

A BRAVE NEW WORLD:
AREA, INTERNATIONAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDIES
IN THE GLOBAL ERA

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Introduction

In this presentation I will argue that globalization has profoundly changed the theoretical assumptions and empirical issues addressed by area, international, and foreign language studies. Rather than refer to this triad as “area studies”, I will use the more comprehensive term “AIFL studies”, using the acronym A-I-F-L, a felicitous term invented by Nancy Rutherford of Yale that we can remember by thinking of a certain cast iron tower.

AIFL studies have been undergoing a reconceptualization that has been driven by the realities of globalization. This reconceptualization can be described as a new paradigm, using Thomas Kuhn’s well-known term. I am not inventing this new paradigm, but rather arguing that it already exists and simply needs to be recognized. I will first describe the key features of the new paradigm, and then contrast them with those of the old paradigm. The second part of the paper will discuss the historical context that defined the underlying assumptions of both paradigms. The final part of the paper will offer suggestions about the implications of the new paradigm for future research.

The work of late German social theorist Niklas Luhmann may help set the stage for the following discussion. Luhmann argued that society in the contemporary world is global, and that terms such as “international” and “transnational” should be dropped because they imply that society is the same as the nation-state, which it is no longer is. He also argued that this global society is composed of different subsystems, such as economics, education law, medicine, and sport, which are basically communication networks, each with its own specialized language. Whether or not one agrees with Luhmann, he highlights the case for the globalized world as presenting an emergent reality.

Luhmann’s perspective also meshes with a considerable literature that has developed in recent years with respect to the concept of flow systems and networks. This literature now abounds in both the natural and social sciences. Networks are systems of flows, or of exchanges between points in the network. The key concept is that the “flow.” Flows define and shape the network, which evolves over time. At one moment in time, like a snapshot, the network looks like a permanent structure, but in fact it undergoes constant change. The natural science literature shows that such flow systems evolve over time to have increasingly similar fractal patterns and cover larger and

larger areas. Fractals, by the way, are mathematical sets that have self-similar patterns and repeat themselves at different scales. Andrea Rinaldo and Ignacio Rodríguez-Iturbe in their book, *Fractal River Basins*, use both geographic and experimental data to show that all river basin networks develop the same structure, that any portion of a river basin resembles the whole, and that as the area drained doubles, the number of streams is reduced by a factor of 2.7. . Adrian Bejan, in *Design in Nature*, proposes the term *constructal* to describe such emergent patterns. He argues that all flows over time and space gradually construct paths of least resistance, whether those flows are inanimate, biological flows, or social, until and unless those patterns are disrupted by exogenous catastrophic events.

The literature on flows thus presupposes that smaller flow systems precede larger flow systems, just as Luhmann's view of the globalized world presupposes the existence of a prior world that was not global, but instead characterized by non-global societies. Non-global societies in turn can be viewed as having a pre-history of smaller and smaller societies with smaller and smaller footprints, or places. Reversing this perspective, one can describe post-nomadic human history before globalization as a sequence of places or localities, that grow from to villages, to towns, to regions, to cities, to nation-states. Each place in the sequence has its own markers, such as language, culture, rites, and social identity.

Prior localities do not disappear on this process. They may retain their local languages, cultures and identities. But these localities are subsumed into larger and larger networks, culminating in nation-states. Nationhood is a socially-constructed type of space that reflects not just underlying networks of exchange, but more significantly, the ideological aspirations of nationalist groups that want to force a national language, a national culture, and a national identity upon the people in lesser localities. Such national projects are often contested. Even when they succeed, the victory may be transitory, as demonstrated by the frequency of partitions, secessions, and separatist movements throughout the world, not least of all in Europe.

Globalization is of course the final step in this progression from smaller to larger systems. It represents a qualitative leap in two ways. The first break with the past is that the globalized world does not reflect an ideological project, such as the imposition of a global language, a global government, or a global identity. It is simply the sum of flows that connect localities with one another throughout the world. These flows can also be conceptualized as transactional networks, of which there are as many as the kinds of transactions involved,

The second break with the past is that in a globalized world there is no "alterity," no other world to define our world against (except in science fiction). The pre-global world was defined by alterity (or otherness), which was more or less a synonym for place (or locality). However, in the global world, places are defined not only by their otherness, but also by their mode of insertion into transactional networks. In other words, the significance of place must be reconceptualized to replace separateness with relatedness.

