Contents

Biography Boxes viii
List of Tables and Figures ix
Acknowledgements x

Introduction 1

1 Globalization: The Global Village 10
   1.1 Introduction 10
   1.2 Compression: the growing interconnectedness of the world 13
   1.3 Globality: the evolution of global consciousness 15
   1.4 Welcome to the global age? 17
   1.5 The practice of global citizenship 21
   1.6 Global events, global experiences 24
   1.7 Conclusion 30

2 Liberalization: A Borderless World 33
   2.1 Introduction 33
   2.2 Liberalization and liberalism 35
   2.3 The theory of the free market 36
   2.4 The ‘triumph’ of liberal democracy 38
   2.5 Neo-liberalism and the ‘new global economy’ 41
   2.6 The neo-liberal agenda 44
   2.7 The benefits of liberalization 45
   2.8 The limits of liberalization? 48
   2.9 Liberalization on trial: the global financial crisis of 2007–8 50
   2.10 Conclusion 54

3 Polarization: Rich World, Poor World 57
   3.1 Introduction 57
   3.2 Core and periphery: the structuralist approach to global development 58
   3.3 The reality of polarization: trends in global poverty and inequality 62
   3.4 Polarization as north–south relations 66
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Polarization within the nation-state: the case of Russia in the 1990s</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>The anti-global capitalism movement</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>An alternative? Deglobalization</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Americanization: The New American Empire</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>The theory of American empire</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>The making of modern America</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>The beginnings of American empire</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>The theory of cultural imperialism</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>American military imperialism</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>McDonaldization: A One-Dimensional World</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>The functionalist tradition: modernization and convergence</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>The neo-Marxist tradition: one-dimensional society</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>The theory of McDonaldization</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>A history of McDonald's</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>McDonaldization and post-Fordism</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>The McDonaldization of politics</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Creolization: Hybrid Societies</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Cultural studies and the theory of resistance</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Post-colonialism and the theory of Orientalism</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Creolization and postmodernity</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>The creolization of food</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>The creolization of music</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Transnationalization: A Space beyond Place</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Transnational corporations</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Transnational classes</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>Transnational practices</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>Transnational spaces</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>Transnational institutions</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>Reflexive modernization</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8 Balkanization: A Clash of Civilizations 177
  8.1 Introduction 177
  8.2 The legacy of political realism 178
  8.3 The ‘clash of civilizations’ debate: Huntington and his critics 181
  8.4 The neo-conservative agenda 186
  8.5 Islamism and balkanization 188
  8.6 Balkanizing Islam: the neo-conservative response 192
  8.7 Conclusion 198

9 Conclusion 202

Bibliography 210

Index 228
Introduction

John Tomlinson is a good writer and knows how to begin an article. As there is no better way of making the point we wish to make at the very start of this book, allow us if you will, to use Tomlinson’s own words on the subject:

To begin with let us agree — on this we can all probably agree — that ‘globalization’ is a rather unsatisfactory term for the phenomena we are attempting to describe and to understand. The reasons why globalization is such an unfortunate word are several. Because it invites overstatement and smacks of an overwhelming tendency to universalize, or at least to over-generalize. Because most of the processes and experiences it describes, though vastly wide and growing in their distribution, are hardly ever actually, literally global in their reach. And therefore because it invites close analysis to point out all the exceptions rather than to see the force of the trajectories involved. And because, as a response to this, the élan of the term quickly becomes dissipated once it is hedged about by necessary qualifications — for instance its general pairing with the opposing tendency to ‘localization’. More significantly, because it seems to many to articulate — and even to distribute and enforce — the dominant cultural, economic and political discourses of the West. But most of all because it has been a victim of its own success: hardly mentioned before 1990, it is now a word, as Zygmunt Bauman (1998, p. 1) says, ‘on everybody’s lips, a fad word fast turning into a shibboleth’. (Tomlinson 2007: 148)

Well said! In this book we intend to provide a survey of much of the main literature which purports, whether explicitly or implicitly, to be about ‘this thing we call globalization’. However, what we want to do with it is quite different. We want to make the claim that globalization is best defined as one particular form of contemporary global change; that much of the literature associated with it is not actually about globalization but about some other process which may or may not be contradictory to it; and that there is an intellectual validity to all of this literature, not within the study of ‘globalization’ because as Tomlinson rightly says this has been plagued with confusion, not least because the term is used differently in different academic disciplines,
but as contributors to alternative paradigms within the interdisciplinary field of global studies.

With this as our goal, we have set ourselves the task of looking at this literature, from across the range of social sciences and related disciplines, in order to ascertain how respective contributions, whether from an anthropologist studying new diverse cultural forms within a locale, a political scientist exploring the dynamics of nation-state interdependence, or an economist praising the virtues of a single market, have sought to define their subject matter. They may or may not have referred to it as ‘globalization’ but what, actually, is the process they are describing? In trying to disentangle these contributions and setting them up as alternative paradigms, we have sought to develop a schema for comparing and contrasting models of global change which do not presume consistency of subject matter, which may in some cases be compatible and in others be entirely contradictory with each other but which, at least, say something worthy of engagement with. To this end we have pulled the term ‘globalization’ out of the metaphorical haystack within which it has got lost and reduced it to a simple definition: as the process of becoming global. This is a surprisingly important if simple and often overlooked point – as a word, if it is to mean anything, that is all this word can mean. It is not a thing in itself. We should not subject it to reification or essentialization, although many do. It ends in the suffix ‘-ization’, suggesting it must be a process, and processes are defined by their end point, which in this case must be ‘the global’. If that much is straightforward, then the questions we need to ask when interrogating such a process are clear-cut. What is it to be ‘global’? How does one measure the extent of this ‘globality’?

