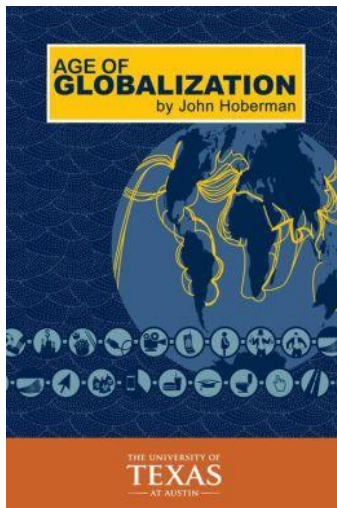


John Hoberman, **Age of Globalization**, Austin, Texas: University of Texas at Austin, 2013, 164 pp., \$7.00 (E-book).

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Globalization is not a new phenomenon. Some scholars tend to view globalization as a product of early 20th-century advancements in industrialization and the development of modern transportation and communication technologies. Although international travel, and especially new media technologies, have played huge roles in expanding and accelerating the globalization process, several other subtle and often ignored factors remain powerful globalizing forces. Interconnection and exchange between peoples for purposes of diplomacy, trade, technological advancement, culture, and so on goes back practically to the earliest civilizations when different groups of people began to interact, intermarry, and trade by barter. The issues that have developed from these cross-border relations among nations (balanced or unbalanced, beneficial or exploitative) form the crux of the globalization narrative.

In the first chapters of *Age of Globalization*, developed from a series of lectures given during a 2013 MOOC with the same title organized by the University of Texas at Austin, John Hoberman introduces and maps out three phases of globalization. Hoberman describes globalization as “a set of man-made systems that provide transport, communication, governance, regulation and entertainment on a global scale” (p. 7). He traces the origins of globalization to 1492 to mark a first phase of early voyages of exploration and colonization. This phase, according to the author, marked the beginnings of European discovery, trade, and eventual conquest of hitherto unknown regions of Africa, Asia, and the West Indies. Through state-sponsored expeditions, the likes of Columbus, Cortes, and Drake prepared the way for the expansion of European political power, economic expansion, and exploitation of the new world. This phase saw the rise of the British East India Company in 1600—the progenitor of modern multinational corporations which continue to influence the world economy. However, historical records show that incursion into the new world predates 1492. Assyrians, Phoenicians and Romans for example, had trade or colonial connections with peoples of other nations, either transferring or forcefully imposing their cultural values and expanding their economic and political empires. These early connections were in no way different. The year 1492 only marked a continuum of a long cycle of exploitation.

The second phase of globalization, which the author describes as the age of transnational integration, began in 1850 and lasted until the outbreak of World War I in 1914. This era witnessed the intensification of industrialization, transportation, science, and communication. According to Hoberman,

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"this era transformed people's expectation of what was possible comparable to the impact of new media technologies which shape today's world" (p. 11). European countries, especially Britain, France, and Spain, benefited enormously through trade in the vast resources exploited from colonized territories.

Hoberman traces the third phase and current age of globalization to the end of World War II in 1945. He notes that starting in the 1970s, a new order of capitalism championed by the United States emerged and to date remains a key feature of modern globalization. Capitalism facilitated the rise of powerful multinational corporations, many of which directly or indirectly still dominate key sectors of the global economic sphere. The commercially centered and competitive ideologies of capitalism are the underlying forces of modern globalization. Economic interests increasingly redefine the roles of nation-states, reshape the media, and influence social justice, the environment, labor, sports, and even the entertainment industries.

Two overriding themes dominate the entire text: unfulfilled idealistic internationalisms and the culture of creative destruction.

