

## AN OVERVIEW OF GLOBALIZATION'S IMPACT ON WELFARE THE CONTRIBUTION OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO THE GLOBAL SOCIETY

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**ABSTRACT:** *The phenomenon of globalization has - for a long time and through many of its aspects - been the subject on intense analytical debate. The social indicators show that it had a positive effect on the welfare of many countries' populations, notwithstanding variations in its progress, due to age or nationality. New phenomena like mass migration and redefinitions at the international level of some concepts like that of handicap have determined a visible transition to what nowadays one calls the global society and towards the development of global social policies. A significant contributor to these changes are the international organizations.*

**Keywords:** *welfare; global society; international organizations; global social policies;*

### The Globalization – A Concept in Expansion

The rich literature on globalization is continuously expanding. The term first appeared in corporate boardrooms in the 1960s but became well-known in the public and academic spheres in the 1990s (Robinson 2012). Raewyn Connell (2007) claims that the term globalization is in fact “an encounter” between sociology and global aspects which lead to the concept of global society. “The rhetoric and performativity of globalization theory construct a relation with metropolitan audiences, and sociological theories constitute themselves in multiple ways as Northern theory”.

Veronika Wittmann (2014) finds that the debate over globalization takes national, international, and trans-national stages especially “since the breakdown of the bipolar world order and is differently perceived and reflected upon in public discourse, in realpolitik and in the media, as well as in scientific disciplines”. “In the middle of the nineteenth century, many of the dimensions of globalization had already been identified as the mobility of people, the expansion of trade, financial and cultural flows worldwide, and international cooperation” says (Lecler, 2019). The globalization has been defined by Sirgy et

al. 2000, p. 253 (apud Tsai, 2007, p. 1) as a process of diffusion of goods, services, capital, technology, and persons (workers) over national borders. “In a general sense, globalization has been defined as the increased worldwide integration of economic, cultural, religious, social, and political systems. However, globalization is a multidimensional notion that covers considerably more than commerce and capital flows” says (Muhammad, 2022, p.122). In another definition, one takes the view of globalization as a growing interdependence between economic, social, cultural, political, and legal structures and global institutions (Turtiainen, 2018).

At a global level, we are witnessing two opposing currents. One is a continuous movement of trans-national solidarity and connectivity due to the impact of rapid flow of information that keeps communities connected to what's happening in various parts of the world, examples being the movements like Indignados and Occupy movements across Europe and North America; youth mobilization in support of the Arab Spring movements; transnational commemorations of the victims of terrorist attacks in Paris, France or in Christchurch, New Zealand; Extinction Rebellion in London and other European cities; as well as the transnational youth Fridays for Future rallies in the last couple of years

(Triandafyllidou, 2022, p. 207). The opposite current is that of nationalism and separatism, examples being movements like Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" or patriotard campaigns of Hungary's Viktor Orban, France's Marie LePen or Italy's Salvini.

### **Welfare in the Context of Globalization**

The relationship between globalization and well-being has started to gain more importance according to (Can, 2023). The phenomenon of globalization can be looked upon from a multi-dimensional perspective that is articulated through various mechanisms like financial and market liberalization. In time disparities emerged between countries and with all the efforts that have been made, not everyone enjoyed the same benefits. Some countries fell behind, and depending on each specific case, globalization lead to more or less equality.

The relationship between globalization and income inequality has been the subject of much research and the correlation between globalization and social development is intensely studied, the conclusion being that the phenomenon had both positive and negative effects.

The process of European integration accelerated globalization in virtue of the fact that member countries transferred some of their power to European institutions. Han, Ocal, and Aslan (2022) claim that as an example of economic integration and regional cooperation, the European Union is expected to strive more toward a more equitable distribution of income among member states, but they found that visible inequalities emerged, especially after the 1980s. Their 1995-2018 data-based panel quantile analysis method study found that trade openness and stock market capitalization decrease poverty at all development levels, but preserve differences in well-being among member states.

