

ANALYSIS OF GLOBALIZATION WITH REGARD TO WELFARE

Forestry Grad Paper

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4/17/2015

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ABSTRACT

Globalization has been a system that is both criticized and applauded. This paper will look at the relationship between globalization and welfare. It will ultimately attempt to answer whether or not globalization increase or decreases welfare. One side argues that globalization increases welfare because it is making the world more efficient and that there is statistical evidence to prove its necessity. The other side argues that globalization decreases welfare because it often achieves efficiency at the cost of the poor and the environment.

The result of this paper demonstrates that globalization increases welfare but at the expense of the environment. Statistical evidence has shown that globalization leads to an increase in both consumption and development but decreases poverty. Globalization creates negative environmental damage in which the global community will have to address and evolve in a way where globalization becomes sustainable.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization, as defined by the Geneva Centre for Security Policy is, “a process that encompasses the causes, course, and consequences of transnational and transcultural integration of human and non-human activities.”¹ The definition itself is strategically convoluted and broad because of its complexity in nature. Nayef et al states that “Globalization is not a single concept that can be defined and encompassed within a set time frame, nor is it a process that can be defined clearly with a beginning and an end. Furthermore, it cannot be expounded upon with certainty and be applicable to all people in all situations.”² What this means is that the concept of globalization must be defined in broad terms as to not undermine the topic while also keeping

¹ Al-Rodhan, Nayef. 2006. Definitions Of Globalization: A Comprehensive Overview And A Proposed Definition. Geneva Centre for Security Policy, 5.

² Ibid., 3.

bias out. With that said, this paper agrees with Kozak's definition of globalization in which he states "countless definitions of globalization exist, but, fundamentally, it means that this pair of trousers is made in Calcutta and that shirt is made in Jakarta and the outfit costs \$20 less at the big box mega-outlet than at the "mom and pop" store that stood there before it."³ This means that globalization allows us to create global or international pathways in which advantages (cheap labour, low material costs etc.) are maximized to reduce the cost of goods.

The basis of this paper will be to look at the effects of globalization and ultimately analyze whether or not globalization increases welfare. Welfare is similar to globalization in the sense that it is multidimensional. By having no universally agreed upon definition of human poverty, to measure welfare is extremely difficult. For the purpose of this paper, welfare will be defined as the wellbeing of society. An increase in welfare would mean an increase in standards of living or a reduction of poverty. To further simplify, the measurement of wellbeing will look into accounts of equality when compared to the level of development of a nation.⁴ It is important to note here that equality is considered with regard to welfare rather than equity since equity is a normative term whereas equality is not. This is important because if a normative term is a determinant of welfare then the criteria to measure equity can be subjective. Since equality can be considered outside of a valued judgement, we will use equality when measuring welfare. In this paper I will begin by presenting arguments of why globalization increases welfare.⁵ Following that, I will then present arguments of why globalization decreases welfare and subsequently, present common oppositions and rebuttals of both sides. I will then conclusively weigh the two

³ Kozak, Robert. 'What Now, Mr. Jones? Some Thoughts About Today's Forest Sector And Tomorrow's Great Leap Forward'. In *The Global Forest Sector Changes, Practices, And Prospects*, 431-446. Eric Hansen, Rajat Panwar and Richard Vlosky, (1st ed., 2013), 435.

⁴ World Resources Institute., 1998. *Mapping And Geographic Analysis Of Human Welfare And Poverty -----Review And Assessment*. Washington. http://pdf.wri.org/poverty_mapping_1998.pdf.

⁵ Ibid.

arguments and apply the arguments to China and Canada in an attempt to answer whether globalization ultimately increases or decreases the welfare of people.