‘Globalization’, then, is treated as a process defined by a conception of becoming one world. Much of the literature which is associated with it, though, is not, actually, underpinned by this definition. Rather, it presents, explicitly or implicitly, a different process, the process of becoming something else. In the eight chapters that follow, we survey and interrogate eight different process-models which are presumed within this literature. They do not say the same thing. ‘Liberalization’ refers to the process of becoming liberal, read as the relaxing of borders for the easier flow between states of goods, money, labour, people, ideas, as well as the apparent triumph of the liberal values which advocate this. ‘Polarization’ refers to the process of increasingly apparent division between two extremes, namely, in this case, a rich world and a poor world. ‘Americanization’ refers to the process of becoming American, read as the imposition of American values worldwide through cultural, economic and political-military forms of imperialism. ‘McDonaldization’ is actually used here in a more metaphorical sense than a literal one, to refer to a process through which practices and values become standardized across the world. ‘Creolization’ refers to a process of increasing diversification, of new hybrid forms emerging from the continuous interplay of difference. ‘Transnationalization’ refers to a process of moving
towards a new level, one above the nation-state (but not necessarily global),
read usually in respect of new forms of economic power and political gov-
ernance. ‘balkanization’ refers to a process of increasing division into units
defined (objectively and subjectively) by their respective differences to one
another.

We do not say that in introducing these eight paradigms we have exhausted
all the possible models suggested within this literature. Nor do we say that
they are mutually incompatible, that one has to accept one at the expense of
the others. Rather, there is often much overlap between them and the ‘reality’
of the situation is likely to exist in all of them and none of them at the same
time. Readers should keep this in mind when travelling through this book.
These are models, analytical tools, even Weberian ‘ideal-types’, if you like,
but they are not absolute and fixed articulations of social reality. The world
is far more complex than that, but as social scientists we accept that in order
to best understand the complexity one has to sometimes reduce it to a more
simplistic form.

Part of the project of this volume, then, is to relocate the reading of this
literature away from the unhelpful and almost labyrinthine study of ‘globali-
zation’ and towards the emerging interdisciplinary field of ‘global studies’.
Global studies refers to the ways in which academic knowledge can help
us understand the dynamics of the globe itself, but we need not presume
this is a replacement for, or indeed incompatible with, the more established
study of international relations. The core focus of international relations has
always been the (mainly political and diplomatic) relations of nation-states
to one another, a focus which neither presumes nor precludes any analysis of
the location of such states within a global framework. Sociology, however,
is in a different position, in so far as it is well-recognized that most of the
‘founders’ of sociology in the nineteenth century treated their subject matter –
society – synonymously with the nation-state. If, as Martin Albrow (1990)
suggests, early sociology was ‘universalistic’ in its pretensions to scientific
accuracy regardless of time and place, and later sociologies have been bound
up in specific ‘national traditions’ and problems, and ‘internationalism’ in the
sociological context can refer to the way specific dominant national traditions
were exported and in some cases adapted to local use, then the ‘globalization’
of sociological knowledge brings with it obvious challenges: if the tools of
the sociological trade were honed within a nation-state framework then are
they applicable to the task of engaging with the problem of world society? Anthropol
gists have been faced with an even more difficult task (to which,
it has to be said, they have risen admirably), given that a lot of traditional
anthropology and ethnography has been about local cultures and practices,
and it is dangerously easy to simply present the global as that sweeping tidal
wave which threatens the precious local. Historians are perhaps better placed
to adapt to the demands of global studies, in so far as there is a long-standing
field of global or world history which does not use the nation-state as its cen-
tral unit of analysis, whether associated with the cyclical and civilizational
histories of Toynbee and Spengler or the socialist world histories of someone like Hobsbawm.

The task of global studies, then, is to bring together these and other voices in order to debate the processes and dynamics impacting upon all aspects of modern social life. It incorporates critical voices for whom this fundamental dynamic may not be ‘globalizing’ at all: to engage in global studies does not require one to possess a theory of ‘globalization’. It is also inherently multidisciplinary, and incorporates a range of research areas. Scholars working within global studies are interested in America’s war on terror and in the global marketing and fan base of Manchester United, in the theory and practice of human rights and in the discrepancies in the distribution of wealth and life-chances between North and South, in the democratizing possibilities of global information and communication systems and in migration patterns, labour exchanges and friendship networks.

One might reasonably argue that there is nothing new about ‘global studies’ except the name, and that its history can be traced back long before Marshall McLuhan coined the phrase ‘the global village’, back to the ancients, and to the universalizing presumptions of many of the world’s major religions. Each discipline would no doubt highlight its own historical contribution to this area. We are sure there is much truth in this, but in the current context it is not important. We welcome the publication of a volume ‘Historicizing Global Studies’ as a companion to this one, on Theorizing Global Studies. It would make fascinating reading. But our task is to address a contemporary literature associated with a relatively recent academic development. Perhaps the early signs of this came in the 1960s, but globalization as a contested idea really took off in the 1980s and by the 1990s it had become a ‘buzz-word’ for academics, activists, journalists, politicians, and business-people alike to attach to their respective theories, causes, concerns, policies, or strategies. Its crystallization as a legitimate academic field came in the UK with the establishment of the Global Studies Association (GSA). This was the brainchild of Paul Kennedy, a well-respected sociologist of development at Manchester Metropolitan University who organized a series of conferences on global themes at the turn of the century, from which, in 2000, the GSA was formed. Inspired by this, two years later in Chicago a North American branch of the Global Studies Association was formed, under the auspices of Jerry Harris, which brings together an eclectic blend of academics and activists at its annual conference.

The emergence of global studies exists not only in the imagination of academics. Global studies programmes are fast emerging at universities across North America and Europe. At the University of California at Santa Barbara, the relatively new global studies major has attracted over 700 students, making it the most popular undergraduate major. California State University at Monterey Bay and the University of Wisconsin have both a department of and a programme in global studies on their books. At Freiburg University in Germany, a two-year Master’s programme in global studies is offered in
conjunction with universities in South Africa and India. There are respected academic centres at the University of Minnesota, Johns Hopkins University and Manchester Metropolitan University, to name just three. The reputations of many longer-established centres committed to understanding the dynamics of global interdependence – such as the Braudel Center at the State University of New York, Binghampton, USA, or the Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation at Warwick University, UK – speak for themselves. Leading journals, including Theory, Culture and Society, have dedicated much space to discussions of global cultural change, and other interdisciplinary journals, such as Global Networks and Globalizations, have emerged. More recently the Global Studies Network has been established to bring together the many research centres, academic programmes and specific-issue organizations working broadly within the global studies umbrella. Further information on all of the above and far more is easily available by typing ‘global studies’ into any Web search engine.