The literature shows that globalization is not the only cause of inequality as it results in both advantages and vulnerabilities in strongly subsidized and rigid governmental frameworks. In looking at the last wave of globalization, Vanesa Jordá and José María Sarabia (2015) notice that during the last decade, the process

has substantially accelerated, with most countries becoming connected to trade and capital flows, migration, and technology transfer. The attention is being shifted however from the economic towards the social sphere.

Concretely, globalization has had a powerful effect on education, health, security, the political system and the environment. The 1980s through 2011 have been known as globalization decades. The authors attempt to understand if the phenomenon of globalization brings equal benefits to both developed and developing countries and if it lets one see who are the winners and the losers in the process. Toward that goal, they describe the relationships between globalization, the improvements in the social sphere, and the distribution patterns at the national level. The indicator used is the Human Development Index since is the most popular indicator and since it also takes into account non-monetary aspects (Klugman et al., 2011 apud Jordá and Sarabia, 2015, p. 125). The results show a tilt on the right side of the HDI distribution curves for the period, indicating an increase in well-being. Additionally, a decrease in the disparity of incomes is also noticeable, although not as substantial as one would wish. Muhammad Tariq Majeed (2018) analyses the relationship between the economic, social, and political dimensions of globalization and the quality of life for 44 Islamic periods during the 1970-2010 period. Using several estimation techniques, he concluded that the economic and political forms of globalization tend to lead to an improvement in well-being, but less so the social one.

The political and economic aspects of globalization are more and more prevalent in the literature. Vincenzo Pavone (2007) analyses the way in which intergovernmental organizations like the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) react to globalization. Tracing UNESCO's philosophical cultural foundation from its beginnings, Pavone identifies swings between scientific humanist ideas and functionalism. The scientific humanism promoted by UNESCO after the Second World War had little success in achieving the Utopian ideal of world peace, so the more pragmatic model of functionalism and

intergovernmental cooperation has been adopted for it appeared more instrumental until the end of the Cold War. After the end of the Cold War, the philosophical ideas of scientific humanism gained traction one more time, bringing a global model with it. A Utopian vision persisted in many of UNESCO's programs and projects nevertheless, contributing further to the expansion of globalization. An illustrating example is that of UNESCO's world sites, where out of 1157 properties belonging to 167 out of 195 states of UNESCO's patrimony, 47 are shared by more than one country (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>).

### **Social Policies and Globalization**

Social policy studies have traditionally been centered on nation states, particularly on the European ones. Social policy makers however have never been working in complete isolation from those of other countries. A telling description of these interferences and their historical evolution has been done by Nullmeier, González de Reufels, Obinger (2022). The authors review the process of social policy-making that first started in the 19th-century Europe, the first wave of globalization ending in 1914 with the onset of the First World War. They also look at other significant events that determined interactions among social policing like the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the Great Depression which sent shocks throughout the world and produced various and ambiguous effects on policy-making (Nullmeier, González, Reufels and Obinger 2022, p. 2). In recent times, research in the domain also changed its accent from being nation-state-centered to being more global, especially among western states, where social policymakers did not act in isolation (Nullmeier, de Reufels and Obinger, 2022).

Bob Deacon (1997) identifies at least three forms of supra-nationalization, specifically supra-national legislation, supra-national redistribution, and supra-national provisioning. The first involves various mechanisms, instruments, and politics that try to legislate commerce in the interests of social protection and of meeting welfare objectives. This is a

form that is in its early stages. The second form is that of redistribution among countries, the most obvious being the sub-global example of the European Union. The third form refers to measures being in an embryonic stage developed exclusively at the European level “whereby people gain an entitlement to a service or are empowered in the field of social citizenship rights by an agency acting at a supranational level like The Council of Europe empowers the citizens of member states to take their governments to the Strasbourg Court of Human Rights if they believe their rights have been circumscribed” (Deacon, 1997, pp. 3-4).

