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Globalism and the Internet: How Much Are We Willing to Pay for Security?

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Globalism and the Internet: Editorial Essay

Posted on **February 1, 2002** by **Editor**



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Editor, *The Journal of Education, Community and Values: Interface on the Internet*.

The Electronic Journal of the Berglund Center for Internet Studies

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.01. Introduction

With this editorial we begin a series of analyses on the linked topics of the Internet, globalism, global civic culture, privacy, and terrorism. At first glance these topics may seem so disparate as to be unrelated. But these topics are closely related and they are of major importance in the future development of the Internet. We begin with globalism and global civic culture.

In brief, we argue here that the Internet and globalism are closely related in their development; they are key factors in defining the era in which we live. Although globalism is primarily an economic process, it includes cultural processes that are creating a global civic culture. But

economic globalism does not require the Internet in its present form, and there are reasons to believe that changes are inevitable. It is possible that we will have economic globalism, but not cultural globalism.

.02. Defining Globalism ([Return to Index](#))

When we speak of globalism, we refer above all to economic issues. But globalism also embraces many cultural issues. Because its impact is so extensive and so deeply felt, a precise definition of the concept is elusive. [1] Jon Katz, the very active editorial writer at *Slashdot.com* (“News for Nerds — Stuff that Matters”), writes [2] :

I've been writing about it [globalism] for years, and got more than 2,000 responses and e-mails about it from some columns here last week, but you know what? I still couldn't tell you exactly what it is. "It's the biggest evil facing the world," e-mailed JDRow. "It's the only hope the world really has," messaged a professor from Amherst. Neither could say what it was. Can you?

Given the lack of a standard definition of this term, we attempt one here, intended to fit our own uses of the term in this and subsequent editorials:

Globalism is the spread of a very wide range of ideas and practices, principally economic ones, beyond the boundaries of individual nations into the world arena.

The most controversial impacts have tended to be economic ones. While many Americans are concerned about the potentially adverse economic consequences of globalism on their jobs or lives, few worry about the impact of American popular culture abroad.

.03. Globalism and the Internet ([Return to Index](#))

It is apparent that the Internet itself is directly related to the phenomenon of globalism or *globalization* if we wish to view it as the dynamic process that it is rather than as a static entity. The Internet is a *cause* of globalization in that it is perhaps the single most important communications channel by which values and practices are spreading beyond individual nation states. It enables international businesses to exchange vast electronic files and powerful graphical images. Within the foreseeable future capacity will be sufficiently large to make the downloading of Hollywood films a practical means of accessing far larger audiences in a far more timely and cost-effective fashion than is presently true. Non-governmental entities and individuals will be able to participate in multipoint video conferencing, as do well-funded groups today.

The contemporary era, sometimes referred to as post-industrialism, also has been called the “Age of Informationalism” [3] by Manuel Castells, the most influential analyst working in the field. He emphasizes that the phenomenon of informationalism differs from earlier stages of industrialization. The feedback loop between process (the digital production of a wide variety of

artifacts, but principally, information) and product (information) is much more important and the loop closes much faster than in industrial processes. New processes lead to new information, which almost immediately leads to new processes, ad infinitum. [4] The Internet is clearly the critical link in the dissemination of this information as well as being in considerable part the market for it, if we consider the Internet to be the entire system of digital communication, from desktop processors where the information is created to the browsers of end users.

But the Internet is also in part a *result* of globalization. The spread of markets and production processes abroad has included with it the production and consumption of the vast array of computer technology necessary to the Internet at every step, from the creation of an HTML file, to the applications and mechanisms necessary to send and receive it over the equally necessary cables and wires that embody the “net”.

.04. Globalism and Earlier Expansions of Trade ([Return to Index](#))

A wide variety of responses to globalism have emerged, all the way from dismissive comments that it is, in fact, merely the same old struggle for markets that has consumed mankind’s energies from the beginnings of trade, to impassioned arguments that globalism is an entirely new phenomenon with epochal reach and consequences. [5] It is comforting to many to believe that globalism is merely an evolution of earlier economic processes. Both the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank are officially committed to this view. [6]

I think, however, that they are in some important regards mistaken. There is a great difference between the British East India Company, perhaps the most important British mercantilist corporation and the leader in expanding trade in the early modern age, and today’s Nike, Inc.

The critical factor in the Informational age is that processes, ownership, and management practices are all networked. Nike, although we like to think of it here in Oregon as a local firm, is not even an American firm in any important sense. The British East India Co., though distributed worldwide, was British. It had an important relationship with the British state, its owners were British, and the ships’ bottoms it leased were British owned.

