

The Emergence of the Global Age and the Globalization of the Human Condition

In this section, Dr. Anderson provides an extensive analysis of this global era, which is the context driving the need for global education. He notes that his "discussion is organized around the development of a particular line of argument." Ed.

The major elements may be summarized as follows:

1. The contemporary world is characterized by a historically unprecedented international or global character.
2. The global character of contemporary history reflects a long-term historical trend toward a progressively more globalized human condition.
3. Within modern history and, more particularly, within contemporary times this historical trend has substantially accelerated as a result of western expansion and the development of modern science and technology. Specifically, the first, second, third . . . and *n*th order consequences of these twin events have been to substantially globalize the history, the geography, the economics, the politics, and the sociology of the human condition.
 - a. Historically, the era of separate regional histories has ended and an era of common global history has begun.
 - b. Geographically, the isolating efforts of distance on human affairs have been progressively eroded by the evolution of global systems of transportation and communication.
 - c. Economically, local and national economies have become increasingly absorbed into a global economy.
 - d. Politically, the European-centered nation-state system has been transformed into a worldwide and an organizationally heterogeneous global political system.

e. Sociologically, increasing interrelatedness between societies combined with increasing cultural congruence among societies is creating a common global culture co-existing uneasily with the traditional array of distinctive local, national, and regional cultures.

4. The progressive globalization of the human condition has produced a social system that is larger and more inclusive than nations, and this world system can be fruitfully conceptualized as a global society.

THE GLOBAL QUALITY OF CONTEMPORARY LIFE

Life in the contemporary world, at least the life of a large and growing fraction of humanity, is characterized by a historically unprecedented international or global quality. In this chapter I try to do two things. First, I illustrate the global quality of contemporary life. Second, I provide a brief historical overview of the globalization of the human condition.

I will be trying to develop a documented brief in support of the assertion that the human condition in modern history and particularly within contemporary times has become markedly globalized. But before launching into this analysis, it seems appropriate to illustrate the global quality of contemporary life. This can be done in a variety of ways. The method I have elected to use consists of giving an account of a day in my own life. I will be accompanied by a "detector of encounters of the international kind." This detector stops the story each time I encounter or experience things international.

Dr. Anderson's analysis of his very first actions of the day suggests the depth and breath of the global connections in an individual's ordinary day. Ed.

I awoke at 6:30 am to the ringing of an alarm clock . . .

STOP: I have encountered the international. my clock is a product of the Sony Corporation, a Japanese-based multinational corporation. The clock was assembled in a Sony plant in Brazil from component parts produced in Japan, Mexico, and Germany. It was shipped from Brazil to the United States in a Greek-owned ship manufactured in Sweden, licensed in Liberia, and staffed by a Portuguese crew.

[By the end of his day, Dr. Anderson had identified perhaps thousands of global encounters. He concluded:] The day in my life that I have just recounted is not atypical of the experience of a very large number of human beings, particularly those of us who happen to reside in the affluent and industrialized regions of the planet. Each of us is caught up in a network of international links and relationships that encircle the planet like a giant cobweb and make the "globalness" of the contemporary world a pervasive and ubiquitous element in the routines of everyday life. Indeed, the global character of our lives is like the air we breathe. It has become so commonplace that we often take it for granted and unconsciously assure that it is a natural and unchanging feature of the human condition.

But such is not the case. To the contrary, throughout most of history, human beings lived out their daily lives in conditions that were decidedly non-global. The markedly global character of contemporary history is a recent innovation in the human condition. To appreciate this and, in turn, to grasp its implications for citizenship and citizen education, we must look at humankind's historical sojourn from a pre-global past to a global present and toward what very probably will be an even more global future.