



Understanding Social Change

Globalist views

Bob Kelly

OK, well let's try and move on to the next stage then which is to look a little bit at the various contrasting theories or approaches that we have to globalisation, and I need to say I think at the outset that what we've tried to do is to take a whole range of different views, and to make them manageable for people by possibly integrating some ideas that don't necessarily go together in any one person's view, but nevertheless we can begin to see the wood for the trees perhaps if we do isolate three fundamentally different positions, so let's first of all look at the approach offered by the globalist arguments. What would you identify as the key assumptions of let's say first of all positive globalists, people who think that globalisation is a very positive and good thing.

Raia Prokhovnic

Yeah, well I'm going to sum up the positive globalist position and then identify four assumptions. Globalists see globalisation as an almost inevitable development. Globalists are completely convinced that globalisation is here and that there's nothing that we can do about it. They argue that it cannot be resisted, or significantly influenced by human intervention, such as through traditional political institutions like the nation state. So the first assumption they make is that globalisation is a structural matter which leaves very little or no room for agency. The second assumption concerns the way positive globalists, from their perspective as economic liberals, point to the benefits they see to globalisation for consumers by increasing the efficiency of the market. Economic liberals advocate a free economic market through deregulation of controls by government, and the removal of trade barriers. A third assumption that they make is that increasing wealth in the rich economies will trickle down to benefit those in the developing world through foreign investment. And the fourth assumption of the globalists is that economic factors determine political and cultural developments, and that economic evidence is the most significant when it comes to assessing the processes called globalisation.

Bob Kelly

Right, so also within the globalist approaches are those people who tend to focus on the negative dimensions of it, or what we've called in this course pessimistic globalist. What would you see as the key features, and the similarities and differences, between the pessimistic globalists and the positive globalists, Grahame?

Grahame Thompson

Well I think the pessimistic globalists still see the fact that globalisation is going on, they see it going on big-time around them but they don't like it, I mean quite honestly, they are very hostile to it. The pessimistic globalists I think are very hostile to what's happening, particularly hostile to, you know, kind of market solutions to problems that have arisen in the international system, particularly international economy, more liberalisation, more deregulation, more privatisation, and so on. I think they see it being run effectively by multi-national corporations, the pessimists, so they see too much power being invested, this extension of the market system internationally, globally, is really run by the multi-national corporations and suits their purpose, they're setting the agenda about it, they're in there for profit maximisation and dominance over the kind of poor and marginalised peoples; the pessimistic globalists don't like the brands that they see coming into the international arena, like McDonald's, McDonaldisation of the system, Nike, Gap; I think they think that really a consequence of this neo-liberal approach is increased inequalities and increased inequities in the system. They think it leads to a cultural imperialism, you know the Americanisation of culture through music, films, television, and so on, and that ultimately all of this will lead to a kind of more conflict and

strife between the rich and the poor in the system, and they want to resist that, that's the anti-globalisation movement position, want to resist that. They think this is all being posed from on top and that we need solutions coming from the bottom to international problems.

Bob Kelly

So essentially then both the positive and pessimistic globalists are seeing the process is occurring, they're seeing it's a process that is effectively going ahead, no matter what other people want to do about it, but they're looking at the evidence through different lenses, through different value systems, with positive globalists seeing everybody benefiting from this great neo-liberal society, and pessimistic globalists, perhaps from a more socialist background, seeing the opposite, that people are suffering as a result.

Grahame Thompson

Exactly, it's producing more inequalities and more inequities and that will actually, in a sense, make the system more confliction and fewer consensuses I think.