Nike is a worldwide network whose “campus” could as easily be in Vancouver B.C., as in Beaverton, Or. Moreover, It does not itself produce anything, save perhaps for fashion designs. Its production processes are themselves networked; only a very few shoe parts are made directly by Nike. It employs subcontractors to produce shoes abroad that are then mostly sold through outlets owned by others, though Nike perhaps owns a few stores outright. Its production processes are “just-in-time” and dependent upon electronic communications for their cost effectiveness. To believe that Nike is merely following in the wake of the British East India Co. as a capitalist enterprise is to miss very important differences between the two entities, and between the two eras in which they exist.

.05. Positive Responses to Globalism ([Return to Index](#))

Many scholars have observed that there has been within the American value system of the last several decades, a conflation of what were earlier quite distinct ideas. “Freedom” now means, to many Americans the freedom to make consumer choices. This idea is a very powerful one that has raised an abstract notion of “market” to such a height that Harvey Cox, a noted theologian, has observed that the market now performs many of the functions earlier ascribed to “God.” [7]

Given the widespread public repetition endlessly hammered home by all forms of media that freedom is primarily *economic* freedom, it is not surprising that Americans see the spread of consumer choices via globalization as an unmixed blessing.

Moreover, it is clear that in many cases access to the global market on any terms whatsoever is a *sine qua non* to breaking the fetters of traditional economies. [8] However much activists criticize international firms such as Nike for their practices in overseas production, it is also true that jobs producing in and for the global market are not only a welcome alternative to traditional poverty for many workers in countries such as Indonesia or Vietnam, they are often the only alternative.

.06. Negative Responses to Globalism ([Return to Index](#))

Americans usually see globalism as an international phenomenon. But because of the sheer economic strength of the United States, much of the world views it as a type of American expansionism. [9] Benjamin Barber argues that it is this aggressive pursuit of a global market society that has precipitated the anger of much of the Muslim world, and made them vulnerable to true terrorists. [10] Even United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, who is clearly committed to an open world economic order, warned business leaders at the World Economic Forum which met in New York in early February:

The reality is that power and wealth in this world are very very unequally shared, and that far too many people are condemned to lives of extreme poverty and degradation...The perception, among many, is that this is the fault of globalization, and that globalization is driven by a global elite, composed of, at least represented by, the people who attend this gathering. [11]

.07. The Emergence of a Global Civic Culture ([Return to Index](#))

There are many consequences of globalization but we wish to focus upon an unintended consequence of economic processes directly related to the Internet: the emergence of a shared body of humanistic values that shows us the outlines of a true global civic culture. These values could, in effect, if they continued to coalesce, one day be characteristic of a sort of world citizenship.

It is not surprising that there is a relationship between informationalism and culture; what is the content of informationalism if not culture? As Castells states, “technology *is* society.” [12] And

neither is it surprising that there is a feedback between processes and content; indeed, as Castells reminds us, this is perhaps the primary characteristic of this current stage of production, whether we call it post-industrialism or informationalism.

There are many indications of the recent emergence of global systems of values. One indication is the number of contemporary socio-political movements that have risen locally and then quickly become global. The most striking recent phenomenon is probably the Zapatista movement of Chiapas, Mexico, or the protracted series of World Trade Organization protests. [13] But others would include the anti-landmine movement, many feminist campaigns dealing with the lot of third world women, concerns about child labor, sexual exploitation, consumers' rights, protection of the rights of indigenous peoples or those of religious minorities such as Tibetan Buddhists and *Fa Lun Gong* practitioners in the Peoples' Republic of China, to name but a few of many possible examples.

While some of these may seem to many to be purely political and hence lacking a broad base, they are above all united by a shared ethic. These ethical systems define appropriate behaviors between workers and employers, between sovereign states and their citizens, between businesses and consumers, and between human beings and the earth itself. [14] While these movements are certainly at important levels separate ones, when taken together they increasingly constitute an international and unified movement, usually called "human rights". There are, however, important differences between local human rights movements, and the human rights movement when viewed in a global context. In illuminating this distinction, I find it useful to refer to personal experience.

I am, by academic training, a historian of modern China. I have lived in Chinese cultures, either Taiwan or Guilin in south China, close to the Vietnam border, for more than six years, funded by two Fulbright grants and generous support from other sources. I have also studied or taught in Hue, Vietnam, on many occasions lasting a month or so.