Clearly, then, global studies has come a long way in a short time. Perhaps its greatest accolade, evidence of its acceptance within the public as well as academic imagination, has been to be subjected to the wrath of the American right-wing commentator Robert David Johnson, who in 2004 saw fit to pen an on-line article attacking the Global Studies Association, the various global studies programmes in the US, and the whole concept of ‘global studies’ which, he argued, uses the language of promoting a necessary ‘global citizenship’ (certainly an interest of global studies) to promote an anti-American left-wing ideology (hardly!) (Johnson 2004).

Given its interdisciplinary origins and reach, it is understandable that there is no clear or single direction within global studies, and different emphases exist in different settings. The early Manchester Metropolitan University conferences focused largely on cultural aspects of global change, with later ones drawing on themes such as human rights and global civil society, reflecting the interests of the GSA’s European members, who are largely drawn from sociology. In North America, by contrast, a stronger activist voice has been heard in debates over global inequalities and labour rights. At the 2004 conference of the GSA (North America), held at Brandeis University, many of the contributors were working within a framework associating current global dynamics with Americanization and neo-imperialism, reflecting the importance of such a framework within the broader global studies field of enquiry (hence the less than favourable comments on the GSA from Johnson). For the European in attendance, it would have seemed striking how little attention was being paid at the time to such debates within the European context; many leading European scholars, such as Leslie Sklair, Saskia Sassen, Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens, prefer to operate within what we call in this volume a ‘transnational’ framework.

This observation brings us neatly on to the purpose of this book, namely, theorizing global studies. If we are to accept that global studies has emerged as a significant new field of academic enquiry, how are we to theorize it? Is
there a framework within which we can locate, compare and contrast the key contributors to the new field? If each discipline or field of study is to be defined by its theoretical schools of thought, what does global studies have?

One attempt to provide such a schema has been developed by David Held and his collaborators, presented in their influential book *Global Transformations* (Held et al. 1999), which uses as its core criteria the extent of global change suggested by the different contributors to the debate. Held and his associates divide these key contributions into three camps, the ‘hyper-globalists’, the ‘sceptics’ and the ‘transformationalists’ (a schema that has been uncritically reproduced in countless undergraduate and postgraduate essays ever since). The hyper-globalists are clearly a naive bunch. Their ranks are made up largely of neo-liberal economists (Kenichi Ohmae and the like) who wish to celebrate the extent to which we now live in a fully globalized free market economy, together with social and cultural theorists (Marshall McLuhan and Martin Albrow, for instance) who claim that new technologies have effectively reshaped social relations, bringing about the demise of the restrictive old world and ushering in a new world, a ‘global village’ or ‘global age’. But if these hyper-globalists suffer from naivety, the sceptics suffer from an apparent lack of imagination, and come across as a dour bunch, rather stuck in the past. Sceptics would have us believe that there is ‘nothing new under the sun’, and in some cases that the world today is even less interdependent than it was 100 or so years ago. The sceptics are also a diverse crowd ideologically. Some are in the mould of the Old Left (Paul Hirst and Graham Thompson), others trained in neo-realist or neo-conservative thought more popular with the Right (Samuel Huntington). In between these rather extreme, ideal-typical straw positions stand the transformationalists, who, in the view of Held et al., are champions of reason. Transformationalists accept that the world today is experiencing global change on a rapid scale, but deny that this constitutes any wholly new society or set of social relations; rather, it reconfigures and transforms existing social relations. Into this camp come a wide range of scholars, including Anthony Giddens, James Rosenau, Manuel Castells, Saskia Sassen and, of course, the authors themselves. A comparison of the three positions is presented in the table below:

This model is, of course, quite crude in its basic distinction between those who suggest ‘full change’, those who claim ‘no change’ and those who accept ‘some change’ but within existing frameworks. In fact, we could add a subgroup of the ‘transformationalists’ by singling out a range of contributors, mostly inspired by a blend of neo-Marxism and ‘postmodern’ theory, who set themselves the task of understanding contemporary global cultural and economic processes using a modified Marxian theory back in the late 1980s, many of them part of the ‘New Times’ school associated with the journal *Marxism Today* whose number included such otherwise quite distinct names as Stuart Hall, John Urry and David Harvey. The point of this schema for
us is that these contributors in each grouping are not classified according to ‘standard’ theoretical schools of thought, and in this volume at least are discussed in different chapters because they present a range of different models.

A second possible schema for classifying and contrasting theories of global change, which also defies conventional models of social theory, is to look at the historical context of any such transformation. This approach would distinguish between those who treat the process of contemporary global change (whether they call it ‘globalization’ or not) as a long-term process, which rather than replacing earlier debates around modernization and capitalism and other such driving forces in history should actually be viewed as pre-dating and even driving them, from those who see global transformations in contemporary contexts, as part of a clearly identifiable and recent rupture in the dynamics of history. For all the other differences between them, writers such as Roland Robertson and Immanuel Wallerstein belong to the former camp, while Anthony Giddens, David Harvey and Martin Albrow are among those belonging to the latter. Slightly outside of this distinction we can place those who have resisted treating global change as a single historical event and prefer instead to speak of multiple or competing projects of globalization.

Leslie Sklair’s work is a good example of such an approach, and another is Darren O’Byrne’s application of the Habermasian distinction between ‘system’ and ‘lifeworld’ to the concerns of global studies (O’Byrne 2005). As with the previous system, these names belong, for us, in different chapters. Long-term theorists of global change are not of a like mind when it comes to saying what that process of global change actually is, and neither are those who adopt a more contemporary approach.

