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BOOK REVIEW

The Ages of Globalization. Geography, Technology, and Institutions.

By Jeffrey D. Sachs

Columbia University Press, New York, 2020, 280 pp., 9780231193740, US\$ 24.95

When, in 2015, Jeffrey D. Sachs, published *The Age of Sustainable Development*, it seemed to me to be the culmination of a life's work of a renowned academic in providing a crucial contribution to build a sustainable development rationale. However, the publication of his latest book proves that far from signaling the end of a brilliant academic career, this is yet another accomplishment in offering a comprehensive review of current global development challenges and a range of potential solutions to some of them.

Sachs starts by defining globalization as "the interlinkages of diverse societies across large geographical areas. These interlinkages are technological, economic, institutional, cultural, and geopolitical" (p. 23). While there has been considerable research attention dedicated to a better understanding of this concept, Sachs focuses his on the "complexities of globalization, including the powerful capacity of globalization to improve the human condition while bringing undoubted threats as well" (p. 16). In essence, rather than providing a normative and descriptive treatment of the subject, Sachs uses the knowledge acquired during a lifetime to provide a useful global analysis and set of potential solutions. Ultimately, its main novelty is the author's classification proposal for seven distinct ages of globalization, even though he recognizes that humanity has always been globalized.

The author devotes an initial chapter to justifying the proposed rationale to divide the globalization process into seven ages. In the end, the classification in both this initial chapter and the following seven chapters, respectively dedicated to analyzing each of the seven Ages of Globalization (Paleolithic - 70,000–10,000 BCE; Neolithic - 10,000–3000 BCE; Equestrian - 3000–1000 BCE; Classical - 1000 BCE–1500 CE; Ocean - 1500–1800; Industrial - 1800–2000; and Digital Age - XXI century) does not portend scientific novelty. These ages are all based on well-known historical events and on consolidated perspectives. A final chapter (Guiding Globalization in the Twenty-First Century) serves both as a conclusion and a reminder of how important it is to learn from all the past mistakes of human history in order to forge a global sustainable governance system.

For Sachs, in each of these seven ages, global change emerged from the interplay of physical geography, technology, and institutions, as they are at the heart of the economic system that is dominant during each of the seven ages. This perspective offers a sympathetic but critical overview of both positive and potential negative effects of an interconnected and globalized world. Ultimately, Sachs claims that globalization poses global challenges, in particular related to the current Digital Age. The first is a dramatic and destabilizing increase in economic inequality. The second is evidently related to the environmental crisis. Finally, the third is a potential devastating global war.

While not explicitly stated in the book, the author appears cautiously optimistic that world leaders will eventually understand that only global concerted action to manage globalization can lead to an effective implementation of the 17 UN SDGs. With this in mind, he suggests five concepts which could help to achieve this global governance process. The first is a holistic approach of governance that combines economic, social, and environmental objectives for sustainable development. The second is the pursuit of what he calls the 'social-democratic ethos', for an inclusive and participatory approach to political and economic life. The third is a well-known European Union policy priority: the subsidiarity principle. The fourth is a reformed UN with reduced powers for the five permanent member states. Finally, the fifth is a world that is safe for diversity. All of these five concepts are central to a democratic, free, and inclusive way of thinking, which has brought positive development to several parts of the world.

This book is a valuable resource for the study of development theory and policies. Moreover, the research offered in this book is very well structured, highly informative, and elaborated in a comprehensive manner in view of the highly complex nature of the globalization processes. On a more critical note, however, I would like to highlight a few aspects that can either be improved or retouched in a second edition. For one, the book rationale is driven and molded by an econometric and (sometimes excessively) Anglo-Saxon centric prism. Regarding the former, the systematic insistence in associating the notion of sustainable development with the economy-society-environmental triad, undermines, in my view, its full conceptual scope. As regards the latter, it is hard to comprehend why the author places Christopher Columbus' and Vasco da Gama's discovery expedition at such high level as contributors to globalization. A more historically accurate vision of world history would recognize that the Portuguese maritime discoveries, which linked all continents through trade routes, were in fact among the key triggers of what we now call globalization. These include, not only the crucial voyage of Vasco da Gama, which reached India in 1498, but also the follow-up voyages to the American continent (1500 - Brazil) and finally Japan, in 1543. I also note that Henry (Infante Dom Henrique) the Navigator was a prince not a king. There are also location errors in maps 6.2 and 6.3. I also suggest reconsidering the position of Portuguese (as opposed to the Spanish), given the importance of explorations along the African coast well before Spanish became an important nation in this respect. Finally, in my opinion, it is hard to understand that the most vital commodity in the world since the twentieth century (oil) was not considered by Sachs as a central element to define any globalization age. In fact, as several scholars postulate we live in an age of oil.