GLOBALIZATION INCREASES WELFARE

Before we begin with the arguments on why globalization increases welfare, we must address the idea of the “zero sum world”.⁶ Arguments made by this side are under the assumption that our world is not a zero sum world. This means that there is not a capacity of rich people that the world can sustain in which one rich person must equal to poor people in existence to balance out the world.⁷ For example, in a zero sum world, there would be a fixed net world wealth. For the sake of simplicity, in this example we will assume that the fixed net world wealth is \$500. If one person in this hypothetical world were to have a net worth of \$300, then this means that only \$200 is distributed to everyone else. This means that the more money you have, the less money everyone else has because the world can only sustain a certain amount of wealth. This also means that if you are to be rich, then there has to be an abundance of poor people to sustain your wealth. This idea in its most literal sense is not true because we know that there is not an actual limit to the world’s wealth. However, the idea does have some truth in it in the sense that if we apply logic to the lifestyle of some of the richest people, it is clear that it is not sustainable in the sense that if everyone lived the way they do, the world would collapse. The side that is pro globalization argues that we do not live in a zero sum world because our world is not static.⁸ Our world continues to create goods and services all the while advancing to do so with fewer

⁶ Aldridge, Irene. 2010. "Fast Trading Not Zero-Sum Game." Securities Industry News 22, no. 1: 23. Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost

⁷ Tsheola, Johannes. 2002. 'South Africa In GEAR: `A Better Life For All' Or A Zero-Sum Game Of Globalization?'. *Geojournal* 57 (1/2), 80.

⁸ Held, David, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt, and Jonathan Perraton. 2002. 'Globalization'. *Global Governance* 5 (4): 484.

resources. An extremely practical example of how globalization increases our welfare would be the clothes we wear. If globalization were to not exist then being a Canadian citizen, this means that all the clothes I have purchased would have been made in Canada. The clothes would be made by Canadian people working for Canadian companies. The point here is that all available clothes in Canada will be a product of Canada which is radically different from what we have grown accustomed to. With globalization, Canadian people can now outsource the job of making clothes to a country that can make it at a lower cost. This will in turn reduce the cost of clothes for Canadians while at the same time, create jobs for less fortunate countries.⁹ This thus creates a positive cycle in which consumers can purchase more clothes due to the reduced costs which means that consumers will ultimately have more choice with regard to money. Having more choice means that individual freedom is increased and by maximizing individual freedom, welfare is increased.¹⁰ In this example, globalization has successfully increased the welfare of all parties involved by providing jobs to the less fortunate country while also increasing individual freedom of the first world country.

GLOBALIZATION DECREASES WELFARE

One of the main arguments for why globalization decreases welfare is the argument of culture loss. The argument here is that globalization promotes a homogeneous culture in which we lose the diversity of cultural uniqueness.¹¹ An example of this would be Starbucks and China. Tea is a staple in the Chinese culture but in recent years there has been a shift in the paradigm in which Chinese citizens prefer to choose coffee over tea. In this example, we can see how over time

⁹ Ibid., 486.

¹⁰ Schwartz, Barry. 2004. *The Paradox Of Choice*. New York: HarperCollins Publisher.

¹¹ Lieber, Robert, and Ruth Weisberg. 2002. 'Globalization, Culture, And Identities In Crisis'. *International Journal Of Politics, Culture, And Society* 16 (2): 278.

globalization will enhance cultural identity loss. Furthermore, this side argues that if globalization increases welfare in which people are able to afford more, they raise the concern of the gentrification of neighborhoods.¹² This relates to the culture aspect because there is a paradox. Take Gastown in Vancouver as an example. Gastown is historically rich and is renowned in Vancouver as to an area that is rich with culture. The grittiness of the area has attracted business owners who set up shop there in order to grasp the ambiance. The paradox is that Gastown has slowly over the years, succumbed to gentrification in which the people that made the area so rich in culture are being driven out because they can no longer afford live there. The incorporation of businesses in turn has raised the property value of Gastown and although that can be seen as a good thing, the cultural diversity is slowly diminishing because the people who made it what it is cannot live there which leads to businesses losing their unique qualities of operating at such a different location. This goes to show the severity of gentrification of neighborhoods in Vancouver but if the same logic is applied to the enormous nation of China or India in which the number of middle class people are exponentially increasing, irreversible damage may be done. The important thing here to note is that globalization reduces welfare in this case because it is reducing choice associated with personal liberty. The people that were originally from Gastown are moving out not because they choose to but rather they are being forced to.¹³

Perhaps the biggest argument made would be the notion that globalization is fundamentally flawed because it is not sustainable.¹⁴ They question the legitimacy of supporting a concept that

¹² Zukin, Sharon. 1987. 'Gentrification: Culture And Capital In The Urban Core'. *Annual Review Of Sociology* 13 (1): 129-147.