Table 0.1  Hyper-globalists, sceptics and transformationalists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hyper-globalists</th>
<th>Sceptics</th>
<th>Transformationalists</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Globalization defined as...</td>
<td>...reordering of the framework of human action</td>
<td>...internationalization and regionalization</td>
<td>...reordering of inter-regional relations and action at a distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Globalization driven by...</td>
<td>...capitalism and technology</td>
<td>...states and markets</td>
<td>...combined forces of modernity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Globalization results in...</td>
<td>...a global civilization, a global free market economy</td>
<td>...regional blocs, state-controlled internationalization, possible clash of civilizations</td>
<td>...greater global interconnectedness and the transformation of world political institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nation-state power is...</td>
<td>...declining or eroding</td>
<td>...reinforced or enhanced</td>
<td>...reconstituted or restructured</td>
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*Source:* Adapted from Held et al. (1999: 10).
A third system we might apply would perhaps be more familiar to the reader, in so far as it would draw on the distinctions commonly used within most social science subjects. This would focus on the root causes of global change – capitalism, the state, values and so on. In this schema, we can go back to some of the founders of the social sciences as sources of inspiration – Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and Adam Smith, for instance. Each of these writers was concerned with understanding and to some extent explaining the sweeping social transformations of the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, and while their gazes were all locked on the same processes and transformations per se – the shift from a feudal to a capitalist economy, the shift from local, community-based social relations to more specialized, urban-based ones, the increasing centralization of political power, the growth of industrial technology and so on – each presented a different foundational explanation for these changes. For Marx, it was the economic dimension, the change to a capitalist mode of production, albeit understood in a directly politicized fashion, that mattered most, and from which all other processes derived. For Durkheim, the explanation lay more in the realm of socio-cultural activity, changing ways of life, patterns of social solidarity and social relations. For Weber, the increasing dominance of an instrumentally rational way of doing things, a formal and bureaucratic system of administration which gave rise to the nation-state and its associated legal and political institutions, was crucial, thus paving the way for a tradition of political-cultural, or institutional, analysis. For Smith, the economic dimension was inseparable from an ethical dimension of values derived from basic human nature. These founders of modern social science thus gave us the tools to help us understand social change. Theorists of global studies, as with all subsequent social sciences, have developed those tools to suit their field of study. There is almost nothing else to unite the approaches of Immanuel Wallerstein, Leslie Sklair and David Harvey, for example, except that they all acknowledge a debt to Marx, in that they seek to theorize global transformations within the changing dynamics of the capitalist economy. Roland Robertson, however, focuses on the experience of the world as ‘one place’ and thus on cultural patterns and ways of life, acknowledging the influence of Durkheim upon his work. Writers as diverse as Martin Albrow, George Ritzer, John Meyer, Robert Gilpin and Samuel Huntington all owe a debt to Weber, utilizing his wide range of analytical tools and theoretical propositions, including the role of the nation-state in framing the modern age (for Albrow), the process of rationalization associated with the centralized nation-state (for Ritzer), the cultural analysis of political institutions (Meyer), the centrality of the nation-state in the international political arena (for Gilpin), or the inevitability of conflict between competing interest groups (for Huntington). In contrast to such ‘realists’, Smith’s liberal agenda from the nineteenth century provides the impetus for the likes of Kenichi Ohmae and Francis Fukuyama, who take it in distinct but associated directions. Yet again, this classification system is convenient but not definitive. Just taking those who are ‘Marxian’
as an example, we will see that the contributions of Wallerstein, Harvey and Sklair say very different things indeed within the context of global studies, and so are dealt with in different chapters of this book.

We leave it to the reader to use her or his preferred method of classifying the different theories contained herein. In doing so no doubt they will be influenced by the standard classification systems used within their disciplines – sociologists would look for Marxist, Weberian or Durkheimian traditions, international relations scholars would distinguish between realist, liberal and Marxist approaches and so on. Before global studies can develop its own range of theoretical schools of thought, it needs to have a clear idea about its own subject matter. This book is intended to be a contribution to that project. We thus present, as a central argument within the growing field of global studies, an overview of eight different processes which frame the theoretical and analytical writings of these different and noteworthy scholars. We leave it to the reader to map the similarities and differences of key names across the chapters, and in the conclusion we will endeavour to pull some of these themes together.
Index