To illustrate the dramatic change that is represented by globalization, let us briefly consider urbanization. It is reasonable to assume that people who live in cities are more likely to be linked to transactional networks. In this regard, it is striking that most people in the world did not live in cities until recently. In 1800 the percentage of the world's population living in cities was only 3%. By 1900 it had only risen to 13%. By 1940, as World War II gathered strength, 19% of people lived in cities. However, most of the 1940 urban population was located in the West. In the less developed regions of the world, which included Africa, East Asia, South Asia, and tropical Latin America, only 9% of the population was urban.

The contrast with the globalized world in which we now live is striking. In 2007 the percentage of the world's population living in cities reached 50%. By 2015 the projected urban population will be 76% of the more developed regions and 48% of the less developed regions. Even in rural areas, isolation from larger networks is increasingly rare, as the proliferation of cellphones demonstrates. While linguistic and cultural differences remain, most foreign peoples and places are no longer remote. They are part of networks that link them to other peoples and places throughout the world.

World War II and AIFL Studies

Let us now consider the rise of AIFL studies and its original paradigm. AIFL programs were established as an invention of necessity during World War II. The U.S. military knew that they would be fighting a global war on multiple fronts involving many countries. That effort would require the U.S. military to cope with the languages and cultures of its allies, its enemies, and of the other peoples drawn into the conflict. These places were largely rural, and if not in Europe, they were also remote, isolated, and unknown to most Americans, except for a few anthropologists and missionaries.

The only way to acquire the necessary foreign language and cultural expertise needed by the U.S. military was to turn to the nation's colleges and universities. Immediately after Pearl Harbor, the U.S. Army established the Army Specialized Training Program, or ASTP, which sent officers to institutions of higher education for crash courses in foreign languages and foreign area studies. The total number of officers trained is not known, but at its high point the ASTP had 150,000 officers enrolled in colleges and universities. In 1943 the Navy set up a similar program, the V-12 Navy College Training Program, which enrolled more than 125,000 officers before it was terminated.

The fundamental assumption of the AIFL studies programs sponsored by ASTP and V-12 was that they were about the otherness and strangeness of the alternative realities in which foreign peoples lived, speaking esoteric languages and enjoying unique cultures. The markers for these differences were geographic, defined by areas and places. Given the largely rural character of the world in 1940, and the relative absence of networks linking the rural peripheries

of the world to the economies of the West, the assumption that foreign places were uniquely different was reasonable. In fact, part of the attractiveness of the original AIFL model was precisely that it was about the exotic..

The Cold War and AIFL Studies

The global military networks established during World War II were short-lived and soon abandoned. The ASTP and V-12 programs were shut down. But the end of the World War II was followed almost immediately by tensions between the Soviet Union and the West which led to the Cold War. Korea was partitioned. The Soviets took control of Eastern Europe. The West defeated the Communists in the Greek Civil War. Mao's communists triumphed in China. The world gradually became divided between the Communist powers and their client states, and Western powers and their client states, with a few non-aligned countries on the sidelines.

In 1957, when Sputnik led to an uproar over the Soviet missile threat, the Eisenhower Administration proposed a National Defense Education Act for the purpose of training rocket scientists. The White House point man for the bill, Eliot Richardson, restarted the government-university partnership in AIFL studies by adding Title VI to the NDEA bill. The assumptions underlying the AIFL paradigm remained the same as before.

On balance, World War II and the Cold War delayed globalization. World War II was tremendously damaging to the global economy and disrupted world commerce. During the Cold War globalization was hindered because markets were closed to one side or the other, the movement of people was restricted, and vast amounts of wealth were wasted in military expenditures rather than productive investments. It was only when the Cold War ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union that globalization was able to take off.

AIFL Studies in the Global Era

The theoretical assumptions and empirical issues addressed by AIFL studies in the global era, or on short, the new paradigm, takes for granted that in the contemporary world it is necessary to study the ways in which people in other locations deal with their insertion into the global system. Differences of language and culture remain. But rather than markers of isolation, language and culture are now better seen as components of adaptation or resistance to global flow systems. Therefore, AIFL studies no longer see the world as a geography of places, but rather a system of transactional networks that link places together.

The transactional networks of the globalized world are flow systems defined by the content of their flows. The flow of people from one place to another constitutes a migration network. The movement of components of a manufactured product through global outsourcing describes a flow of value added to the product. Flows of goods and services across countries

make up trade networks. The movement of information over the internet is a flow system, as is international airplane traffic. The spread of an infectious disease is a flow of pathogens. Cultural products such as films and music are disseminated through networks.

Global networks occur in real space and time, not in some theoretical vacuum. Something which flows moves from one place to another and therefore changes both places. Therefore, places cannot be understood without reference to their insertion into these flows. Likewise, global networks cannot be understood without reference to the places that generate the flows and receive the flows.