The most problematic aspect is that social policymaking involves a wide variety of forms and intervention mechanisms and various degrees of support. This happens especially in the non-EU countries as Daniela Vintila and Jean-Michel Lafleur describe in their book (eds.) *Migration and Social Protection in Europe and Beyond. A focus on Non-EU states*, published in 2020. The problem of migration, which is directly connected to the phenomenon of globalization, has only recently entered researchers' attention, even if there is massive literature on it. There are limitations nevertheless. Firstly, when examining the ways in which the host country treats immigrants, Vintila and Lafleur notice a lack of attention to benefits and levels of protection that they could enjoy from their respective countries of origin. Secondly, the latest studies show a Euro-centric perspective on welfare expectations in spite of not being able to apply the European model to other countries (Vintila and Lafleur, 2020, p. 2). As a matter of fact Leisering (2020) claims that even though in Europe's Western and Northern and in some Commonwealth countries there is a tendency to look upon the welfare state as being the sign of a healthy society (as indicated by phrase-words like “social rights”, “inclusion”, “universal social protection”), the future of welfare state will be configured by non-western states. Vintila and Lafleur's analysis included 12 countries of origin for immigrants residing in the European Union, respectively Argentina, China, Ecuador, India, Lebanon, Morocco, Senegal, Serbia, Switzerland, the Russian Federation, Tunisia,

and Turkey), and the United Kingdom (UK) after the Brexit referendum. All of them have different welfare systems and have been selected based on their proportion of immigrants in the EU. In terms of the Human Development Index and poverty rates, the analyzed countries show large variations. Switzerland, the UK, Argentina, and Russia score quite high in the Human Development Index, and Turkey, Serbia, Lebanon, Ecuador, China, and Tunisia are in the top 100. Morocco and India score in the middle and Senegal occupies the last position in this rank among the 13 selected countries.

As to the evolution of poverty rates between 2000-2018, one can notice an improvement for all countries mentioned, alas in different degrees. Due to reforms, poverty rates have dropped in India, Tunis, Russia, and China. More worrisome is the situation of Senegal and Lebanon where the level of welfare is still low (Vintil and Lafleur, 2020, pp. 11-13).

The creation and spread of work insurance schemes in democratic countries varies from one country to another, having to do with economic-political factors (Breznau and Lanver, 2022). Nevertheless one can now talk of a generalization of such schemes. A study of the evolution of such insurance schemes has been done by Breznau and Lanver (2002) who found that the origins of such policies date all the way back to ancient Greece and Rome, a time when provisions for health care, pensions, survivor benefits and compensation for injuries were offered to soldiers (p. 41). Michael Windzio and Kerstin Martens (2022) focus on both the vertical and horizontal global interdependencies in the development of the field of education, the authors bringing a noticeable contribution to the study of education globalization. Seitzer and Besche-Thruthe (2021) focus on the effect of a country's membership in different clusters defined by cultural characteristics, on the diffusion of compulsory education.

What is now known as the concept of global social policy recently underwent an extension, including additional issues. Disability for example was only recently (in the last decade) included as a subject of social policy making, mainly as a result of rehashing it from a medical

concept into a social (social limitation more precisely) one. The process took quite a few years, an official definition having been laid out in 2006 during the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the United Nations (UN), representing a seminal step in establishing disability as a human rights issue (Schuster and Kolleck, 2021). Another example of a recent inclusion is the issue of women's discrimination which is now in the attention of several organizations, the most prestigious being the UN Women Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). "Models provide evidence that the impact of CEDAW ratification on women's and girls' health outcomes varies by global regions. While the authors find no significant gains in health outcomes in European and North American countries, the countries in Northern Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Africa, Caribbean and Central America, South America, Middle-East, Eastern Asia, and Oceania regions experienced the biggest gains from CEDAW ratification, exhibiting reductions in total fertility, adolescent fertility, infant mortality, maternal mortality, and neonatal mortality" (Gevrek and Middleton, 2016).