academic global studies programmes 4–5
accountability 155–6
Adams, B. 94
Adams, J.T. 87–8
adaptability 116–17
Adorno, T. 107, 109, 123, 145, 154
advertising 91
Afghanistan 13, 80, 99, 100, 195
al-Qaeda 30, 100, 190, 191–2, 195–6, 200
Ala Mawdudi, S.A. 189
Albarn, D. 145
Albrow, M. 18, 19–20, 22
Althusser, L. 129, 130
American Constitution 85
American Dream 88
American globalism 13, 15
American War of Independence 84–5
Americanization 2, 31, 80–103, 127, 128, 140, 202–9
advantages/disadvantages of the model 204–5
beginnings of American empire 88–90
cultural imperialism 89, 90–3
making of modern America 83–8
and McDonaldization 104–5, 124
military imperialism 93–101
theory of American empire 81–3
Anderson, B. 126, 148
anthropology 3
anti-global capitalism movement 71–4
Appadurai, A. 126–7, 131, 134, 141, 144, 150
Arbenz, J. 97
Armas, C.C. 97–8
Arnold, M. 90
Asian immigrants, in Britain 143
Asian tsunami 2004 28
assembly line 112–13
Australia 26, 52, 98
‘authenticity’ discourse 146
axis of evil 195
balkanization 3, 93, 177–201, 202–9
advantages/disadvantages of the model 204–5
‘clash of civilizations’ debate 181–6
of Islam 188–92, 200
legacy of political realism 178–81
neo-conservative agenda 186–8
neo-conservative response to balkanizing Islam 192–8
Balkans 199
banks/banking 42, 52–3, 54, 67–8, 71, 163, 165
financial crisis of 2007–8 52–4
Baudrillard, J. 29–30, 110, 136
Bauman, Z. 1, 16, 30, 117, 136, 138, 139, 146, 171
Baumol, W. 50
Beatles, The 145
Bello, W. 40, 41, 57–8, 68, 75–6, 78
benign hegemony 180–1
Bertrand, M. 168–9
Bhabha, H.K. 133, 134
Bhagwati, J. 47–8, 64, 65
Bin Laden, O. 100, 190, 191, 196
Birmingham University Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies 128–9
‘Black Atlantic’ culture 133
Blair, T. 28, 44, 173, 176
Bond, E. 28
boundaries, erosion of see liberalization
boundary fetishism 149–50
Boyle, M.J. 195
Brazil 67, 68, 121
Brecher, J. 49, 58, 75
Bretton Woods system 41
Britain 15, 27, 28, 52, 55, 84, 87, 93–4, 96, 143
colonies in America 84–5
Indian cuisine 141–4
politics 121
Brown Childs, J. 58, 75
Buerk, M. 27
bureaucracy 19, 109, 111–12, 115, 116, 121, 163
Burton, J.W. 13, 14
Bush, G.W. 83, 101, 194, 195
calculability 108
Caldwell, M. 148–9
Calvinism 85–6
capitalism 78–9
  anti-global capitalism
    movement 71–4
crises and 50, 162–4
imperialism and 65–6, 81
liberalization and global 34, 36, 37–8, 54–5
managed 4
organized and disorganized 163
postmodernity and
creolization 137–8
post-war American foreign policy and
global 96–7
transition to post-Fordism 161–4
transnational 152, 153
see also Fordism; post-Fordism;
Taylorism
capitalist class, transnational 152, 153, 158–60
capitalist imperialism 65–6, 82–3
Castells, M. 6, 72, 93, 152, 159, 165, 166, 188, 190, 191, 197, 199–200
causes of global change 8–9
‘champagne glass’ model of income
distribution 64, 65
Chang, H.-J. 66
charity 26–9
chemical weapons 196
Cheney, D. 192–3
Chicago School 42
chicken tikka masala 141–2, 144
child labour 47
chilli peppers 142
China 46, 54, 98, 102, 168, 182, 183, 184, 185, 188, 193
Chomsky, N. 80, 83, 97, 98
Chouliaraki, L. 26–7
Cioffi, J. 156
cities, global 165–6
citizenship, global 21–4
civil rights 35
clash of civilizations 40, 181–6
classes, transnational 152, 153, 158–60
classification of theories of global
studies 6–9
client states 96–7
Clinton, B. 44, 193
Coca-Cola 16, 127–8
Cold War 96–9, 181
Collingham, L. 142, 143, 144
comparative advantage 44
compassion fatigue 28
compression (interconnectedness) 11, 13–15, 31, 61, 74
‘Concert for Bangladesh’ 27
collection 177–8, 179
theory 179
see also balkanization
consciousness, global 11, 15–17
consumerist fraction 159
consumption
  Americanization and 89
core and periphery 58–62
core states 183–4
corporate fraction 159
corporations, transnational 153, 154–8
cosmopolitan theory of transnational relations 152, 170–1, 176, 197
Costello, T. 50
Coupland, D. 117
creolization 2, 126–50, 202–9
advantages/disadvantages of the model 204–5
cultural studies and the theory of resistance 128–31
of food 139–44, 149
of music 144–8
post-colonialism 131–4, 140
and postmodernity 130–1, 135–9