Global networks are the subject of considerable research. However, this research takes place studied primarily within the academic disciplines using theories and methods of each discipline. There is little communication across these disciplines. Thus economists study global financial markets or commodity markets, demographers study global migration, economic sociologists study global value chains, musicologists study global music flows, film specialists examine global cinema, epidemiologists study vectors of contagion, information specialists study the internet, criminologists study crime networks, and so on. These disparate approaches must be synthesized if we are to understand the globalized world.

Another problem is that disciplinary research often focuses on the local at the expense of the global, or the global at the expense of the local. The disciplines that generate theory and research about transactions take places as givens, not as dynamic components of the network. What we need is research that focuses on the ways in which a locality can shape the networks of which it is a part by changing its capacity to generate and receive flows, or alternatively, by changing its capacity to prevent and resist flows.

AIFL studies are meeting these challenges. They are ideally situated for the interdisciplinary challenge of synthesizing research from different disciplines and for the empirical challenge of inserting place into the analysis of globalization. Research in the various AIFL fields has long since left behind the study of the exotic in order to examine modes of insertion into global networks. This explains why we can speak of a new paradigm of AIFL studies. The new focus still requires all the tools of the old paradigm, such as the mastery of foreign languages and deep knowledge of local cultures, with all of the field experience that both forms of knowledge require. The difference is that this knowledge is now employed to understand not just the place-in-itself, but the place in the context of its global networks, and hence the place in relation to other places.

The Franco-Romanian sociologist Lucien Goldman liked to distinguish between two forms of knowledge about a phenomenon, which he called *explaining* and *understanding*. Goldman defined *explaining* as viewing the phenomenon in terms of the larger structures of which it is part, and *understanding* as viewing the phenomenon in terms of the smaller structures

of which it is composed. Using Goldman's terminology, the old paradigm for AIFL studies was primarily focused on the understanding of place. The new paradigm for area studies still includes the understanding of place, but now it also focuses on the explanation of place, that is to say, viewing a locality in terms of the larger structures into which it is a part. Today we would amend Goldman by saying "flow systems" instead of "structures."

These considerations lead logically to a number of lines of inquiry that are being addressed by the new AIFL paradigm.

1. What is the relative importance or impact of different kinds of flows in affecting specific localities?
2. What characteristics of localities affect their modes of insertion into specific flow systems?
3. Are similarities among localities increasing as a result of globalization, or are they becoming increasingly diverse?
4. Are some modes of insertion more beneficial for localities than others?
5. Are the gains from the development of more efficient transactional systems differentially distributed, and if so, are the winners upstream or downstream?
6. Are the various transactional systems evolving structures that are increasingly similar to one another?
7. Does the placement of a locality in a transactional network, for example at an extremity of a node, help to determine the extent to which it benefits?
8. Are some transactional networks more beneficial than others for localities at similar places in their networks?
9. To what extent do different flow systems affect one another, for example, do migration flows affect flows in cultural products?
10. To what extent do the intended or unintended consequences of public policy affect network development or the mode of insertion of localities?

Questions such as these are addressed by collaborations among international and area centers, particularly on campuses that have more than one center. The emergent pattern is for international centers to focus on global networks in partnership with area centers whose faculty members have expertise about developments in specific localities. On some campuses the Title VI centers for international business education and research are also part of this effort. In the case of my own institution, the Duke Center for International Studies, in partnership with six

area centers, has received funding for a year-long series of workshops to compare the local and global aspects of two types of human flows, specifically migration and tourism; two types of economic flows, namely investment and trade; and two types of cultural flows, film and music.

Conclusion

In conclusion, globalization has been posing a new series of challenges for AIFL studies that have profoundly changed its paradigm. The old AIFL paradigm was appropriate for a Balkanized world. But the Balkans are no longer the Balkans, not as a metaphor for isolation. There are no Balkans in the brave new globalized world.

The challenges posed by globalization are not merely challenges for theory and research. They are challenges for all the localities, regions, and countries in the world, rich and poor, large and small, and for the policies of governments and the private sector organizations alike. The challenges are not only cultural, social, and economic, but also challenges to public health, law enforcement, and national defense. There are global networks for the flow of terrorists, heroin, cocaine, prostitution, and blood diamonds. Conflict and crime are not contained by or limited by separateness. Instead they spread through networks and pose new challenges to national security. Moreover, the globalized world is prone to conflict over network insertion, as suggested by the examples of Afghanistan, Mali, South Sudan, Syria, and the Ukraine. If anything, area, international, and foreign language studies may be more important for the national security of the United States than they were during World War II and the Cold War.