¹³ Putterman, Louis. 'Development And Human Welfare'. Presentation, Brown University.

¹⁴ Kozak, Robert. 'What Now, Mr. Jones? Some Thoughts About Today'S Forest Sector And Tomorrow'S Great Leap Forward'. In *The Global Forest Sector Changes, Practices, And Prospects*, 431-446. Eric Hansen, Rajat Panwar and Richard Vlosky, 1st ed., 2013. <http://www.crcnetbase.com/doi/abs/10.1201/b16186-24>.

is not sustainable because it would be counter intuitive to follow a system that will eventually collapse. It is counter logical in the sense that it creates complex paths for goods and services. Using the same clothing example as above, yes globalization will increase efficiency from the human perspective but it is counter intuitive from the perspective of the planet. To make a shirt, cotton is shipped from South America to Asia where they can be produced into blanks. They blanks are then shipped to either Europe or North America where they can be printed and then after all of that, the shirts will then be shipped to various retailers. This example highlights the illogical process of globalization because it is more efficient to go through all these steps rather than have a native country control everything from production to assembly. The example also demonstrates that in order for globalization to promote growth, it must be dependent on the unsustainable use of the planets natural resources. Similarly, this brings us to the last point raised by this side which is the argument of globalization decreases welfare because it leads to detrimental environmental changes.

A system, no matter how good, cannot be deemed viable if it causes environmental damage. Environmental damage is characterized by the notion of when consumption is not sustainable. Sustainability is defined as the idea “that things should be better in the future than they are at present.”¹⁵ This means that waste does not equate to damage unless it pushes the planet to be unsustainable. When applying only logic, no matter how efficient a system is, the fact of the matter is that we rely on the natural resources on the planet. If these resources are exhausted then efficiency or all the good that globalization brings would not matter simply because we would all perish without the planet. Globalization can be argued to have improved efficiency and increased individual freedom by providing more choice towards consumer goods but it can also be argued

¹⁵ Ibid., 435.

that the process in which it is providing these attributes are causing environmental damage.¹⁶ For example, our planet cannot sustain 7 billion cars but globalization is making it so that more people can afford cars. The car market in China and India has increased because people in those countries can now afford more. However, this increased consumption cannot be matched by sustainable productivity so that it will eventually collapse. This brings us back to the previous point which is that globalization is not a sustainable system.¹⁷ The point here is that disregarding everything, even if globalization hypothetically increases welfare, we cannot support a system in which environmental damage is a by-product because nothing is of concern if there is no longer a place to live.

COMMON OPPOSITIONS AND REBUTTAL

A common challenge against the side that argues globalization increases welfare is to bring up the fact globalization is not a fair game in which all sides are benefitted. Globalization promotes the idea of large corporations which translates to the rich countries holding immense power while the developing countries are working under a false pretense that they are better off. While one can argue that even if the developing countries are being exploited, they are nevertheless better off because at least they are in a state of being developed. However one must consider the notion that the system is set up in a way where the rich have the power and they therefore have control over the system. Drawing from the previous example of clothing, the only reason it benefits all parties involved is because the developing country in the example is being exploited in the sense that they are making clothes at a much lower cost. This system is logically absurd because in order for it to work, the rich have to impoverish the poor to make things efficient.

¹⁶ Freeman, Phyllis, Barry Bluestone, Nicholas Ashford, William Moomaw, and J McAteer. 2002. 'Globalization And The Environment'. *Journal Of Public Health Policy* 23 (2): 225-238.

