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**Working Paper**

## Embedded Theorizing: Perspectives on Globalization and Global Governance

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MAX-PLANCK-INSTITUT FÜR GESELLSCHAFTSFORSCHUNG  
MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIETIES



MPIfG Discussion Paper 05/14

**Embedded Theorizing**

Perspectives on Globalization and Global Governance

Renate Mayntz



MPIfG Discussion Paper

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## **Abstract**

In the face of a vast, but highly heterogeneous literature, this paper examines the factors that shape different scientific perspectives on the loosely bounded set of phenomena addressed by the terms “globalization” and “global governance.” Based on the secondary analysis of research funded by the German Volkswagen Foundation, the paper shows first how the disciplinary paradigms of economics, law, and the social sciences lead to different perspectives on a shared object. In a second step, intra-disciplinary differences in perspective are analyzed. Based on a comprehensive review of the relevant social science literature, it is first shown how changes in world politics since World War II are reflected in the scientific perspective on globalization and global governance. In a final section, different perspectives of American and European scholars are then linked to differences in geopolitical context that have developed since the end of the Cold War on both sides of the Atlantic. The findings alert scholars to the contingent nature of their ways of perceiving, evaluating, and studying a given scientific object.

## **Zusammenfassung**

Angesichts einer ausufernden und hochgradig heterogenen Literatur zu „Globalisierung“ und „global governance“ fragt dieses Papier nach den Faktoren, die die unterschiedlichen Perspektiven auf den mit diesen Begriffen angesprochen, unscharf abgegrenzten Bereich von Phänomenen prägen. Gestützt auf die Sekundäranalyse von Projekten in einem Schwerpunktprogramm der VolkswagenStiftung wird zuerst die charakteristisch verschiedene Perspektive von Sozialwissenschaftlern, Wirtschaftswissenschaftlern und Rechtswissenschaftlern auf ein gemeinsames Erkenntnisobjekt dargestellt. In einem zweiten Schritt werden auf der Grundlage einer umfassenden Analyse sozialwissenschaftlicher Literatur intradisziplinäre Unterschiede der Betrachtungsweise analysiert. Zuerst wird gezeigt, wie sich die weltpolitische Entwicklung seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg in der Analyse von Globalisierung niedergeschlagen hat. Anschließend wird ein (selten bemerkter) Unterschied in den Perspektiven amerikanischer und europäischer Wissenschaftler in Beziehung gesetzt zu dem unterschiedlichen geopolitischen Kontext, der sich nach dem Ende des Kalten Krieges auf beiden Seiten des Atlantik entwickelt hat. Das Papier verweist damit auf die Selektivität und kontingente Natur wissenschaftlicher Perspektiven auf ein gegebenes Erkenntnisobjekt.

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## 1 Introduction

“Globalization” is a blanket term with fuzzy boundaries, and, depending on the way it is defined, global governance is either perceived as part of the process called globalization, or as a response to it. This conceptual ambiguity has stimulated definitional efforts, while the diversity of theoretical interpretations has motivated attempts to structure the field by distinguishing different schools of thinking about globalization (e.g. Genschel 2004). This paper sets itself a different task. Instead of describing different views on globalization and global governance, we shall examine factors that *shape* different perspectives, i.e. different ways of perceiving, evaluating and studying the loosely bounded set of phenomena called “globalization.” The purpose of such an analysis is not to arrive at new definitions of globalization and global governance, nor to offer yet another substantive theory, but to alert scholars to the selective – and contingent – nature of their perspectives.

In the philosophy and the sociology of science it has been discussed at length how scientific perspectives on a given object are shaped by the cognitive features of the dominant paradigm, by the social organization of the science system, and by external or contextual factors. This literature provides the general frame of reference for the following analysis. Given the specific object and the aim of this paper, this analytical frame must, however, be adapted to the task at hand.

The philosophy and the sociology of science deal typically either with science writ large, i.e. science as distinct from other forms of knowing, or with the properties of scientific disciplines that have different objects of cognition. This paper, in contrast, wants to explain differences in perspective on a *shared* cognitive object. Different perspectives on globalization can be related, first of all, to the cognitive features of different scientific specialties dealing with the topic. In the philosophy of science, numerous attempts have been made to identify the cognitive features that characterize sciences dealing with different segments of reality, with physics often serving as the epistemological benchmark to be compared to other sciences like biology, psychology, or sociology (e.g. Cole 1983; Fiske/Shweder 1986; Mitchell 2000). Pointed comparisons of different perspectives in the study of a *shared* cognitive object are, however, difficult to find. In section 2 of this paper, such a comparison will be undertaken for the major disciplines studying globalization and global governance – the social sciences, economics, and law.

Highlighting disciplinary perspectives on globalization and global governance means to neglect intradisciplinary differences in perspective. In sections 3 and 4, this limitation is suspended, and the analysis concentrates on intradisciplinary differences in perspective. Due to the limited competence of the author, however, only the social science literature on globalization and global governance will be covered. Within the social science

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literature, some substantive differences in perspective are well known and have been described repeatedly. This holds particularly for International Relations, the subfield of political science mainly concerned with globalization and global governance. For decades, this field has been structured by the opposition between two “schools,” labelled realists and idealists (or institutionalists) respectively (see for instance Baylis/Smith 2001). This paper does not try to add to the substantive theoretical debate between realists and institutionalists, nor, for that matter, to the less focused debate between political scientists and political economists on the nature and causes of globalization; it wants to *explain* rather than describe different views. The factors highlighted in sections 3 and 4 were chosen for their explanatory potential in our particular case; they have been suggested by a careful reading of the literature.