Crisis
capitalism and 50, 162–4
East Asian crisis 51
global financial crisis 50–4, 55
international debt crisis 45, 67
cultural capital 17, 147, 159
cultural flows 126–7
cultural imperialism 80, 83, 89, 90–3, 101, 127, 128, 140, 164, 183
cultural relativism 199, 208
cultural studies 128–31
culture
clash of civilizations 181–6
creolization see creolization
global 120–1
one-dimensional thought 107
cutler, J. 58, 75

Davis, G. 22–3
De Grazia, V. 89–90
debt crisis, international 45, 67
Declaration of Independence 84
deglobalization 75–7
dehumanization 109–10
democracy see liberal democracy
democratic deficit 23, 72
dependency theory 59–60
derrida, J. 40
deskillting 109
developing countries 49
polarization between rich countries and see polarization
development, structuralist approach to 58–62
Dicken, P. 157–8

Diem, N.D. 98–9
disembedding 20, 172–3
disorganized capitalism 163
diversification 127, 128
Dollar, D. 46–7, 63
dominant ideologies 129–30
Donnelly, T. 193–4
dot com bubble 52
downward levelling 49–50
Durkheim, E. 8, 16, 121

Eade, J. 134
Earth democracy 77
East Asia 68
crisis of 1997 51
East India Trading Company 143
Economic Commission for Latin America 59
economic failures 66–7
economic growth 65
efficiency 108
Egypt 183, 189, 191
elite, global 159–60
empathy, global 26–9
employment
instability 49–50
policy 43
Enlightenment rationalism 85–6
environmentalism 23–4, 31, 77
ePOCHAL change 19–20
Ethiopian famine 1984–5
27
ethnoscapes 126
events, global 24–30
exchange 140–1
experiences, global 24–30
exploitation 59–60, 66
extraordinary rendition 198, 200
fast-food franchises 114–15
see also McDonald’s
financescapes 126
financial crises
East Asian 1997 51, 68
global 2007–8 13, 50–4, 55
financial markets 42
flexible production 116–17, 162–4
food, creolization of 139–44, 149
Ford, H. 112–13
Fordism 108, 111, 112–14, 116, 161
formal economics 48
formal rationality 108, 111–12
France 39, 60, 96, 167, 168, 185
French colonies in America 84
French colonies in Indochina 98
franchising 114–15
Frank, A.G. 59–60, 71
Frankfurt School of Critical Theory 106–8, 109, 154
free market 6, 7, 34, 43, 44, 50, 52, 54, 65, 66, 67, 70, 73, 84, 130
theory of 36–8
freedom 89, 101
consumerism 117–18
French colonies in America 84
Friedman, J. 93
Friedman, T. 122
Frum, D. 194, 196, 197
Fukuyama, F. 38–40, 70, 72, 121, 182
functional differentiation 14–15
Furtado, C. 59
Gamble, A. 50, 51
Gates, B. 65
Geldof, B. 27
gender 47, 208–9
General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) 57, 95
Genoa G8 summit protest 74
Germany 27, 70, 94, 121, 167, 168
germinal phase 12
Giddens, A. 5, 6, 7, 13, 16, 20–1, 24, 116, 121–2, 136, 138, 152, 154, 171–3, 176
Gilpin, R. 8, 65, 177, 178, 180–1, 188, 205
Gilroy, P. 133
Gindin, S. 81–2
Glass–Steagall Act 52
global age 17–21
global cities 165–6
global citizenship 21–4
global consciousness 11, 15–17
global culture 120–1
global empathy 26–9
global events 24–30
global experiences 24–30
global financial crisis 2007–8 13, 50–4, 55
global studies 3–9
theorizing 5–9
Global Studies Association (GSA) 4, 5
Global Studies Network 5
global village 17–18
globalism 15
globalist nationalism 187–8
globality 15–17, 31
globalization 1–2, 10–32, 33, 202–9
advantages/disadvantages of the model 204–5
compression 11, 13–15, 31
defining 2, 11
five phases of 12, 13
global events and experiences 24–30
globalization-from-above 58
globalization-from-below 75
glocalization 141, 149
‘Golden Arches Theory of Conflict Prevention’ 122
Gorillaz 145
governments, and TNCs 155–6
Gramsci, A. 128, 129, 130, 154, 176
Great Depression 94
Guantanamo Bay 198, 200
Guatemala 97–8
Gulf War 1990 29–30, 83, 100
Halal, W.E. 161–2
Hall, S. 134, 135
Hannerz, U. 109, 135, 136, 139–40
Hardt, M. 73, 81, 82–3, 86
Harvey, D. 21, 82–3, 161–4, 173
Hegel, G. 39
hegemonic cycles 60
hegemony
benign 180–1
cultural studies 129
US 49, 95–6, 177, 180–1
Held, D. 6–7, 152, 154, 156, 199
Hewlett, J. 145
higher education 107
impact of McDonaldization 124–5
hip-hop 145
Hirst, P. 41, 49
historical context 7
history 3–4
end of 38–39, 72, 121, 177, 188, 198, 207
INDEX