¹⁷ Ibid., 231.

The rebuttal to the challenge would be to bring up hard statistical evidence. Perhaps the most prominent example of how globalization increases welfare would be to look at the economic growth of China and India.¹⁸ When just looking at data from 2005-2013, one can see the staggering growth of GDP in China. China's GDP in USD in 2005 was estimated to be 2.25 trillion dollars and in 2013 that number grew to 9.24 trillion. The growth of GDP indicates that the economy of China has significantly increased which translates to the country having more money.¹⁹ Although GDP is not necessarily a prime indicator of welfare, it can be argued that the growth in translates to a rise of productivity. Furthermore, countries with high GDP usually translates to citizens having a higher standard of living due to the healthy economy. Although the claim that GDP is a good representation of welfare can be debatable, it is certainly undisputed that in terms of productivity, China has proven to be a success story.²⁰

To address the earlier concerns of a homogeneous culture, it has been raised that it can be viewed both ways. While perhaps globalization dilutes culture in which Eastern uniqueness is diminishing, it can also be argued that globalization also promotes the culture of the West. Using the same Starbucks example as above, we can see that in a country like China where tea is culturally imbedded, people are now getting a chance to enjoy a cup of coffee that is so iconic in Western society. While it can be easily viewed as cultural homogeneity, it can argued that the challenge is irrelevant because it is bias in the sense that anyone from the West can see globalization as an effective method of cultural sharing in which countries from the orient can now get a taste of the West. Furthermore, addressing the concern of expense, while it is certainly fair to criticize a global company of charging \$22 RMB per latte, one must understand that

¹⁸ Data.worldbank.org,. 2015. 'GDP (Current US\$) | Data | Graph'.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Meredith, Robyn. 2015. The Elephant And The Dragon: The Rise Of India And China And What It Means For All Of Us. Ebook. 1st ed. New York: W. W Norton & Company, 144-153.

people are paying much more than just the latte. When a cup of Starbucks is bought in Beijing, along with the coffee comes status.²¹ Meredith quotes Claire Jackson who is a senior partner at Ogilvy & Mather in Shanghai saying “for that price, one could buy a family a substantial lunch. It is about being able to show off.”²² With that said, social status has always been a deep ideology embedded into the Chinese culture so when the Chinese citizen is buying a cup of Starbucks coffee, they are not necessarily promoting a homogeneous culture but rather they are practicing their own culture of showing social status through a different medium.

The point they are trying to make is simple: globalization and the embrace of capitalism leads to an increase in welfare and there are hard statistical facts to prove it. When looking at the growth rates in GDP from 1980-2007, one can clearly see that India has grown exponentially from 5.8% in 1980-1992, to a staggering 9.4 in 2006-2007 alone. As Shalendra D. Sharma pointed out in his book “China and India in the Age of Globalization”, the “experience of both countries confirms that the most powerful force for the reduction of poverty and improvements in living standards is sustained economic growth.”²³ The proportion of Indians living in extreme poverty (on \$1 a day or less) has fallen from 40% in 1990 to 25% in 2007.” In addition, when looking at the reduction of poverty rates in China, one can further grasp the potential of globalization. Sharma goes on to say “between 1981 and 2001, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty fell from 53% to just 8%.”²⁴ The statistics are there in which it clearly demonstrates that China and India, countries who have been heavily influenced by the notion of globalization, have flourished in which the welfare of people have been improved. The only viable concern of these countries would be the worry of the gentrification of neighborhoods in which the influx of middle class

²¹ Ibid., 144.

²² Ibid., 145.

