

DECLARATION OF INTERDEPENDENCE¹ (*draft*)

Although not as consequential as the 226 year-old document it seeks to emulate, this Declaration of Interdependence springs from a similar aspiration: to break free of a tyranny that constrains creative thought and action. Independence has been superseded by interdependence, by a world comprised not of independent people and states but of one in which all individual and collective actors are increasingly affected by and reliant upon events and trends far removed from their immediate circumstances. This interdependence is widely acknowledged through pervasive preoccupations with the benefits and detriments of globalization, but these preoccupations cannot be freely pursued because thought and action at all levels of community are cast – tyrannized, really – in terms of a state-centric world view that limits comprehension and distorts practice.

The core principles of our Declaration of Interdependence are thirteen in number:

1. The revolutions in communication and transportation, especially the advent of the Internet and jet aircraft, are shrinking time and distance, and making state boundaries increasingly porous. While states will continue to be active and most will continue to be viable, their power and authority on the global stage has been diluted by the presence of a wide range of other, nongovernmental collectivities. The interaction between the former and the latter – between the state-centric and the multi-centric worlds – is extensive, sometimes marked by cooperation and often rooted in conflict. And the more crowded the global stage becomes, the greater will be the dilution of the power and authority of states with respect to situations abroad.
2. With more active and organized citizenries, the domestic power and authority of states has also been significantly diluted. Many states are limiting their scope; others are suffering political gridlock and a crisis of legitimacy; and some are collapsing.
3. The ever-growing interdependence of world affairs has rendered the concept of “international” obsolete as a label for what transpires across societal borders. It is far more accurate to elevate “globalization” as the core description of boundary-spanning activities with due allowance being made for significant elements of “regionalization” and “localization.”
4. Globalization is not a singular process. Its consequences unfold in every realm of human endeavor, from the cultural to the social, from the economic to the political, from the scientific to the artistic, from the technological to the environmental, from tourism to terrorism, to mention only the more conspicuous domains in which globalizing dynamics are operative. There are, in other words, many globalizations that can give rise to diverse outcomes across time.
5. To probe the diverse realms in which boundary-spanning activities unfold and overlap, analysts must relax their strict criteria of parsimony and, instead, acknowledge the extraordinary complexity that marks the course of events. They must treat feedback loops as no less central to their analyses than linear sequences.
6. While boundary-spanning processes are as old as human history, the present era of globalization is distinguished by a vast and relentless acceleration of these diverse processes. It is an acceleration that has obscured the long-standing boundaries that differentiate the public from the private, the domestic from the foreign, the local from the global, the political from the economic, the living from the natural environment, and the scientific from the experiential.
7. The more rapid and cumulative is this acceleration, the less is globalization likely to be reversed. Increasingly, in short, present-day globalizing processes appear inevitable and in many respects irreversible.
8. Despite its inevitability, opponents as well as supporters of globalization are active in all of its realms. The opponents either prefer to retreat behind old boundaries or to alter the trajectories of the boundary-spanning processes, preferences that have fostered a globalization backlash that may redirect some of the trajectories but will not bring them to a halt.
9. The dynamics of globalization have an enormous potential for both good and ill. Just as they can create jobs and investments, encourage civil society, and empower individuals, so can they also widen the gap between the rich and the poor, facilitate crime and terrorism, and spread uncertainty and hate.
10. It follows that there is an urgent need for an expansion of serious inquiries into globalization’s manifold dynamics as well as an enlargement of constructive dialogues among policy-makers, NGOs, transnational corporations, and academics. Both the inquiries and the dialogues should be marked by intellectual and normative thrusts, thereby advancing understanding of globalizing processes and their impacts, suggesting those aspects that serve the common interests of an increasingly interdependent humanity, and helping to reform or curb those aspects that harm or divide.
11. But the expansion of inquiries into globalizing dynamics must avoid falling back on state-centric worldviews. This Declaration of Interdependence will not be realized if existing research centers and professional associations treat transnational and globalizing activities as strictly “international.”
12. Nor will it be realized without vigorous lobbying of governments, foundations, and corporations for funds to train students for careers in an ever-more globalized world and to support research centers that break free of the tyranny posed by state-centric premises.
13. Finally, this Declaration is founded on the assumption that the study of interdependence and globalization knows no disciplinary boundaries. It can encompass any or all of the social sciences, the natural sciences, and the humanities; and it can be undertaken through scientific, historical, and interpretive methodologies. The only requirement is that the epistemological and methodological approaches used must proceed from a focus on boundary-spanning phenomena.

¹First drafted by James N. Rosenau on a Boeing 777 high over the Atlantic Ocean