The cognitive dynamics of scientific development are largely seen to follow from a dialogue between the researcher and his object (Kuhn 1962; Thagard 1992). The object contradicts the propositions of the researcher and “talks back” to him (Pickering 1995). Confronting theoretical preconceptions of the nature of a given (stable) object with empirical evidence dispels earlier misconceptions and leads to a deepened understanding. This kind of learning has also taken place in the field of globalization studies. It has come to be recognized, for instance, that what is now called globalization is neither a new phenomenon, nor a linear process, and the increasingly detailed knowledge of regional differences in the extent of integration into global markets and international institutions has meant that the implicit empirical claim of terms like global and globalization is now explicitly relativized. A different kind of learning must take place if the object of cognition does not “hold still,” but is undergoing change while it is being looked at. Such a learning process is the topic of section 3, which will trace how historical change has been reflected in the analytical frames dealing with globalization and global governance.

In the sociology of science, attention concentrates on the social organization of science, and on the effect of institutional features on scientific development (e.g. Whitley 1984; Ben-David 1991; Fuchs 1992). Evidence for the influence of these factors comes mainly from synchronic (different disciplines) or diachronic (different periods) comparisons. Looking only at social science perspectives on a particular topic such as globalization, the social organization of science does not appear to play a significant role. The same holds for the external factors impinging on the development of science commonly favored in sociological analyses. Beginning with Robert K. Merton (1970), the interest of social scientists has mainly been attracted by the shaping influence of economic demand, and of political efforts to direct the development of science by selective promotion, legal constraints, and ideological indoctrination (e.g. Barber 1966; Kogan/Henkel 1983; Braun 1997; Kocka/Mayntz 1998). Research on globalization, however, appears neither to be subject to politically motivated restrictions, nor to enjoy special promotion by political or economic interests. But this does not mean that there are no external influences. Section 4 will consider the subtle influence of a rarely considered situational factor, the geopolitical context in which scholars are embedded.

## 2 Disciplinary ways of studying globalization

Scientific disciplines are a relatively recent way of organizing knowledge both socially and cognitively (Stichweh 1994). As a social institution, a discipline possesses a codified body of knowledge, certified members, has arrangements for training and teaching, and a career structure. Considered as cognitive systems, disciplines are characterized by their object or objects of cognition, and by the specific way they view and study their objects. Different disciplines view the same ontological object differently. They focus on different aspects, ask different questions, make different ontological assumptions, and may use different methodologies and techniques. We should therefore expect the main disciplines dealing with globalization, the social sciences, economics, and law, to have characteristically different perspectives. The cognitive structure of most disciplines is, however, internally differentiated; each comprises a plurality of (often overlapping) scientific specialties and theoretical paradigms. It is therefore an open question to what extent disciplinary perspectives on globalization reflect cognitive features generally characteristic of these disciplines.

The opportunity, and with it the incentive to undertake a comparison of disciplinary perspectives on globalization was provided by a large interdisciplinary research program on globalization and global governance financed by the German Volkswagen Foundation between 1998 and 2003.<sup>1</sup> In a novel attempt to summarize the major findings of this program, the Foundation commissioned a secondary analysis of the reports and publications that had been produced by the end of 2003 (Mayntz et al. 2005). At this point, 91% of the grants had gone to projects in three of the disciplinary categories used by the Foundation: social sciences (50%), economics (30%), and law (11%). In order to do justice to studies undertaken by scholars from these three disciplinary groups, the secondary analysis was performed by different authors, each taking on one of the three groups of projects (see von Bogdandy 2005; Genschel 2005; Lütz 2005). Responding to a uniform list of queries, the three separate analyses were performed in a strictly comparative fashion. This made it possible to compare the disciplinary perspectives of German social scientists, economists, and legal scholars doing research on globalization; unfortunately, the project classification scheme of the Volkswagen Foundation did not permit systematic differentiation between sociological and political science projects. Not all projects in the three groups that were officially concluded had already produced written results by the end of 2003; the data base of the secondary analysis thus consisted of 147 publications produced by 78 projects.<sup>2</sup> Since the research financed by the Volkswagen Foundation is not fully representative of current German research on globalization, the

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1 Schwerpunkt Globale Strukturen und ihre Steuerung. Förderinitiative der VolkswagenStiftung. Merkblatt 63.

2 Of the total of 178 projects finally financed by the Volkswagen Foundation in this program, 120 projects had been concluded by the end of 2003; 78 of these 120 projects addressed issues of globalization, fell into one of the three largest disciplinary categories, *and* had published results by the end of 2003. The Volkswagen Foundation classified 36 of these 78 projects as “social science,” 26 as “economics,” and 16 as “law” (Mayntz et al. 2005: 8–9).



authors of the three disciplinary reports have analyzed the results of the projects falling into their disciplinary category explicitly in the context of a more comprehensive knowledge of the relevant literatures. The following discussion, which is mainly based on these three reports, thus already goes beyond their primary data base. In addition, the discussion also draws on a larger, international literature survey which provides the data base for the two later sections.

In the literature dealing with “disciplinarity,” i.e. the basic cognitive elements characterizing a given discipline, three elements are generally identified as fundamental: the specific way the object of cognition is framed, the questions asked about it, and the methodological approach used (Chubin 1976; Elster 1983: 15–24; Messer-Davidow et al. 1993). These features are highlighted in the following discussion. Passing reference will also be made to additional cognitive features such as the functional identity of a discipline (i.e. theoretical, practical, or critical), its internal cognitive coherence or degree of fragmentation, and basic axioms or ontological assumptions.