Hixson, W.L. 96, 98, 99, 100
Hizb ut-Tahrir 189
Hobbes, T. 43, 178, 179, 187
Hoggart, R. 90
homogenization 127, 128
see also Americanization;
McDonaldization
housing market 52–4
Howes, D. 128
human rights 21, 26, 27, 35, 75, 120,
152, 170, 176, 199, 205
abuses 198
implications of the eight
models 206–8
Hunt, M. 85
Huntington, S. 40, 177, 181–6
Hussein, S. 195–6
hybridization see creolization
hyper-globalism 6–7
Iceland 53
ideal type, liberalization as 54–5
identity 10, 24, 127, 130, 131, 141,
144, 145, 174, 175, 181, 183, 184,
185, 190, 204, 208
consumer culture and 116, 138–9, 172
national identity 19, 85, 96, 205
new cultural identities 134, 150
ideological state apparatuses 129
ideoscapes 126
imagined worlds 126
immigration
Asian immigrants in Britain 143
US 87–8
imperial expansionism 86–7
imperialism 81–2
American empire see Americanization
incipient phase 12
income inequality, global 62–6
India 46, 131, 142, 183, 184, 188
Indian cuisine, in the UK 141–4
indigenization 141
individualism 35–6
individualization 159, 164, 174
Indochina 98–9
industrial agriculture 68
industrialization 59
America 87, 88
inequality 62–6, 160
information underclass 160
institutions
market institutions 70–1
standardization of 118–19
transnational 95, 121, 153, 167–71
instrumental rationality 106–8
interconnectedness (compression) 11,
13–15, 31, 61, 74
International Court of Justice 168
International Criminal Court
(ICC) 170
international debt crisis 45, 67
international law 170
International Monetary Fund
(IMF) 44–5, 49, 55, 62, 66, 67,
68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 95, 168
East Asian crisis 51
global financial crisis 53, 54
Latin American debt crisis 67
international non-governmental
organizations (INGOs) 24, 27
international relations 3
realism 178–81
internet 24–5, 47, 74
intra-state polarization 69–71
invisible hand 37
Iran 96, 100, 183, 184, 188, 190–1,
193, 195, 198, 200
Iraq 100, 169, 187, 189, 191, 193,
195–6, 197
Iraq War 2002 13, 80, 83, 197, 198,
200
irrationality of rationality 109–10
Islam
balkanization of 188–92, 200;
neo-conservative response 192–8
fundamentalism 40, 100–1
Islamic civilization 182, 183–4,
184–5
Israel 100, 169
Jamaat-i-Islami 189
Japan 49, 51, 69, 82, 94, 165, 167,
168, 180, 182, 183, 184, 188
jihad 190
Johnson, R.D. 5
Kagan, R. 187–8, 193–4, 198
Kennan, G.F. 97
Kennedy, P. 4
Kepel, G. 190
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Page(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keynes, J.M.</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keynesianism</td>
<td>41-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilburn, London</td>
<td>139-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klein, N.</td>
<td>73, 75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge transfer</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea, North</td>
<td>96, 98, 193, 195, 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea, South</td>
<td>51, 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kroc, R.</td>
<td>114-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labour value system</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladysmith Black Mambazo</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laissez-faire</td>
<td>37, 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>landmarks</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lash, S.</td>
<td>42, 160, 161-2, 163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>45, 59, 60, 67, 68, 72, 84, 92, 97, 182, 183, 184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leadership</td>
<td>197-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>League of Nations</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legrain, P.</td>
<td>75, 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lehman Brothers</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenin, V.I.</td>
<td>81, 102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liberal democracy</td>
<td>36, 55, 72, 95, 99, 130, 177, 182, 187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonaldization as liberal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>democratic convergence</td>
<td>119-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘triumph’ of</td>
<td>38-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liberalism</td>
<td>35-6, 198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neo-liberalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liberalization</td>
<td>2, 33-56, 72, 78, 202-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advantages/disadvantages of the model</td>
<td>204-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>benefits of</td>
<td>45-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>free markets</td>
<td>34, 36-8, 43, 44, 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and the global financial crisis</td>
<td>50-4, 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and global poverty and</td>
<td>62-3, 65-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inequality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and liberalism</td>
<td>35-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>limits of</td>
<td>48-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and north-south relations</td>
<td>66-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lilienthal, D.</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live Aid</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>living standards</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>see also poverty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>localism</td>
<td>92-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creolization</td>
<td>127, 140-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local cultures and resisting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americanization</td>
<td>101-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locke, J.</td>
<td>35, 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London G20 protest</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>long-term theorists of global change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luhmann, N.</td>
<td>13, 14-15, 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyotard, J.-F.</td>
<td>136, 161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majeski, S.</td>
<td>96, 97-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>68-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>managed capitalism</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manufactured exports</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcuse, H.</td>
<td>106-8, 124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>market institutions</td>
<td>70-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>markets</td>
<td>34, 43, 44, 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>free market theory</td>
<td>36-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshall Plan</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marx, K.</td>
<td>8, 37, 39, 48, 50, 54-5, 59-60, 117, 129, 152, 160, 162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marxism</td>
<td>9, 21, 71-2, 77, 81, 97, 102, 129, 136, 158, 161, 162, 175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classes</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neo-Marxism</td>
<td>6, 78, 104, 105, 106-8, 128, 130, 151, 154, 160, 176, 198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massey, D.</td>
<td>139, 174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCormick, T.J.</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonaldization</td>
<td>2, 104-25, 127, 128, 140, 202-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advantages/disadvantages of the model</td>
<td>204-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and creolization</td>
<td>148-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>functionalist tradition</td>
<td>105-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neo-Marxist tradition</td>
<td>106-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of politics</td>
<td>119-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and post-Fordism</td>
<td>115-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theory of</td>
<td>108-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonald's</td>
<td>116, 122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>history of</td>
<td>111-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>restaurants in Russia</td>
<td>148-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGrew, T.</td>
<td>154, 156, 180-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McJobs</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McLuhan, M.</td>
<td>17-18, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McNamara, R.</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>global events and global experiences</td>
<td>24-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imperialism</td>
<td>91-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mediascapes</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mehdi, A.</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meta-narratives, end of</td>
<td>136-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>46, 67, 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meyer, J.</td>
<td>120-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middle class</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Middle East 99–101, 189–92
Milanovic, B. 63–4
military imperialism 93–101
military strategy 193–4
Mill, J.S. 48
Mills, C. Wright 159
modernity 19–21
defining 172
modernization
reflexive 143, 145, 153, 171–4
theory 14, 105–6
moral authority 197–8
Mughal empire 142–3
multicentric world 169–70
music, creolization of 144–8
Muslim Brotherhood 189