Unfulfilled Idealistic Internationalisms

Many of the sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and cultural issues witnessed in the world today stem from initially good plans that have gone bad. The early years of the 20th century saw the rise of several international organizations movements that aimed to improve and integrate the world: the Red Cross, the Boy Scouts, the Nobel Prize, and the Olympic Games to mention but a few. The United Nations and World Bank, which emerged after the end World War II, were established to prevent another world war and to create economic stability among countries. Hoberman describes the agenda of these organizations as "idealistic internationalisms" (p. 12). Pitched against the powerful and marginalizing forces of globalization, these organizations have not been able to realize their ideals. Their efforts are continually undermined by rich and powerful countries that call the shots in global affairs. Examples of undermining activities of these global powers are numerous. The continual dominance of the UN Security Council by powerful and technologically advanced nuclear states has either caused or fueled more wars and conflicts than ever witnessed before. Regulatory bodies such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which were established to regulate air and maritime transport, ensure the protection of the environment, and promote healthy competition among companies, have become ineffective as rich countries like the United States and China continually influence decisions and openly flout international regulations on sea and atmospheric pollution. International regulations to protect whales from extinction are continually flouted by Japan on the claims of conducting "scientific experiments" thus prompting Greenpeace and the Sea Shepherds to forcefully and dramatically enforce international regulations.

The global media, developed over centuries with the aim of knitting the world together by disseminating information to foster greater understanding and appreciation of different peoples, is increasingly becoming a tool for promoting misunderstanding and disunity. The continual demonizing of Muslims in Western media, which intensified after September 11, 2001, and continues even up to the 2014 conflict in Gaza, is just one of many examples. Major global media bodies and telecommunication

companies are Western owned. Media houses in developing countries do not hold a candle to them. Global news on various platforms is thus constructed to propagate Western ideologies and reinforce hegemony, reinforcing the ugly situation nonaligned countries tried to avoid as they campaigned for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in UNESCO in the 1970s. The Internet, which was viewed as a new medium to facilitate various kinds of exchange, is increasingly becoming a tool for marginalization as access and strength of Internet connection has become a criteria for distinguishing between developed and developing countries. Disclosures by WikiLeaks and Edward Snowden reveal massive surveillance and data mining programs which infringe on citizens' privacy.

The Culture of Creative Destruction

According to Hoberman, "globalization promotes a culture of creative destruction within global capitalism that creates winners and losers, making competition the beating heart of the globalization process" (p. 7). Hoberman here means that globalization first creates a global community then destroys it by promoting a materialistic culture that fuels competition, class division, and insatiable desire for wealth. Commercial interests and competition are the central ideologies of modern globalization. Market share prices and public ratings have become the cardinal interests even of media organizations that were established to serve public interests. Globalization has thus encouraged an ideology that weighs all actions by cash value. Insatiable greed for wealth and power has fueled the rise in global crime, ranging from human to drug trafficking, illegal logging, trade in human organs and endangered species, and identity theft, to mention but a few.

Privatization has allowed business moguls to expand their businesses to control key sectors of several nation-states. The impact of MTN and Vodacom in Africa illustrates this point. Big corporations are increasingly threatening the sovereignty of nation-states. As Hoberman states, "countries and companies are locked in an evolving balance of power relationship . . . globalization thus becomes the playing field on which these rivals contend" (p. 54). With huge financial bases, some multinational corporations like Walmart and Microsoft make profits that rival the entire wealth of many nation-states. Multinational corporations are increasingly becoming what mid-nineteenth century English politician Robert Lowe described as little republics within a republic which create divided loyalties. Staff of these corporations increasingly face the dilemma of where to place their loyalty: to government or to a company that pays well enough to meet their needs.

In simple and very clear-cut language, John Hoberman paints a very grim but true picture of how the world works in terms of its sociopolitical, economic and cultural systems. His analysis of globalization stems from a political-economic examination of exploitative manmade systems and how these systems reinforce unequal opportunities. However, it is advisable for him in subsequent editions of the book to include more detailed information on ways in which smaller countries can positively assert themselves in the competitive age of globalization. Hoberman maintains a simple style throughout the book by not raising complex arguments and theories. His use of copious, timely, and relevant examples in text, audio, and visual formats makes *Age of Globalization* a good choice for students and scholars new to globalization studies.