Speaking of globalization, it is important to distinguish between the phenomenon we have in mind and the term being used to designate it. Not all projects included in the secondary analysis used globalization terminology, nor did they use the term “globalization” in the same way. Legal scholars focus on the development of an international legal order and often prefer to speak of internationalization rather than globalization. For economists, globalization simply means economic globalization. Legal scholars and social scientists agree that a globalizing economy is the dominant aspect and driving factor of the process. However, social scientists in particular tend to extend the concept to include political, infrastructural, cultural and societal aspects. A truly shared conception of globalization as an object of cognition can thus only be defined at a metadisciplinary level.

Methodological approaches count as basic disciplinary characteristics – in spite of the fact that different methodological “schools” exist in all of the disciplines considered here. By and large, however, the dominant approach in legal studies of globalization is hermeneutic and interpretive, while the dominant approach in the projects classified as social science is in a broad sense empirical. In economics the approach appears to be less uniform; here we find analyses that are based on empirical (largely statistical) data as well as formalized deductive modelling efforts. In the Volkswagen program, the latter kind of projects predominated, though published statistical data were mostly used.

Different conceptions of globalization direct attention to different aspects of the complex phenomenon, but the questions asked by scholars in different disciplines cannot simply be derived from their perception of the object of cognition and the way it is approached methodologically. Instead, it became evident in the course of the secondary analysis that the research questions pursued are related to a feature rarely counted among the characteristics of a given discipline – to values and valuations. In the positivistic philosophy of science, implicit, let alone explicit, value judgments are considered to

be unscientific, and consequently are not included among the fundamental features of disciplinary views. Scholars aligned with Adorno's critical theory, in contrast, are openly partisan; they hold that the social sciences have an emancipatory function. In the field of globalization studies, few authors use critical theory explicitly. Most scholars working on globalization would formally subscribe to Max Weber's injunction to abstain from value judgments. In fact, however, their analyses cannot be "value neutral," because the major dependent variables in their studies – welfare, inequality, justice, order, etc. – are not value-neutral. It is therefore not surprising that a – positive or negative – valuation of globalization turned out to be an important feature of the different disciplinary perspectives.

By and large, and again neglecting intradisciplinary differences that do exist, economists evaluate globalization positively, social scientists evaluate it negatively, and legal scholars are ambivalent. These evaluations are the result of different standards, or evaluation criteria, which in turn are rooted in different disciplinary core values. The core value and evaluation standard of economics is efficiency, or economic welfare production. This evaluation standard is applied to economic globalization, the globalization aspect highlighted by economics (Genschel 2005: 74). Based on the axiomatic assumption that the expansion of markets beyond national boundaries increases welfare, globalization – to the extent that it does take place – is evaluated positively. The obvious normative consequence is to promote economic globalization and remove still existing (mainly political) obstacles.

The core value of the legal discipline might be described as the development and maintenance of a deliberately created order safeguarding individual rights. The perception of a multidimensional, but economically driven globalization process defines a challenging task for legal development. The evaluation of globalization, which as a process includes the "globalization" of law, is ambivalent because on the one hand, the stepwise growth of an international and transnational legal order is judged positively, while doubts remain that a legal order able to fulfil its traditional function can develop outside of the framework of national states (von Bogdandy 2005).

Within the social sciences, sociological and political science studies are likely to focus on different aspects of the multidimensional globalization process – the "global society" and the "global polity," respectively. The implied core values of these disciplines also differ. While social integration and emancipation could be called core concerns of sociology, democracy and freedom (as individual liberty and as national sovereignty) are core concerns of political science. In a somewhat modified form, these disciplinary value perspectives are manifest in the research on globalization. In the social science projects of the Volkswagen Foundation program, ecological values, socioeconomic standards of living, and human rights play a prominent role; additional evaluative reference points are democracy, national sovereignty, and global peace and security. If social scientists evaluate globalization negatively, it is because of its presumed negative impacts on the cherished core values of the respective sub-disciplines.

The implicit or explicit valuation of a given object of cognition shapes the cognitive interest with which it is approached. Cognitive interests are always selective. In the field of globalization studies, interest in governance issues appears to dominate interest in the evolution of international and transnational structures. While the Volkswagen Foundation program put equal emphasis on questions of structural development and on questions of governance, not only in its title but also in the call for proposals, very few projects were devoted specifically to the shape and evolution of, for instance, geographical distribution patterns, interorganizational networks, or large technical infrastructure systems. The selective emphasis on governance is particularly evident for the legal and the social science projects. For the discipline of law, the focus on governance appears self-evident; whether at the national or the international level, law *is* a form of governance. For social science studies of globalization, in contrast, the selective interest in questions of governance is a consequence of their focus on the negative effects, or problems caused by globalization. Of the three disciplines considered, economics appears to pay most attention to structural developments, tracing the development of international trade, FDI (foreign direct investment), multinational corporations, and global production networks. The economics projects in the Volkswagen program used such data, but did not generate them. In this respect they were not representative of economic research on globalization.