### **The Contribution of International Organizations to the Global Social Governance**

Niemann, Martens, and Kaasch (2021) note the fact that international organizations have become important actors in a significant dimension of globalization, under the concept respectively known as global social governance. These organizations prepare, guide, and supervise international treaties pertaining to welfare. A systematical exploration of institutional complexity rests on a comprehensive understanding of the subject. Works on this topic are concentrated around a few case studies instead of capturing the phenomenon in its breadth according to (Haftel and Lenz, 2022).

In the aftermath of World War II a new world order was put in place which was based on a few well-organized international institutions like the United Nations, the

International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Nowadays the architecture of global governance includes a variety of “formal and informal, regional and global international organizations, self-standing international treaties, trans-governmental networks, non-governmental organizations, and transnational public–private partnerships” (Haftel and Lenz, 2022, p.1). Issues like global warming, global health, intellectual and property rights, and others implicate clusters of institutions and treaties with intersecting mandates and memberships (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni and Westerwinter, 2022).

As a form of hybrid institutional complex, global governance comprises heterogeneous interstate, infra-state, public–private and private transnational institutions, formal and informal. Although these complex frameworks bring multiple benefits, there are also a series of risks associated with them firstly due to them amplifying overlaps and contests instead of bringing order and coherence, secondly for sometimes focusing on issues for which they are not always qualified reducing thus the substantive fit and thirdly for “the ”soft” institutions within may reduce the focality and authority of incumbent treaties weaken the incentives to establish new ones” (Abbott and Faude, 2022).

Even with a lack of a systematical and comprehensive analysis of the notion of global governance, there are examples that illustrate the concept. Some of the most visible are United Nations' programs that cover the field of sustainable development. “UN has become the foremost forum to address issues that transcend national boundaries and cannot be resolved by any one country acting alone” (<https://www.un.org/en/global-issues>). “The United Nations launched its sustainable development agenda in 2015, reflecting the growing understanding by Member States that a development model that is sustainable for this and future generations offers the best path forward for reducing poverty and improving the lives of people everywhere. At the same time, climate change began making a profound impact on the consciousness of humanity. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF),

originally known as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, provides emergency food and healthcare to children and mothers in countries that had been devastated by World War II. In 1950, UNICEF's mandate was extended to address the long-term needs of children and women in developing countries everywhere. In 1953 it became a permanent part of the United Nations System, and the words "international" and "emergency" were dropped from the organization's name, though it retained the original acronym, "UNICEF"”. (<https://www.un.org/en/ccoi/unicef-united-nations-childrens-fund>).

Other well-known examples of global governance are the programs of the World Bank that had a major impact on policy-making in the Central and the South-Eastern Europe and some countries in Latin America, or the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development that (among many other achievements) also fueled strong debate on the best suited educational system for Germany, or UNESCO having the stated purpose of “sharing knowledge about diverse cultures fosters understanding and tolerance, ultimately creating inclusive societies” (<https://www.unesco.org/en>), cu a broad range of expertise in the fields of education, the sciences and culture. Examples are many more.

## Conclusions

The theorization on the phenomenon of globalization is still in its early stages, even though there is some history of it. During the last decades an acceleration of interferences and socio-economic, cultural and political diffusions took place, especially due to the explosion and democratization of information. The fluidization of information exchange is a new element that was added to the mix of people and goods already moving around.

The studies which address the relationship between globalization and welfare - although not many - do conclude that the phenomenon of globalization had both positive and negative effects over the quality of life for many people. The socio-economic condition are important,

but the political ones are sometimes critical. The massive immigration that took place during the last decades, facilitated by the disappearance of borders between countries, particularly in the European Union, proves this point, but is not the only factor. Although the quality of life improved globally, there still remain disparities based on age or national profile.

If globalization of the economic structures implies the transfer of some of the political power from local and national structures to

global institutions like multinational corporations or international organizations like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and others, then the contribution to the improvement in the quality of life is undeniable. Social policies thus become less anchored in their national patterns and one can now talk of a global social policy. As mentioned before, a notable impact on social policy making is due to global international institutions, best examples being the various agencies of the United Nations.

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