observed as: (1) the intensification of worldwide political interconnectedness that encompasses transnational policy problems, (2) new systems of global regulation, (3) political action at a distance, and (4) transnational solidarities (Anthony, 2004, p167). Accordingly, it features a dynamic mechanism that consists of a “multi-layered” global governance complex, the emergence of transnational civil society, the formation of a transnational public sphere and those transforming political communities.

### 4. Challenges from political globalization

Following the end of the Cold War, the legitimacy of those classic geopolitical administration of global affairs has become increasingly marginal. As a result, the multiplicity of international political bodies, such as ICC and ASEAN, are organized in order to deal with the matters which might go beyond a state’s control, and further, to ensure world order. Likewise, cosmopolitans are seeking for a system of “global government” or state with political institutions in transnational level (Cabrera, 2011; Scheurman, 2014). Besides, the global interconnectedness of diverse nation states offer those non-state actors an opportunity to wield their potential influence, which also renders hierarchical forms of managing global affairs less effective. Those transnational political coalitions effectively constitute a multi-layered global governance complex. As a consequence, a detectable shift from the classic multilateralism could be proved: Multilateralism and geopolitics coexist in dynamic tension during this period. Additionally, those traditional domestic models of self-rule have been transforming into other forms of global governance (Maus, 2006). However, this global complex could be distorted by enormous inequalities within it. For example, Joseph Stiglitz is a critics of the International Monetary Fund for its tendency to levy excessively restrictive conditions on states in

return for aid, limiting their ability to intervene in the economy and preventing possible development of underdeveloped countries (Jason, 2013, p877).

The global governance complex is accompanied by the emergence of a global civil society where citizens around the world can collaborate across national borders to advance their common interests or goals. This transnational society has developed due to the acceleration and growing availability of interconnections in modern era, as well as the consciousness of shared benefits across states that locate in worldwide distant sites. Therefore, a new political movements from the bottom up constitutes an increasingly significant social force through which communities and citizens come to challenge systems of domination and exclusion. Another side to this change is the rapid diffusion of political ideas and relevant process with overwhelming media networks, which amplifies the worldwide influences of political organizations (Anthony, 2004, pp168-169).

Based on the combined function of the global governance complex and transnational civil society, an evolving international public sphere has been developed, which renders the orthodox territorial conception of political community comparatively antiquated. According to Keohane and Nye [10], this complex interaction could be attributed to a strengthened “institutional velocity” which helps the influence of certain decisions in distant locations to spread rapidly through the global networks that usually can produce aggregate effects. In this way, those actions might lead to several unintentional outcomes, some of which can be even unfavourable. This view explains how profoundly that interconnectedness of globalization affects the traditional boundaries between domestic and foreign issues. According to the “world society” theory, a world society which is featured by “stateless” is the highest level and ultimate form of humane society. It shows an intensive level of connection that links those separated human communities together. Individuals in this society hold mutual values, based on which normative instructions can be built.[11] Echoing that, Salvatore and John (2019) put forward their view that the emergence of worldwide society has contributed to the formation of a new type of international society. It is a “central state system” through which political power also undergoes globalization and thus has been centralized. As a result, a global picture that manifests as a “steep hierarchy” has been created, as similar as the social hierarchy system in national society. In this new type of international society network, a certain country could become the “central state”.

As Anthony (2004, pp172-173) pointed out, global politics witnesses the ruptured boundaries in key facets of conventional politics in the era of globalization, including: (1) a shifted scale of political life in which power operates simultaneously from the local area to the global neighborhood; (2) the blurring boundaries that separate the “national” from the “international; (3) the unbalanced power distribution among divergent actors from public or private groups under a worldwide hierarchy system; (4) the disseminated authority in charge, ranging from supra-state organizations to sub-state branches of lower levels; (5) an increasing weakness of the status of sovereignty for it is being exercised as a “bargaining tool” within the global governance complex; (6) gradually opened national polities. Overall, all politics are inevitably becoming global politics. Greider (1997) further asserted that global politics will be ultimately constituted by an empire of global capital.[12] Constructing global politics can be understood as the process of establishing and managing a network of social ties that might go beyond national borders on a global scale. This trait of political globalization has constituted the fundamental decisive characteristic of human society in the twenty-first century (Modelski, 1972).

In summary, as social activities such as political and economic transactions on a global scale transcend state borders, the traditional consensus in political studies that there exists a presupposed “self-contained and self-governing community” has been evidently fictional and open to debate. [13]

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the process of globalization has certainly eroded the distinction between domestic and international politics for the following reasons: (1) Deterritoriality leads to the annihilation of geographical distance, which undermines the core status of national borders in modern era; (2) Social interconnectedness and accelerated social activities amplify the worldwide influences of political issues irrespective of geographical bounds; (3) A “stateless” political system accompanied by a developing global governance complex is forming. All those facts render the presupposition of a “closed domestic polity” unrealistic and disputable.

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