Governance tends to be seen as a process or an institutional structure designed to cope with problems. The kind of problem attracting most scientific attention is related to disciplinary value perspectives, and differs between the three groups of projects analyzed. Obstacles to globalization, mainly caused by protective measures of nation-states, are a problem typically discussed in economics projects (Genschel 2005: 69–73). For legal scholars, the intensification and expansion of economic and non-economic interactions and transactions beyond national boundaries challenges the ordering capacity of law. This raises the issue of the extent to which law can meet the challenge, and directs attention to questions of the legitimacy, sanctioning power, and compliance commanded by international and transnational legal institutions. But the limited effectiveness of international and transnational law is not the only problem addressed; its continually increasing effectiveness, too, has a problematic consequence, as it impacts negatively on national sovereignty and the control capacity of national states (von Bogdandy 2005: 26).

In the social science projects, the “erosion” of the national state is also a recognized problem caused by globalization. As for problems at the global level, attention concentrates on ecological problems, the violation of human rights, poverty and the lowering of welfare standards, and new risks induced by increased geographical mobility and modern information technology. While imbalances in the international power structure are recognized, the inequality between countries and regions (e.g. the North/South divide) commands more interest than security issues and the rise of a single superpower. Many of these problems, it might be mentioned in passing, are only partly consequences of globalization; ecological problems follow from (increasingly worldwide) changes in production technology, while human rights violations and even poverty are

often home-grown. In both cases, a “global public” created by the modern media of mass communication stimulates the development of transnational advocacy groups fighting these problems.

Concern with problems directs attention to the institutions and organizations charged with the task of coping with them. Here again disciplinary perspectives were found to differ among the three groups. Projects in economics deal normatively with questions of a global market order. International institutions are expected to play an important role in constituting a global economy, mainly by promoting the further expansion of markets, while market control functions are mainly attributed to national governments. Legal studies analyze international institutions with a view to their normatively expected and their de facto functions in the development of an international legal order, which is still largely seen as the result of negotiations and contracts between states. The most detailed empirical analyses of the constitution and operation of international and transnational organizations are performed by social scientists. The results obtained in the projects of the Volkswagen Foundation program could be used to form a composite description of the regulative structure familiarly referred to by the term global governance; but this would go beyond the intentions of the present paper.

The fact that disciplinary perspectives on globalization differ, as shown in this section, is in itself not surprising. It may serve to sensitize scientists to the inevitable selectiveness of their perspectives. More importantly, the comparative analysis has shown that cognitive features such as object perception, value orientations, and the research questions chosen form a closely interrelated cluster. It is, however, impossible to say much about the extent to which the disciplinary perspectives on globalization reflect cognitive features generally characteristic of the respective disciplines. In particular it may well be that the importance of values for the definition of the cognitive interest underlying specific research questions is greater in studies of globalization than in other subfields of the same disciplines. The importance of values for the definition of the guiding cognitive interest will vary with the perception of the object of cognition: Values will be particularly important if the object of cognition is a real phenomenon which is perceived as threatening. Attention will then be directed to the nature and causes of the threat, and to ways of coping with it.

The characteristic cognitive features of a discipline, its methodological approach, basic cognitive interest, and evaluation standards are likely to change only slowly. In contrast, the specific questions asked about the object of cognition should respond more easily to external, contextual factors. In the preceding analysis, external factors that may affect the perspective on globalization were held constant by concentrating on a body of research limited in time and space, i.e. projects conducted by German scholars between 1998 and 2003. In the next two sections, we shall focus instead on external factors, extending the time and space limits of the analysis, but at the same time keeping discipline constant by dealing only with social science publications on globalization and global governance. The data base for these sections is supplied by a literature search covering

several hundred titles, performed partly by the author herself, partly with the assistance of Tim Müllenborn. The literature surveyed consists mainly of English language publications from 1970 onwards. Since no comprehensive state-of-the-art report is intended in this paper, the vast literature will only be cited sparingly. Though the literature survey suggests that the majority of the titles fall into the field of International Relations, it will again not be possible to distinguish systematically between sociological and political science studies.

### **3 The impact of historical developments**

Historical changes in a given field often become the focus of scientific enquiry. But even where the object of cognition is not a process of change, analytical frames change in response to changes in the object, and crystallize around new concepts. Globalization itself is such a concept. John Dryzek and Stephen Leonard (1988) have argued that the frequent historical changes in their objects forces political scientists continually to develop new and different analytical frames and substantive theories, which therefore cannot build upon each other. To call attention to such external effects on scientific thinking does not deny the existence of an internal cognitive dynamic, fueled by contradicting evidence and the awareness of gaps in the prevalent theoretical model. In the development of the theory of political steering, the successive elaboration and modification of the initial paradigm has been driven both by such an endogenous dynamic and by changes in political reality (Mayntz [1998] 2003). In the development of social science approaches to globalization and global governance, a similar conjunction of an internal cognitive dynamic with the influence of external political changes is visible. We shall focus here on the latter.

Changes can be gradual or more abrupt. The increase and intensification of international and transnational interactions, transactions and relations that is now called globalization includes both more gradual and more abrupt developments. Changes in the global polity are often the consequence of singular historical events that provide visible cutting points in the process. Other facets of the process of globalization move more incrementally and appear more continuous. We shall look at both kinds of processes and the attendant changes in their conceptualization.