²³ Sharma, Shalendra D. 2009. *China and India In The Age Of Globalization*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

²⁴ Ibid.

citizens have raised standards of living in which the poor people are having a hard time catching up. However, one must then question the legitimacy of the concern because the gentrification of neighborhoods is inevitably happening but at the same time, opportunity has also exponentially grown in these countries. The poor are no longer put into positions in which they cannot find jobs because globalization has, on the contrary, created a massive increase in opportunities which might have never been possible.²⁵

A challenge against the argument of globalization decreases welfare would be to point out the fact that globalization without a doubt, increases individual freedom by providing the individual with more choices. When individual freedom is increased then welfare is also increased.²⁶

Following this logic, globalization has clearly demonstrated that it allows the individual to be able to have more choice and thus it increases welfare. To illustrate this, Shelley Nickles writes that after World War II, “men and women often retained their distinctive lifestyles, class values, and tastes. Above all, an ethos I call “more is better” defined the working-class taste.”²⁷ This in turn caused businesses to market to the people these tastes, hence embedding the notion that to increase welfare, one must increase individual freedom by means of adding more choice. An example could be automotive industry. Having more choice in car selection from interior gadgets to exterior features has allowed individuals to increase satisfaction.

The rebuttal to this challenge would be to question the legitimacy of the entire underlying foundation in which it follows. The notion more is better is not always true and there are certainly examples of that. Using the classic example of Arrow’s theorem, we can see how

²⁵ Chow, Gregory. 1993. 'Capital Formation And Economic Growth In China'. *The Quarterly Journal Of Economics* 108 (3): 809-842.

²⁶ Schwartz, Barry. 2004. *The Paradox Of Choice*. New York: HarperCollins Publisher.

²⁷ Nickles, Shelley. 2002. 'More Is Better: Mass Consumption, Gender, And Class Identity In Postwar America'. *American Quarterly* 54 (4): 581-622.

having more choice is actually detrimental. Arrow's impossibility theorem basically states that when three or more distinct choices are given to a general populace, any voting system will run into a mathematical impossibility.²⁸ For example, we have 3 people and 3 different ice cream flavors. For simplicity sake we name these people A, B, and C respectively and the flavor choices are vanilla, strawberry, and chocolate. The preferences are ranked below:

A	B	C
Vanilla	Strawberry	Chocolate
Strawberry	Chocolate	Vanilla
Chocolate	Vanilla	Strawberry

Now if we were to hold a vote on which one ice cream flavor gets to be on the menu then Arrow's theorem deduces that depending on the voting system, you will get different outcomes. If you were to ask them to rate vanilla with strawberry then vanilla would win because person A and C prefer vanilla over strawberry. Following that, if you were to ask them to rate vanilla with chocolate then chocolate would win because persons B and C prefer chocolate over vanilla. Now repeat the same scenario except this time we start with chocolate and vanilla. We know that chocolate will win because persons B and C prefer chocolate. Like before, we now rate chocolate with strawberry. This time we see that strawberry will win because persons A and B prefer strawberry over chocolate. The point here is that given all these choices, the system fails to pick an appropriate ice cream flavor because it runs into a mathematical impossibility.²⁹ To further expand on this point Barry Schwartz writes that there is a paradox towards choice and that

²⁸ Morreau, Michael. 2014. 'Arrow's Theorem'. *Stanford Encyclopedia Of Philosophy*. Metaphysics Research Lab.

²⁹ Ibid.

having more choice is definitely better than having none but that having more choice does not equal to having an increase in welfare. Schwartz goes on to expand that having too many choices often lead to paralysis and less satisfaction. The two examples he gives was first paralysis. Schwartz writes that having an increased amount of choice increases the social stress one has as nobody wants to make the wrong choice which leads to avoidance in the sense that no choice will be made for the fear of making the wrong one. The second example he gives is that even if one were to overcome the paralysis and make a choice, people are often less satisfied. Schwartz writes that when there is no choice and one is dissatisfied then the world is to be blamed because there was no other choice. However, if choice is infinite and one is dissatisfied then the person who makes the choice is to be blamed because that person could have done better.³⁰ The point to note here is that the world cannot sustain the amount of choices that globalization brings and this challenge questions the legitimacy of the fundamental thinking of the opposing side. If globalization increases welfare only because it increases individual freedom then what happens when individual freedom is maximized? When that is achieved then does globalization become obsolete?