In the more than thirty years that I have been moving between Taiwan, China, Vietnam, and the United States I have seen many political and economic changes. Taiwan was a rather grim one-party dictatorship upon my first visit in 1967. It is now a vibrant multiparty democracy. Guilin, China, was almost indescribably poverty-stricken in 1975. Now large sections of it are equivalent to Hong Kong in consumer appeal. Vietnam is perhaps at the beginning of such a period of rapid progress.

When the human rights movement began to focus upon China, beginning in the 1970's, it seemed to me that the criticism, while often well-founded, was, in fact, largely politically motivated. It was very much in the interest of the United States in particular to constantly remind the world that China was a spectacular failure in human terms, regardless of the leaps and bounds it was taking in political and recently, in economic, strength and influence.

The Chinese argument, which I to some degree accept, was that even the United States has its

weaknesses in terms of human rights. Above all, we tend to ignore economic rights, often refusing to join international conventions on human rights because we wish to avoid accepting standards measured against which even our wealthy society does not appear entirely successful. The Chinese still see human rights arguments as politically motivated attempts at “political interference” in their internal affairs. As well, they argue that “cultural differences” usually explain these misunderstandings of their internal practices.

As long as the human rights movement had a predominantly American cast, the Chinese were in some important part correct. But the Internet has broadened the movement. Now idealists or co-religionists all over the world concern themselves with the fate of Tibetan Buddhists, with Chinese student activists, or more oddly, with the *Fa Lung Gong*, to many a rather traditional Chinese messianic sectarian movement to which have been added the modern attributes of a pyramid scheme.

Chinese arguments no longer protect them, in my mind at least, because the human rights movement is an international network and does not hesitate to criticize the United States as well. For example, a Google search on “Abu Jamal,” the imprisoned Philadelphia journalist and activist, will turn up thousands of pages, many in French, German, or other non-English languages. Even Amnesty International, long the bane of the Chinese, called for a new trial for him. [15]

However much as an American I might sometimes resent foreign misunderstandings of the workings of my society, I recognize that the Chinese and other states (including my own) now have to meet increasingly high standards in the treatment of their citizens. There are no longer any purely “internal affairs”. Neither are “cultural differences” a justifiable defense of violations when these are measured not against parochial and often politically motivated national standards, but against truly global ones.

The impact of these many global movements, and the distinction between today’s human rights movements and earlier ones, depends above all upon their shared or networked nature. The Zapatista movement in and of itself was a minor Mexican peasant insurgency. But when news of the events in Chiapas were disseminated world-wide, principally via the Internet, a wide variety of pressures were brought to bear to circumscribe the range of actions open to the Mexican government in suppressing the movement. [16] The same became true for the American government that had long resisted the proscribing of the use of landmines by international agreements. [17] And while Abu Jamal did not get the new trial called for by Amnesty International, he was granted a hearing that freed him from the death penalty. [18]

But while these movements might all be seen as broadly humanistic ones, depending on how we feel about their political values, there are, of course, many others which are offensive by most standards. We have argued elsewhere that the terrorist network known as Al Qaeda grew up in the Informationalist environment and depends upon it. So, too, do such organizations as those of holocaust deniers and criminal groups such as international drug cartels. [19]

Each of these entities, like globalism itself, has the effect of reducing the sovereignty of nation states. Because the United States is clearly the dominant player in the process of globalization as currently constituted, and because these processes are so much to the advantage of politically influential world economic elites, Americans pay little attention to the diminishment of sovereignty, save on the extreme left and the extreme right where paranoids muttering darkly about various conspiracies meet.

When Americans are concerned about a loss of sovereignty, these concerns often are assuaged by the tenets of “market fundamentalism” in that it is widely accepted that the less government interferes in consumer choice (“freedom”) the more freedom we all have. But the developing global civic culture does not have equivalently powerful defenders.

.08. Who Speaks for the Internet? ([Return to Index](#))

To argue that the Internet is not as well defended as the market system is not to say that it is totally undefended. Free speech advocates, for example, are quick to speak out for the Internet. [20] Many businesses, too, have a considerable and growing stake in the Internet, though we believe that their support is highly contingent; the Internet could well be changed significantly and still meet business needs.

But the Internet also has many detractors. We need only to glance at the list of offensive groups listed above to remind ourselves of some of the shortcomings of a totally open Internet environment. We favor freedom of speech, but we are not so sure about pornographers, holocaust deniers, and much less sure about terrorists having access to this high digital road.