The global political order has undergone relatively abrupt changes over the past 60 years. This is reflected in parallel changes in perspective and related semantic shifts. These changes have been traced by, among others, Lisa Martin and Beth Simmons, who point to specific historical events that have led to attendant changes in the research on international institutions (Martin 1992; Martin/Simmons 1998). According to these authors, it is possible to distinguish three phases of theorizing linked to external events. Phase one began after World War II, when the United States pushed for a new world

order and was instrumental in the creation of the Bretton Woods institutions. International organizations were then studied to find out whether they fulfilled their mandate. This period ended with the dissolution of the former World War II alliance and the advent of the Cold War.<sup>3</sup>

In the Cold War period, a bipolar world system developed in which the United States was embedded as hegemon of the Western world. Hegemonic stability theory, while recognizing existing power asymmetries, emphasized the benefits a dominant state could derive from international institutions. “The stability of the Western alliance under conditions of bipolarity led the United States to behave as a farsighted hegemon, often willing to bypass exploitative solutions in favor of long-term benefits and stability” (Martin 1992: 64; see also Steel 1995: 65). In this second period, the earlier focus on international organizations was extended to the study of international regimes, and subsequently to international cooperation more generally. It was the extension beyond *international* organizations, “the acquisition of authoritative decision-making capacity by non-state and supra-state actors” (Fuchs 2002: 11), that led to the ascendance of the concept of global governance. Robert Keohane has described the direction that political science thinking took in this phase as moving “from interdependence and institutions to globalization and governance” (Keohane 2002). The change in “buzzwords,” he argues, reflects changes in reality. Thus the semantic shift from “international interdependence” to “globalization” reflects for him the growing intensity of (not only economic) cross-border interactions and transactions, while he sees the semantic shift from “international institutions” to “global governance” related to the challenges with which developing countries and NGOs have increasingly confronted the legitimacy of the “club model” of international institutions dominant in the 1970s. While realists in this period studied the arms race, the concept of global governance, developed in critical reaction to the paradigm of realism, became the hallmark of institutionalist thinking. As had been believed of international organizations (e.g. Haas 1990: 2), global governance is widely seen to be about collective problem solving and the provision of collective goods (e.g. Langhorne 2001; H  ritier 2002). Different from the concept of domination, governance means to agree on goals, measures, and rules in the management of common affairs. This notion of governance has been criticized as normatively biased (e.g. Latham 1999: 35; Mayntz 2001: 41), and there are those who prefer a lean definition of governance as “a set of authority relationships” (Kahler/Lake 2003: 8). In such a view, “global governance” may denote the actually existing, fragmented set of partly conflicting, partly overlapping supra-, inter- and transnational institutions and regimes; but this is still a minority view.

The end of the Cold War and the events of 1989 ushered in the third phase in thinking about world order. With the bipolar system becoming increasingly multi-polar and the former transatlantic alliance tenuous, the situation that had favored the farsighted hege-

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3 Horowitz (2004) gives a detailed account of this period.

mon changed,<sup>4</sup> and political scientists recognized that the “movement toward multi-polarity should lead powerful states to favor solutions other than multilateralism” (Martin 1992: 59). American multilateralism had been fostered as well as shielded by the Cold War with its clean opposition between a dictatorial Soviet regime and the democratic, cooperative West. Now international cooperation was no longer a self-evident political imperative for the United States; the country became “suspicious of cooperative, regularized, rule-governed endeavors in multilateral institutions settings” (Higgott 2004: 99), and turned increasingly to bilateral and even unilateral action.<sup>5</sup> The debate turned to the Pros and Contras of a world order dominated by a single super-power, and the concept of empire started to be used again to describe the new world order (e.g. Hardt/Negri 2000; Münkler 2005). For Hirst, the developing opposition between supporters of cosmopolitan democracy and “the discourse on empire” is the modern version of the opposition between realist nationalists and idealist internationalists that goes back to the 1920s and 30s (Hirst 2003: 48).

While the perspective on world order changed perceptibly at specific historical turning points, the discussion about the “retreat” of the nation-state illustrates a more gradual change in perspective. The notion of a withdrawal of the nation-state as a consequence of globalization gained popularity in the early 1990s (Moses 1994; Horsman/Marshall 1994; Ohmae 1995; Strange 1996). The steady advance towards a global or at least regional economy transcending national boundaries was considered the main culprit in this process. When, after the end of World War II, economic globalization led by the Bretton Woods institutions slowly returned to, and gradually came to surpass the level already achieved before World War I, the fully developed Western nation-state did not immediately lose its capacity to control the national economy. Through the period of the Cold War, while GATT curtailed tariffs, national governments retained crucial policy instruments to control cross-border capital flows. What Ruggie (1982) succinctly called “embedded liberalism” made national boundaries economically permeable, but left national governments the economic control capacities needed to prevent the recurrence of the social and economic crises of the 1920s and 30s. This changed with neoliberal economic reforms following the “conservative turn” that took place first in Britain and the US, was emulated by the European Union, and gained momentum with the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Mayntz/Scharpf 2005). The policies of deregulation, privatization, and the liberalization of cross-border capital movement removed still existing obstacles to international trade and FDI, and together with new developments in information technology created a genuinely global financial market (Knorr Cetina 2005). In this stepwise development, the control capacity of national governments in

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4 The unsettling consequences of the end of the Cold War for the international role and identity of the United States are frequently noted; they are a major theme in Steel (1995).

5 The change in policy was neither sudden nor a complete turn-about, as the analysis by Nye and Keohane (1993) shows. Neither did American unilateralism originate in the post-Cold War period; it was already evident at the time of the Reagan administration; Keohane (2002: 8) and Martin/Simmons (1998: 439–444) list a number of unilateral American acts in the decades after World War II. The point is rather a difference in dominant policy frames.

the areas of economic policy, tax policy, and welfare policy diminished, a process finally crystallizing in the notion of the “retreat” or even “eclipse” of the state. European political scientists in particular emphasized the constraining effects of globalization on the welfare state (e.g. Scharpf 2000; Rhodes 2001).