Finally, this side argues that even if we were to disregard everything and agree that globalization increases welfare, it can only increase welfare to a certain degree since it is not sustainable. If we were to rely so heavily on an unsustainable system then what is to happen when the system fails or what happens when it succeeds fully? If globalization maximizes choices of everybody then the planet cannot sustain that kind of lifestyle so to follow a system which promotes it is ludicrous since nobody is better off without the planet.³¹

³⁰ Schwartz, Barry. 2004. *The Paradox Of Choice*. New York: HarperCollins Publisher.

³¹ Freeman, Phyllis, Barry Bluestone, Nicholas Ashford, William Moomaw, and J McAteer. 2002. 'Globalization And The Environment'. *Journal Of Public Health Policy* 23 (2): 225-238.

SCOREBOARD ANALYSIS

After analyzing both sides of the argument along with the common oppositions, we can apply some of these concepts to the countries brought up such as Canada and China.

The graph below shows the GDP of Canada since 2005. As observed, we can see that the level of development (GDP per capita) has increased staggeringly.³² When we weigh that against the degree of inequality, in which poverty is the measurement, no data could be found. However, UFCW, a private sector union in Canada reports that poverty rates for all persons rose from 9.4% to 9.6%.³³ When comparing the poverty rate increase to the development rate increase, we can clearly see that globalization has increased the welfare of people in Canada. With this said, the ecological footprint of North America and Europe has risen between 4 and 7 in 2013.³⁴ This

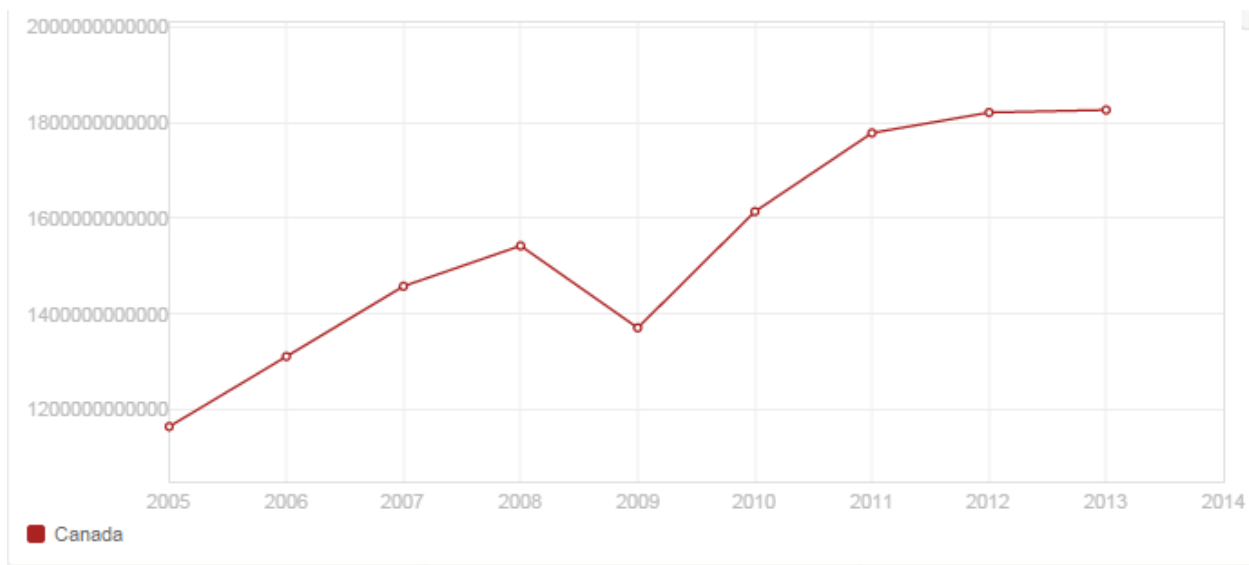


Figure 1- Graph showing GDP of Canada from 2005 – 2014 (USD)

³² Data.worldbank.org., 2015. 'GDP (Current US\$) | Data | Graph'.

