World in the political realm. The world is growing more pluralistic, and the latter (e.g., glocalization) is exceptional to differences within and between areas of the world. Individuals and local groups have great power to adapt, innovate, and maneuver within a glocalized world. Glocalization theory sees individuals and groups as important and creative agents. Individuals and groups have relatively little ability to adapt, innovate, and maneuver within a globalized world. Globalization theory tends to see larger structures and forces tending to overwhelm the ability of individuals and groups to create themselves and their worlds. Glocalization theory is exceptionally sensitive to differences within and between areas of the world. The world is growing increasingly similar. Globalization theory tends to minimize differences within and between areas of the world. Individuals and local groups have great power to adapt, innovate, and maneuver within a glocalized world. Glocalization theory sees individuals and groups as important and creative agents. Individuals and groups have relatively little ability to adapt, innovate, and maneuver within a globalized world. Globalization theory tends to see larger structures and forces tending to overwhelm the ability of individuals and groups to create themselves and their worlds.

Social processes are relational and contingent. Globalization provides a variety of reactions—ranging from nationalist entrenchment to cosmopolitan embrace—that feed back on and transform globalization, that produce glocalization. Globalization theory sees larger structures and forces tending to overwhelm the ability of individuals and groups to create themselves and their worlds. Those commodities and the media are seen as largely coercive. Commodities and the media, arenas and key forces in cultural change in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, are not seen as (totally) coercive but rather as providing material to be used in individual and group creation throughout the glocalized areas of the world. Core concepts include hybridization, creolization, and heterogeneization. Core concepts include capitalism, Americanization, and McDonaldization.

Figure 1.1 Essential Elements of Two Globalization Theories

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exploit possibilities for profit in more remote and less developed regions. Thus, except perhaps for the earliest forms, capitalistic businesses have always had global ambitions; they have always been interested in globalization (and contributed to glocalization). However, their impact has greatly accelerated in the past several decades.

During the Cold War that lasted much of the 20th century, there were powerful restraints on capitalism’s global ambitions. Most important, there was a seemingly viable alternative to it—socialism/communism—and this served to temper capitalism’s expansion. On the one hand, the Soviet Union and China, as well as nations within their orbit, were largely closed to incursions by the capitalists. The idea, posited first by Winston Churchill in 1946, that an iron curtain had descended between Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe and Western Europe, made the barrier to capitalism, and much else, perfectly clear. On the other hand, many other nations throughout the world, even if they were not behind the iron curtain, were influenced by the ideas, if not the military and political power, of the communist countries. As a result, they were at least ambivalent about participating in the capitalist system, if not overtly hostile to it. In these and other ways, capitalism’s global ambitions were limited to some degree throughout much of the 20th century.

However, by the close of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, with the death of the Soviet Union and the near-death of communism/socialism, as well as Russia and especially China behaving very much like capitalistic nations, almost all limits to the global ambitions of capitalistic firms were eliminated. As a result, it is only now that we are beginning to see the full flowering of globalization in capitalism. After all, in Marx’s day (the mid- to late 1800s), capitalistic businesses were comparatively small, and the important technologies (computers, the Internet, telecommunications, fiber optic cables, huge cargo planes and ships, containerization, etc.) that permit and encourage high levels of globalization did not exist. Today’s enormous capitalistic firms, equipped with magnificent globe-straddling technologies, are far better able to globalize than their predecessors. And, they move into a world in which there is no viable alternative to capitalism. We live in an era in which, truly for the first time, capitalism is unchained and free to roam the world in search of both cheap production facilities and labor (China is now a prime site for both) as well as new markets for its products. As two neo-Marxian thinkers, Ellen Meiksins Wood and John Bellamy Foster, put it, “[H]umanity is more and more connected in the global dimensions of exploitation and oppression.” As a result, there are those who believe that the death of communism around the world will not spell the death of Marxian theory but rather serve to resuscitate it. That is, Marxian analysis will be more necessary than ever,
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of the world. It could be argued that it is only now that capitalism exists as
a truly global phenomenon and the implication of Marxian theory is that
this sets the stage, for the first time, for the emergence of global opposition
to it.6 This idea is explicit, among other places, in Hardt and Negri’s work
on “empire.” They depict a new world of decentered global capitalism that
they see as creating the opposition to it—“multitude”—that will ultimately
undermine and destroy it.57

Capitalism is clearly related to economic globalization, especially in the
areas of production as well as the central interest here—consumption. However,
capitalism is also related to other aspects of globalization. Without adopting a simplistic (economic) base-(political) superstructure model,68 it is clear that much globalization in the political realm is affected
to a large degree by the capitalistic economic system. Thus, the United
States’ much-avowed desire to see democracy grow throughout the world,69
as well as many of its military adventures, are closely related to the needs
of its capitalistic system. That is, democratic societies are more likely to
become capitalistic, and they are more likely to be open to the incursions of
capitalistic firms from other countries (especially the United States). And, in
those cases where a society does not move on its own in the direction of
“democracy,” there is always the possibility of American military involve­
ment (in Iraq and Afghanistan, for example) in order to nudge it, not so
gently, in that direction. While the state clearly has its own interests, it just
as certainly shares many interests with the capitalistic economic system to
which it owes much of its existence and success. Political leaders are gener­
ally safe as long as the economy is performing well; however, their situation
becomes precarious when the economy falters.

Similarly, organizational-institutional globalization is also closely related
to capitalism. For example, the proliferation of the franchise system of
organization (this involves a franchiser [e.g., Subway] selling others [fran­
chisees] the right to operate an outlet, although some control remains with
the franchiser, which also usually gets a share of each franchisee’s profits100)
throughout the world is driven, in significant part, by capitalistic economics.
That is, some franchisers have grown fabulously wealthy as a result of this
system, and it is not unusual to find franchisees who have become multimil­
lionaires from the profits from one or several franchises. However, it
is important not to reduce all of this to (capitalist) economics alone (some
value the franchise system, or a specific franchise, in itself and not just for
its profit potential).

We need not go into great detail here about capitalism, because so much
has been written about it, its operations are so well known, and it is so