Already towards the end of the 1990s, however, the assessment of the effects of globalization on the nation-state became more sanguine, and the perspective slowly changed again. In the projects of the Volkswagen Foundation program as well as in the globalization literature at large, social scientists now tend to emphasize that while the domestic steering capacities of national governments may be diminishing, the political functions of the nation-state are changing rather than withering away. In the projects surveyed for the German study, the intensified competition for investments and the increased vulnerability to externally induced financial and economic crises are still seen as powerful constraints for states, but there is agreement that the nation-state, if only by default, remains the most important player, in global governance as well as for the successful domestic adaptation to globalization. National institutions are seen to play an important role in the way states cope with the challenges, and use the opportunities of a globalizing world. The impact of emerging international private authorities on the state is perceived as transformative rather than detrimental to the powers of the nation-state (Hall/Biersteker 2002). The image of the modern nation-state rendered powerless by globalization was recognized as a myth (Weiss 1998). Globalization, global governance and the internationalization of law, rather than causing the eclipse of the nation-state, are now seen to lead to the transformation of the traditional notion of sovereignty (Krasner 1999; Clark 1999; Ilgen 2003). Whether this rather optimistic reassertion of the importance of the nation-state will survive the next set of international crises remains to be seen.

#### **4 The impact of geopolitical context**

In the last section, we saw how more gradual or more abrupt changes in the process summarily called globalization are reflected in changing foci of interest and changing interpretations. These perspectives were tacitly attributed, as is also customary in state-of-the-art reports, to an international scientific community of globalization scholars. Even if it is recognized that authors from a particular nation, most often the United States, play a leading role in a given scientific community, as is the case in political science (Schmitter 2002), one does not expect scientific perspectives to *differ* significantly between, say, European and American authors. But scientific thinking is shaped by social context, as Karl Mannheim realized long ago (Mannheim 1929). The most significant aspect of social context will differ, for instance, between scholars interested in stratification and inequality, and scholars interested in the global political order. Whether or not they are formally classified as political scientists, for social scientists interested in the



world polity the geopolitical situation in which their country finds itself is conceivably the most relevant context. This context had been perceived as largely similar for European and American social scientists during the reign of the transatlantic alliance in the Cold War period. But the literature surveyed suggests that after 1990, in the third period of thinking about the political world order outlined above, European and American perspectives started to diverge. It would require a major project in the sociology of science to show conclusively whether or not there are indeed differences in the perspective on globalization and global governance between European and American scholars;<sup>6</sup> the following remarks do not claim the certainty that could come from such a project. It should also be noted that the picture drawn in the following paragraphs is definitely dated: it sketches differences in perspective that appeared evident around the turn of 2004/2005, but given the fluid nature of collective sentiments, perspectives may well have changed by the time these lines are read.

The theoretically most intriguing difference of perspective between American and European scholars shows up in their dealing with global governance. It is a difference not in the definition, but in the saliency of the concept of global governance. This difference reflects the different geopolitical constellations in which European and American authors found themselves after the end of the Cold War. The foreign policy of the Bush administration following 9/11, and especially the Iraq war, only served to intensify the difference between American and European perspectives.

In the United States, the perception of an increasingly unilateralist policy stance became a live issue in public discourse. Cutting edge international relations work now dealt with the imbalances in the international power structure. Among liberal institutionalists, the new “buzzword” was multilateralism (see Keohane 1990; Ruggie 1993), and interest turned to the threat that an asymmetric international power structure poses to it (Martin 1992). Multilateralism is a narrower concept than governance; it focuses specifically on relations between states, while the concept of global governance refers to a variety of public as well as private actors. Multilateralism refers to a dimension of alternative policy choices. For the United States, this choice became controversial after 1989 because the advantages of multilateralism maintained by hegemonic stability theory before the end of the Cold War could no longer be taken for granted. As Moravcsik (2000: 296) has put it: “Like most powerful and isolated countries, the United States tend to favor unilateralism more than others.”

Weak nations, in contrast, have good reasons to cherish multilateralism. These reasons have been summarized most poignantly by Kagan (2004: 37):

Europe’s relative weakness has understandably produced a powerful European interest in building a world where military strength and hard power matter less than economic and soft power,

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6 For purposes of this article, the term “American” refers to the United States of America, and the term “American political scientist” refers to scholars whose permanent institutional affiliation is American.

an international order where international law and international institutions matter more than the power of individual nations, where unilateral action by powerful states is forbidden, where all nations regardless of their strength have equal rights . . . . Because they are relatively weak, Europeans have a deep interest in devaluing and eventually eradicating the brutal laws of an anarchic Hobbesian world where power is the ultimate determinant of national security and success.

The result is a “longer-term trend towards a stronger normative disposition for multi-level governance in Europe than in the United States,” expressed both in the “European willingness, incomprehensible to the US foreign policy community, to engage in sovereignty pooling,” and in a more positive attitude “towards multilateral governance structures at the global level” (Higgott 2004: 113). From a European perspective, the demise of multilateralism and the superpower position of the United States constitute a highly problematic development (de Wijk 2002; Risse 2003).