nation-state 19, 38, 151–2, 154
bias of Americanization
model 101–2
creolization and 150
future role in the eight
models 205–6
nation-states compared with
TNCs 156–7
transnationalization see
transnationalization
nationalism 22, 23, 134, 136, 150,
187–8
NATO 199
N'Dour, Y. 147
Nederveen Pieterse, J. 136, 140,
149–50
negative thinking 107
Negri, A. 73, 81, 82–3, 86
neo-conservatism 80, 178
agenda 186–8
response to balkanization of
Islam 192–8
neo-liberalism 41–5, 50, 55, 73, 82–3,
94, 95, 96, 101, 116, 121, 122, 156,
186
and the ‘new global economy’ 41–4,
64, 72, 192, 193, 199
neo-liberal agenda 44–5, 56
neo-Marxism 6, 78, 104, 105, 106–8,
128, 130, 151, 154, 160, 176, 198
neo-realists 179–80
network society 165
new cultural identities 134, 150
‘new global economy’ 41–4
new social movements 23–4
‘New Times’ school of neo-
Marxism 154
Nicaragua 99
non-governmental organizations
(NGOs) 155
international (INGOs) 24, 27
north–south relations 66–9
Nuclear Disarmament Rally 27
Obama, B. 200
O’Byrne, D. 21, 22
Ohmae, K. 6, 8, 33–4, 36, 37–8, 44,
50, 206
oil price shock 41–2
oligarchs 70–1
one-dimensional society 106–8
organized capitalism 163
Orientalism 131–4
Ottoman Empire 188–9
Pahl, R. 164
Pakistan 183–84, 189
Palestine 100, 169, 191
Panitch, L. 81–2
paradigm shift 75
Parsons, T. 13–14
passports, world 23
periphery and core 58–62
Perle, R. 194, 196, 197
Perlmuter, H. 18–19
Philippines 68
philosophy 107
Polanyi, K. 48, 50, 51
polarization 2, 46, 57–79, 140,
202–9
advantages/disadvantages of the
model 204–5
anti-global capitalism
movement 71–4
core and periphery 58–62
deglobalization 75–7
as north–south relations 66–9
trends in global poverty and
inequality 62–6
within the nation-state 69–71
political realism 178–81
political repression 108
political speeches 123
Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Page(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>politics</td>
<td>119–23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonaldization of</td>
<td>119–23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one-dimensional thought</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>world politics</td>
<td>169–70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pop music</td>
<td>145–6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese colony at Goa</td>
<td>142–3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post-colonialism</td>
<td>131–4, 140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post-Fordism</td>
<td>137–8, 160–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonaldization and</td>
<td>115–19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post-industrial society</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>postmodernism</td>
<td>18–19, 160–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creolization and</td>
<td>130–1, 135–9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post-war generations</td>
<td>16–17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poverty</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trends in global poverty</td>
<td>62–6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>power</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American power over-</td>
<td>101–2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>estimated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relations and creolization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of music</td>
<td>147–8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>predictability</td>
<td>108–9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presentation, political</td>
<td>122–3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>private–public distinction</td>
<td>25–6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>privatization</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>70–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project for the New American Century (PNAC) report</td>
<td>193–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public–private distinction</td>
<td>25–6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qutb, S.</td>
<td>189–90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘race to the bottom’</td>
<td>49–50, 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>railroads</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rationality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>formal</td>
<td>108, 111–12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instrumental</td>
<td>106–8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>irrationality</td>
<td>109–10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rauchway, E.</td>
<td>87, 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reagan, R.</td>
<td>42, 45, 121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>realism, political</td>
<td>178–81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reflexive modernization</td>
<td>143, 145, 153, 171–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religion</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious fundamentalism</td>
<td>40, 100–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>see also Islam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>research centres</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resistance</td>
<td>102–3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theory of</td>
<td>128–31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricardo, D.</td>
<td>44, 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>civil</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>human</td>
<td>35, 176, 198, 206–8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>risk society</td>
<td>23, 173–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritzer, G.</td>
<td>104, 108–11, 114–15, 123, 124, 125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson, R.T. (Robbie)</td>
<td>11, 13, 15, 18, 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robertson, Roland</td>
<td>8, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosenau, J.</td>
<td>151–2, 169–70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotary clubs</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>168, 182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intra-state polarization</td>
<td>69–71, 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonald's restaurants</td>
<td>148–9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said, E.</td>
<td>131–4, 185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santos, B.S.</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sassen, S.</td>
<td>165–6, 167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>satellite technology</td>
<td>91–2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>100, 184, 190, 191, 192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sceptics</td>
<td>6–7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schiller, H.</td>
<td>91–2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schmitt, C.</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schmitt, G.</td>
<td>193–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scientific management (Taylorism)</td>
<td>108, 111, 112–14, 116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle protest</td>
<td>72, 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second World War</td>
<td>94–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>securitized mortgage asset</td>
<td>selling 52–3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sennett, R.</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 11 terrorist attacks</td>
<td>30, 100–1, 188, 191–2, 194–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>service ethic</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiva, V.</td>
<td>58, 77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shock therapy</td>
<td>70–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>short-termism</td>
<td>116–17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon, P.</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinic civilization</td>
<td>182, 184–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sklair, L.</td>
<td>153, 155, 156, 158–9, 164, 176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, A.</td>
<td>8, 36–7, 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sociology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘sonic tourism’ discourse</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophiatown, Johannesburg</td>
<td>139–40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sound-bites</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Centre</td>
<td>67–8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>south–north relations</td>
<td>66–9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Soviet Union 27, 83, 95, 96, 97, 99, 114, 167, 169, 181, 194
  collapse of 70, 72, 99, 181, 188
spaces, transnational 153, 165–6
Spain 52, 60
Spanish colonies in America 84
spirituality 146
Spivak, G.C. 132, 133
stagflation 42
Stalin, I. 114
standardization see McDonaldization
state, ‘rolling back’ of the 43, 186
state-centric world 169–70
state fraction 159
Stephanson, A. 85
Stiglitz, J. 45, 51, 70
strategic essentialism 133
Strinati, D. 90
structural adjustment programmes 45
structural-functionalism 13–14, 105–6
structuralism
  approach to development 58–62
  linguistics and 131–2
structuration 171
struggle-for-hegemony phase 12
subcultures 129–30
subprime mortgages 52–3
sub-Saharan Africa 68–9
substantive economics 48
Swyngedouw, E. 162
Syhlites 143
Sylvan, D. 96, 97–8
systems theory 13–15
  see also world-systems approach
Tabb, W.K. 43
Taft, W. 89
take-off phase 12
Taylor, F.W. 112
Taylor, T.D. 145, 146–7
Taylorism 108, 111, 112–14, 116
technical fraction 159
technology 109
technoscapes 126
terrorism
  attacks of September 11 2001 30,
    100–1, 188, 191–2, 194–5
  ‘war on terror’ 100–1, 192, 195–8
Thatcher, M. 42, 43, 45, 121
Third Way 121–2, 176
Thompson, G. 41, 49
Thompson, J.B. 29
time–space compression 137, 173
time–space distanciation 20, 172–3
Tomlinson, J. 1, 135–6
Tocqueville, A. de 84
torture 198
trade unions 43
tradition, decline of 138
transformationalism 6–7
translation 134
transnational classes 152, 153, 158–60
transnational corporations (TNCs) 153, 154–8
transnational institutions 95, 121, 153, 167–71
transnational practices 153, 160–4
transnational spaces 153, 165–6
transnationality index 157–8
transnationalization 2–3, 20, 151–76, 199, 202–9
  advantages/disadvantages of the model 204–5
  reflexive modernization 171–4
travel 118
Tunstall, J. 91, 92–3
uncertainty phase 12
under-development 59–60
United Nations (UN) 57, 167–9, 170, 197
  Economic and Social Council 168
  General Assembly 168
  history 168–9
  Secretariat 168
  Security Council 168
  Trusteeship Council 168
United States (US) 41, 50, 55
  American empire see Americanization
  balkanization 199–200
  foreign policy 95–101, 178, 192–8
  global financial crisis 2007–8 52–4
  hegemony 49, 95–6, 177; benign
    hegemony 180–1
  making of modern America 83–8
  National Security Strategy 83
  nationalism 187–8
United States (US) – continued
  neo-conservatism 186–8; response to
  balkanization of Islam 192–8
  politics 121
  September 11 terrorist attacks 30,
    100–1, 188, 191–2, 194–5
  and the United Nations 169
Urry, J. 42, 160, 161–2, 163
values
  American 85
  globalized 120–1
Vietnam War 29, 98–9
Wade, R. 64, 65
Wahabism 64
Wall Street Crash 1929 94
Wallerstein, I. 60–1, 62, 69, 71, 77–8
war, media coverage of 29–30
‘war on terror’ 100–1, 192, 195–8
Washington Consensus 45, 51, 66, 67
Weber, M. 8, 19, 86, 104, 105, 106,
  107, 108, 109, 111, 117, 121, 124,
  160, 179, 183, 184
welfare state 41
Wells, A. 92
Western civilization 182, 184–5
Westernization 182–3
  see also Americanization;
  McDonaldization
Williamson, J. 45
Wilson, W. 89, 94
Wolf, M. 66
Wood, S. 117
working class 160
World Bank 26, 35, 44–5, 49, 55, 57,
  62, 63, 66, 67, 69, 95, 168
world citizenship 21
world civilizations 182
World Government of World
  Citizens 22–3
‘world music’ 146–7
world passports 23
world polity theory 120–1
World Service Authority 23
world-systems approach 60–1, 69
World Trade Organization (WTO) 57,
  66
  Seattle protest 1999 72, 74
youth subcultures 129–30
Yeltsin, B. 70
Zolo, D. 199