The Internet has another weakness in that it produces losers just as it produces winners. As it changes the communications environment, it not only brings new businesses and new practices into being, in many cases it destroys old ones. [21] Among the groups that are truly concerned about the Internet, of course, are state governments who see their tax incomes steadily eroded as commerce moves online.

But surely the greatest sin of the Internet is to diminish the power of sovereign nation states. When governments become aware that non-state players are successfully using the Internet, whether to restrict the ability of the Chinese state to arrest religious dissidents, to spread the word that Catholic priests have been arrested in Vietnam, or that jihadists have facilitated catastrophic attacks utilizing digital resources, many concerned with security might well begin to wonder if some restrictions are not necessary. The Chinese government monitors incoming international traffic; the Vietnamese government makes public access to the Internet very difficult by closely controlling of Internet Service Providers and in effect licenses end-users one by one. Europeans have recently passed a major new law with radical implications for the Internet. [22] And the United States has passed the USA Patriot Act. [23]

The hopes of many for the development of the Internet as a tool for democratization have been

very high. [24] But these hopes are necessarily dependant upon the continued open nature of the Internet. A coalition with the power markedly to restrict the Internet is far more likely to come into being than one with the power to slow or restrict globalization itself. We could well have globalization without the Internet as it is presently constituted.

.09. Conclusion ([Return to Index](#))

It is obvious that there is a direct relationship between the process of globalization and the development and spread of the Internet. But these two processes serve quite different groups. There is no reason to believe that the connection must necessarily be maintained indefinitely. It would be quite tempting in many regards for specific groups to facilitate the former while restricting the latter. This would have disastrous consequences for the development of global civic culture.

In the next issue of *Interface* (March), we wish to consider the implications of privacy issues for the Internet, within the context of globalization. In closing, I emphasize that these editorials are, like all editorials, opinion pieces. I try, by utilizing some of the often-tedious practices of scholarship such as citing sources, to make clear the intellectual and evidentiary foundations of my opinions. At the same time, I hope like every editorial writer to occasionally hear from readers, outraged or otherwise.

.10. Notes ([Return to Index](#))

[1] World Bank. World Bank Briefing Papers. RAssessing Globalization.”<http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/pb/globalization/paper1.htm> Accessed 02/05/02 ... [2] <http://slashdot.org/article.pl?sid=01/11/08/1618249&mode=thread> Slashdot. Jon Katz, “Defining Globalism” Accessed 02/03/02 For the insatiably curious, this location includes hundreds of messages on a BBS that were exchanged in response to Katz’s writings on Globalism.

[3] Castells’ definition of “informationalism” is somewhat discursive. I understand it to be “a new mode of development” (p. 14) the source of productivity of which “lies in the technology of knowledge generation, information processing, and symbolic communication.” P. 17.

[4] Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* ., pp. 31-32. Castells refers to this as “the action of knowledge upon knowledge itself: at p. 17. See also the review of a recent book by Castells in this issue of *Interface* <http://bcis.pacificu.edu/journal/2002/01/bookrev2.php>

[5] For a response to one such argument, that of Chalmers Johnson in his work *Blowback* , *The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* , (Metropolitan Books, 2000), see the review of the work by Sherri Prasso in *BusinessWeek Online* , March 27, 2000. This review nicely frames the two extremes of the argument, Johnson’s that Globalism is in fact an American expansionist devise, and Prasso’s perspective “the reason Americans are so evangelic about their model of

capitalism is because it works...". http://www.businessweek.com/2000/00_13/b3674091.htm Accessed February 3, 2002.

[6] World Bank. World Bank Briefing Papers. RAssessing Globalization." <http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/pb/globalization/paper1.htm> Accessed 02/05/02; see also International Monetary Fund Staff, "Globalization: Threat or Opportunity?" Issue Briefs for 2001, Corrected January 2002. Part II, "What is Globalization?" <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/ib/2000/041200.htm> Accessed 02/05/02

[7] Harvey Cox, "The Market as God" The Atlantic Online, March 1999. p. 2. <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/99mar/marketgod.htm> Accessed February 5, 2002