The persistence of the ideal of collective international problem solving has meant that among European social scientists, the analytical frame of global governance has not lost its scientific attractiveness.<sup>7</sup> The concept of global governance does not only have normative implications: it also seems to exude an unspoken optimism. With all that, interest in the topic of global governance has not abated among European scholars; conferences on issues of governance abound, the European Union has started an Integrated Project on “new modes of governance,” with 24 different projects participating by March 2005 (<<http://www.eu-newgov.org>>), in Berlin (Germany) a new School of Governance has been established, and in August 2004 the Globalization Studies Network was founded in Warwick (UK). There also seem to be more institutions specifically devoted to research on globalization and global governance outside than inside the US (Sachsenmaier 2004). The conceptual frame of global governance continues to be elaborated, with emphasis on the variety of forms in which governance takes place (e.g. Zürn 1998; Cable 1999; Fuchs/Kratochwil 2002; Jachtenfuchs/Knodt 2002; Djelic/Quack 2003).

Quantitative evidence for the shifting focus from governance to multilateralism and the attendant divergence between American and European perspectives is supplied by data from the Social Science Citation Index.<sup>8</sup> While the SSCI lists only 3 publications with “multilateralism” in their title for the 1970s, and 11 for the 1980s, there is an upsurge of such publications beginning in 1990, with 77 entries for the decade of the 90s and another 38 in the following five years. There is also evidence that this thematic shift has been particularly pronounced in the United States: While only 29% of the publications bearing “global governance” in their title came from authors affiliated with an American institution, 46% of those that featured “multilateralism” did.

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7 Political scientists writing in German sometimes prefer terms such as “*neue Formen der Staatlichkeit*” or “*neue Formen des Regierens*,” but even in German, the word “governance” is meanwhile familiarly used (e.g. Zürn 2003: 25–27; Benz et al. 2003; Schuppert 2005).

8 As of spring 2005; analysis performed by Tim Müllenborn.

Within the multilateralism frame, interest has turned to the threat an asymmetric international power structure poses to international cooperation (Martin 1992). An emphasis on the consequences of power asymmetries is not germane to the conceptual framework of governance perceived as the management of common affairs. In this connection it is telling that in the projects of the German Volkswagen Foundation program, the evolving superpower position of the United States was acknowledged as a fact, but as already briefly noted it was not a prominent research topic. Where they do concentrate on the global power structure as it developed after the end of the Cold War, and the unique position of the United States in it, social scientists typically do not use governance terminology.

It is possible, though difficult to prove, that the intense European interest in governance has to do with a particularly critical attitude toward globalization. There are American authors who are equally critical of globalization as their counterparts from other regions of the world (e.g. Stiglitz 2002; Sandbrook 2003), but the literature survey suggests that, judging by their institutional affiliation and biographical data available in the internet, a critical attitude is more often found among non-American and especially European authors (e.g. Abbot/Worth 2002; Gill 2003; Cochrane et al. 2003). Economic globalization should in fact appear more problematic from the perspective of the small European countries than from the viewpoint of the large United States with its powerful economy and huge home market. A critical view of globalization could well lead to a particularly strong interest in global governance perceived, correctly or incorrectly, as a means to discipline the process of globalization and to cope with its negative effects. Belief in the importance of and a positive attitude towards global governance could also lead to a greater concern with issues of democratic accountability. In a recent review of the field, Archibugi maintains in fact that proponents of cosmopolitan democracy are for the most part Europeans (Archibugi 2004: 464, quoting Urbinati). This is supported by the recent volume on accountability in global governance, edited by Held and Koenig-Archibugi (2005), with 10 of the 13 contributors located at European institutions.

In the United States, the multilateralism frame did not wholly supplant thinking in terms of global governance; there has also been perseverance in using the global governance framework. Such perseverance is illustrated for instance by the volume edited by Nye and Donahue (2000). While recognizing the fact of American supremacy, the approach of the editors is normatively multilateralist, globalization is defined as a multidimensional process, and global governance as a multilevel system of public as well as private actors. In fact, political scientists like Keohane, whose intellectual career has been intimately connected with the establishment and elaboration of the global governance paradigm, continue to use it today (e.g. Keohane 2002). But as indicated by the reference to governance *and* power in the very title of this book, power relationships now receive more explicit attention even within the framework of governance.

Substantively, the shift from a governance perspective to a multilateralism perspective means a shift of interest from the “architecture” of global governance to interstate rela-

tions, and the conditions under which they will tend towards cooperation or unilateral action. In the context of liberal institutionalist reasoning, the focus is less on direct state interactions than on multilateral negotiation within international institutions, regimes, and public policy networks. And whereas in the governance perspective the success or failure of collective problem solving was the analytical reference point, the issue now is the conditions under which an asymmetric power structure can be viable. This also shifts the focus of the opposition between realist and liberal institutionalist views. Whereas before, the leading question had been whether or not independent nation states will or will not cooperate for something like the common good, it is now whether the dependent members in a unipolar power structure will tolerate the dominance of the superpower, or actively resist it. The presently existing power imbalance need not lead to large-scale resistance, as realist theory predicts; in a benign hegemony, dependence is not so onerous as to justify the costs of active resistance. The hegemon, on his part, will be wise to act in a multilateralist fashion out of his very own interest (see Ikenberry 2002; Nye 2002). This argument spells a renaissance of hegemonic stability theory with a strongly normative flavor.<sup>9</sup>

It is not surprising that the American superpower, with its tendency toward unilateral action, meets with harsh criticism from European authors; the book by the Frenchman Emmanuel Todd (2002) is one of many examples. Most American political scientists seem to look at the superpower position of the United States with a mixture of regretful skepticism and multilateralist conviction. True, there are authors like Bacevich, a self-declared conservative thinker who thinks favorably of the strategy pursued by the US to establish an international order “conducive to American interests, governed by American norms, regulated by American power, and, above all, satisfying the expectations of the American people for ever-greater abundance” (Bacevich 2002: 6, 88). But Ruggie (2004: 521) finds an explicit rejection of multilateralism by international relations theorists only in a small group of “neo-conservative ‘new sovereigntists’”. Liberal institutionalists take America’s superpower position for granted; but, as recently confirmed by Brooks and Wohlforth (2005), the attitude towards US unilateralism is mostly critical – sometimes in a balanced way (e.g. Steel 1995; Ikenberry 2003), sometimes passionately so (e.g. Prestowitz 2003; Soros 2004).