<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD/countries/CN-IN?display=graph>.

³³ UFCW Canada - Canada's Private Sector Union., 2015. 'By The Numbers: Income Distribution And The Poverty Line - UFCW Canada - Canada's Private Sector Union'.

http://www.ufcw.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2433:by-the-numbers-income-distribution-and-the-poverty-line&Itemid=306&lang=en

³⁴ WWF. 2012. *Africa Ecological Footprint Report: Green Infrastructure for Africa's Ecological Security*. WWF-World Wildlife Fund, Gland, Switzerland.

means that it will require around 4 to 7 Earth-like planets to sustain our consumption and demands. When assessing this, statistics has proven that Canada has benefitted with globalization because welfare was increased. However, statistics has also proven that Canada's rate of consumption has also reached a pattern of unsustainability which is a means of concern.

Looking at the GDP graph of China, it can be observed that the GDP per capita has increased tremendously as well.³⁵ This observation shows that globalization has increased the development of China. When looking at the poverty graph, we can see that poverty has also decreased significantly.³⁶ This demonstrates that globalization has increased the welfare of people in China. Like with Canada, when assessing the environmental aspect of globalization, it is noted that the ecological footprint of China in 2003 is 2.1. When assessing this, similar to Canada, statistics has proven that globalization has increased welfare but also increase consumption.

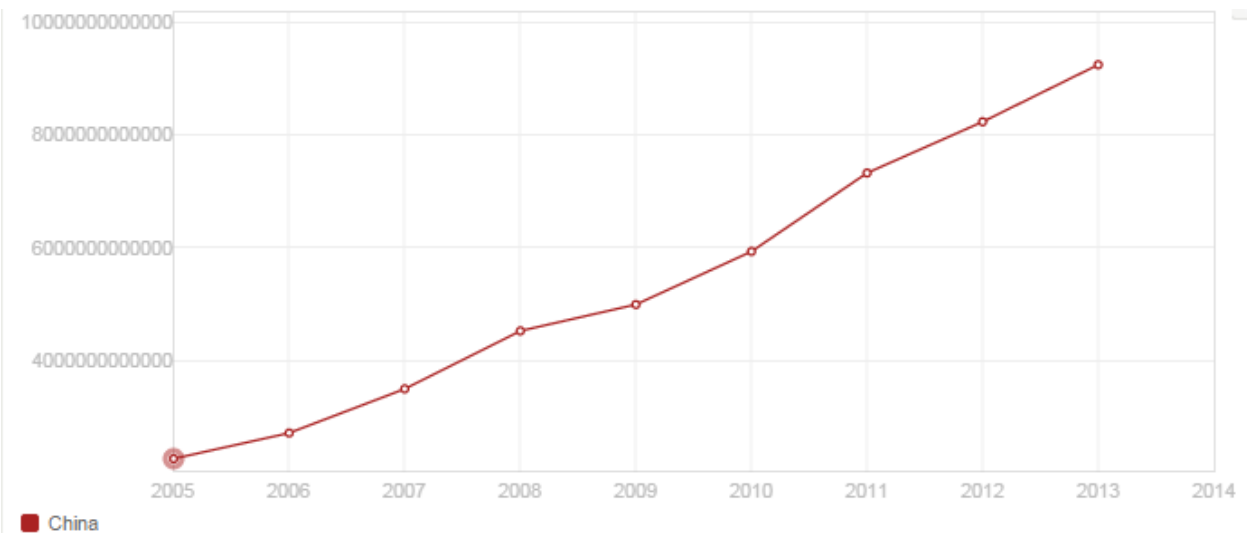


Figure 2- Graph showing GDP of China from 2005 – 2014 (USD)

³⁵ Data.worldbank.org,. 2015. 'GDP (Current US\$) | Data | Graph'.
<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD/countries/CN-IN?display=graph>.