[8] There is some debate over how globalization has affected specific social sectors; however the consensus, at least among those who create policies at national and international levels, is that the more engaged in international trade, the wealthier a country will be. The IMF AND World Band reports cited above both agree that the overall impact of globalization is quite positive for individual nations, but that there can be important issues of equity. Greenspan is in general much more positive: "...globalization has been a powerful force acting to raise standards of living. More open economies have recorded the best growth performance; in contrast countries with inward-oriented policies have done less well." Greenspan sees negative affects as largely resulting from outmoded industries having to face competition from more modern ones. Greenspan, Alan. RGlobalization. Remarks by Chairman Alan Greenspan. October, 2001. The Federal Reserve Board <http://www.federalreserve.gov/boarddocs/speeches/2001/20011024/default.htm> Accessed 02/05/02

[9] A search in Google on *Globalism* turned up 47,500 references to the term. <http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&q=Globalism&btnG=Google+Search> Accessed 02/03/02

[10] Barber, xv. And like Castells, Barber believes that it is in part the rise of globalism itself that has heightened fundamentalism. Barber, 155-56; Castells, I, 24; II, pp. 12-24. See a review of *Jihad and MacWorld* in Interface at: <http://bcis.pacificu.edu/journal/2001/11/bookrev1.php>

[11] Serge Schemann, RAnnan Cautions Business as World Forum Ends." *The New York Times* , February 5, 2002 <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/02/05/international/05FORU.html> [12] Castells, I, p. 5.

[13] One web site of the W.T.O. protest groups, "Protest Net" catalogued 36 protests around the world against the fourth ministerial meeting of the W.T.O. at Qatar in November of 2001, <http://www.protest.net/qatar.html> Accessed 02.05.02

[14] Even as strong a supporter of globalization as Alan Greenspan sees opposition to globalism

as primarily rooted in ethical values, however mistaken he believes them to be. Greenspan, Alan. RGlobalization. Remarks by Chairman Alan Greenspan. October, 2001. The Federal Reserve Board <http://www.federalreserve.gov/boarddocs/speeches/2001/20011024/default.htm> Accessed 02/05/02

[15] See <http://www.web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/index/AMR510202000> Accessed 02/07/02

[16] See Ronfeld et. Al. 50-51. The Chiapas example is seen as a milestone in the development of global civic culture by a great many authors. See Castells, II, pp 72-83; Stratton, p. 729.

[17] For an example of a very sophisticated networked protest, that of the Campaign to Ban Landmines, see: <http://www.banminesusa.org/>

[18] I imply no judgment on Abu Jamal's guilt or innocence here. I cite these events as evidence of the increasing power of the networked human rights movements.

[19] See "Netwar" by the present author in *The Journal of the Association for History and Computing*, Vol IV, No. 3, November, 2001 at: <http://mcel.pacificu.edu/jahc/jahciv3/editorial/edit.html>

[20] See materials at the Center for Democracy and Technology. <http://www.cdt.org/> Accessed 02/06/02.

[21] For example, a friend who owns a small local used bookstore tells me that within five years there will be very few such establishments left.

[22] See "Convention on Cybercrime" <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/185.htm> and commentary at Center for Democracy and Technology, "Comments of the Center for Democracy and Technology on the Council of Europe Draft "Convention on Cyber-crime: (Draft No. 25) found at: <http://www.cdt.org/international/cybercrime/010206cdt.shtml>

[23] While it is too early to understand the impact of the Patriot Act on digital communications, it does make sweeping changes in existing laws. See "USA Patriot Act" at the Center for Democracy and Technology found at: <http://www.cdt.org/security/010911response.php>

[24] "People are better able to question decisions, challenge expert opinion, and to form lobby groups quickly, the promise of increased democracy through information society." Fred Gault and Susan A. McDaniel. "Continuities and Transformations: Challenges to Capturing Information about the 'Information Society'" *First Monday* http://www.firstmonday.dk/issues/issue7_2/gault/index.html p. 5. Accessed 02/05/02. For a Serbian view on the importance of the Internet to Serbian democracy, see "Freedom in Serbia and the Internet" <http://www.rjgeib.com/thoughts/serbia/serbia.html> Accessed 02/06/02..11.

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3 THOUGHTS ON “GLOBALISM AND THE INTERNET: EDITORIAL ESSAY”

africa

on **February 4, 2014 at 10:18 AM** said:

One much more factor I want to talk about is that as an selection to trying to accommodate all your on the web degree lessons on times that you just end work (since the majority people are tired as soon as they get home), try to get most of your instructional classes on the week-ends and only a couple courses in weekdays, even if it techniques a small time away in the saturday and sunday. That is great due to the fact on the saturdays and sundays, you're a lot more rested as well as concentrated in school work. Thanks a lot to your various things I have figured out in the site.

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price?

Thanks, I appreciate it!