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9 The different perspectives of governance versus multilateralism are related in an interesting way to substantive differences in theoretical approach. There is an affinity between the analysis of multilateralism vs. unilateralism issues and a strategic choice approach, and an affinity between the global governance framework and a constructivist approach. Since in Europe the global governance framework has not lost its salience, one might expect to find also a stronger adherence to constructivist approaches. In fact, in the series editors’ preface to the Hart and Prakash volume (1999, X), “an intercontinental bifurcation between North American (mainly USA) and European (including British) debates” is maintained, the former being more akin to strategic choice, the latter to constructivist views. The preference for a strategic choice approach may be related in turn to a greater affinity of American political scientists to economic thinking.

American multilateralists are, however, not necessarily also critical of interventionism. The American “mission” to spread democracy and intervene into the internal affairs of other countries to safeguard human rights is accepted by a number of authors (e.g. Kagan 2004; Bethke Elshain 2003). James Der Derian (2004: 91) in fact points out that noted realists rather than “liberal institutionalists and humanitarian interventionists like Joseph Nye, Michael Ignatieff, and Anne Marie Slaughter” opposed the war against Iraq. The “long-standing and self-declared American crusade for democracy,” which is “proselytizing by nature” and evangelical in essence (Steel 1995: 18–19), cannot be dismissed as hypocritical; it raises a fundamental and well-recognized issue for global governance (see Lyons/Mastanduno 1995). Multilateralists who accept intervention to safeguard human rights and spread the values of democracy insist, however, that interventions should not be unilateral.

The same basic attitude of skepticism and multilateral conviction is also visible in discussions of the transatlantic relationship. American scholars recognize that the changed geopolitical situation after the end of the Cold War has devalued the transatlantic relationship. The European insistence on a true transatlantic partnership is correctly considered illusory; the European Union needs the United States more than the other way round. Nevertheless, a renewal of the transatlantic partnership is urged, its value for the United States being maintained by using arguments familiar from hegemonic stability theory (e.g. Kupchan 2002; Garton Ash 2004). An excellent example of work along these lines is the report by a Council on Foreign Relations task force that counted some of the best known American political scientists among its members (Council on Foreign Relations 2004). Affirming the desirability of global governance and the superior functionality of multilateralism, scholars in both groups see international cooperation as a positive value. This shared attitude is an effect of a common world view generally held to be characteristic of liberal institutionalist thinking, and not necessarily of political science at large.

## 5 Conclusion

This paper has set itself a modest goal: to alert scholars to the contingent nature of their ways of perceiving, evaluating, and studying a given object of cognition. Individual scholars are embedded in a discipline, they study their object at a given moment of historical time, and they are embedded in a specific social, political, and cultural context. The paper has traced the effects these factors have on scientific perspectives on globalization and global governance.

Least surprising is of course the impact of different disciplinary paradigms on the way a given object is perceived and analyzed. But being firmly embedded in one’s own scientific specialty or school, one rarely goes to the trouble to spell out the specific selectiv-

ity of its perspective – even though awareness of disciplinary differences in studying a shared cognitive object may facilitate interdisciplinary communication and research. More surprising has probably been the demonstrated existence of a coherent logic in each of the different disciplinary perspectives. Lastly, a slightly jarring result of the analysis has been the importance of evaluative elements in different disciplinary views on globalization and global governance. Though ignored by a positivist philosophy of science as a characteristic feature of disciplinary perspectives, values guide the formulation of cognitive interests in *all* sciences having to do with phenomena conceivably affecting man.

The adaptation of analytical frameworks to changing objects is a general feature of empirical studies of social macro-phenomena. The historical nature of such objects is reflected in the dated character of our interpretations. Such cognitive adaptations count as learning and do not violate norms of scientific objectivity. This is different for the impact of being embedded in different geopolitical contexts, as suggested in the last section of this paper. We tend to pride ourselves as scientists on the ability to rise beyond the influence of our own place in the world, and are convinced that our own view of reality is the correct one, even if we realize that others see things differently. Even if the difference in European and American perspectives on globalization and global governance that developed in a particular historical situation has been small enough to be overlooked, a mere tendency that may not even reach statistical significance, it serves to remind us of the nasty fact that scientific thinking is not immaculately autopoietic. Substantively, the different perspectives of European and US American scholars are closely linked to the political values identified for the social science perspective on globalization and global governance, values like national sovereignty, peace, security, and democracy. It is such values that define (different) national (or regional) interests in a situation of political and economic inequality.

Where a scientific perspective “fits” a real-life situation, like the global governance perspective “fits” the situation of countries not strong enough to go it alone, it can appear to be analytical in a purely positivistic fashion – not wishful thinking, but a correct assessment. Where perspective and reality clash, the perspective becomes visibly normative, and may generate outright critique of real-life political developments, as has occurred among adherents of the global governance frame. But as we know from Kuhn (1962), if reality disproves a scientific paradigm long enough, it is ultimately given up. It remains to be seen whether this will eventually happen to the paradigm of global governance.

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