³⁶ The World Bank,. 2015. *Poverty Trend (By International Standards) Of China*. Image.
<http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/country/CHN>.

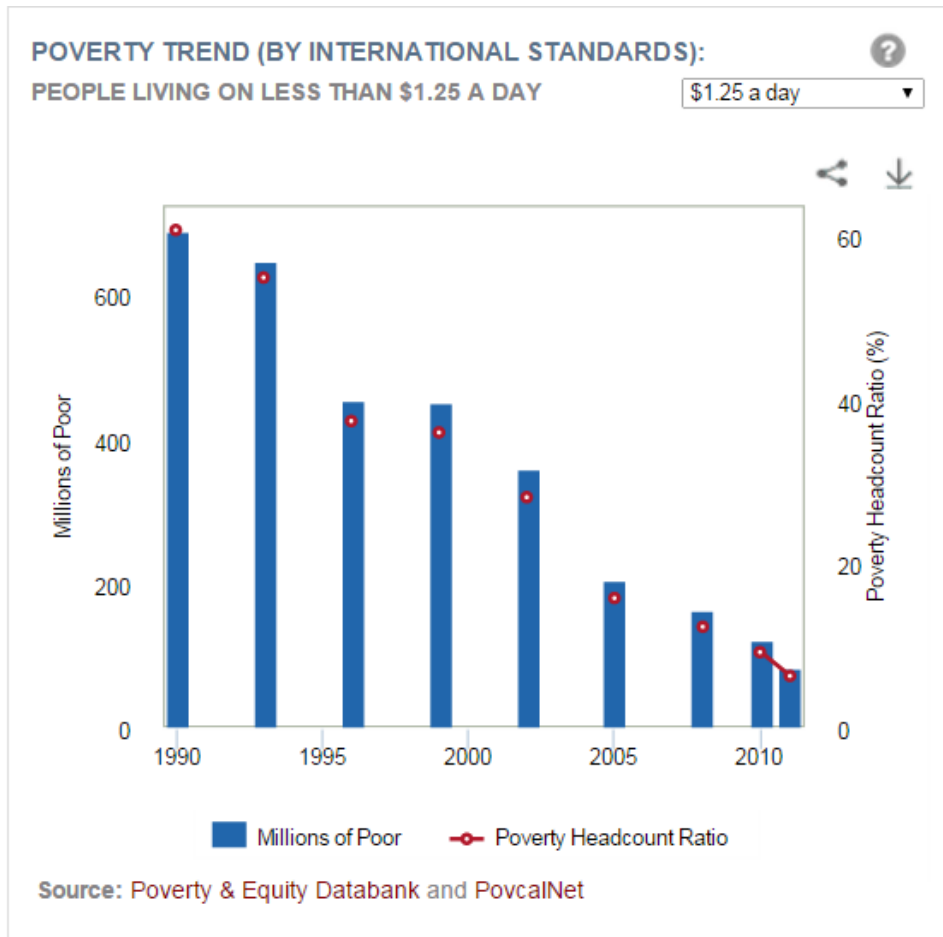


Figure 3- Poverty Trend (By International Standards) of China (USD)

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, globalization increases welfare at the expense of the environment. Globalization creates possibilities in which the world as a collective whole can benefit from. Looking at China and Canada, it is clear that globalization increases welfare with regard to an increase in development and a decrease in poverty. With this said however, globalization raises concern regarding the environment because it causes environmental damage both of which can be witnessed in China and Canada. Although globalization increases the welfare of people within the parameters of this paper based on the definition given, it should be noted that the system will collapse if the trends with environmental impacts continue. The world as it is now is certainly

benefiting from the possibilities of globalization. However, we are failing as a collective whole in extracting the benefits without bringing detrimental change to the environment. In addition, just as we are benefitting from the products of globalization, we must as a global community, find a way to sustainably manage the extraction. Due to globalization being so deeply embedded into our way of life, I believe that it will be evolved through a collective global effort to become at least sustainable.

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