

# Global History as a Trend of Global Studies

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*The paper addresses the issues of Global History institutionalization as a distinct academic field. It investigates the methodological sources and prospects of Global History for the study of 'long duration' social processes. It reveals some parallels between global history and similar fields of historical and social research in the late 20<sup>th</sup> – early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.*

**Keywords:** global history, *longue durée*, interdisciplinarity, the world as a whole, globalization.

The concept of 'global history' denotes both objective global historical processes and a research area where their investigation is conducted. This article focuses on global history as a research area.

The idea of global history has been formulated within scientific thought since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (its starting point lies in the scholarly publications of the second generation of French Annals School). The emergence of Global History as a distinct field of study focusing on social processes of 'long duration' took place in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Methodological sources of global history should be found in Fernand Braudel's works: *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (1949), *Civilisation Matérielle, Économie et Capitalisme, XV<sup>e</sup> – XVIII<sup>e</sup>*, (translated as *Capitalism and Material Life, 1400–1800*) (1967–1979) etc. 'We ('the global historians' – T. Sh.) are all heirs of Braudel, whether we like it or not. He is part of the air we breathe', writes Alan Macfarlane, one of the founders of the British school of global history (Macfarlane 1996).

In *The Mediterranean*, Braudel for the first time suggested the idea of differentiation of historical time and introduced the concepts of long, medium and short duration (*Longue Durée, Moyenne Durée, Courte Durée*) which reflect thousand-year long changes, century-long changes, and current changes of natural and social systems respectively (Braudel 2002). Braudel's novelty was also revealed in the object of his research: he did not study a particular event, society or state, but a socio-natural space (the Mediterranean) created by cultural and economic ties of the peoples that inhabited it.

Indeed, the non-event history of large cultural and economic communities considered in the context of long socio-natural transformations has become a core of global history.

In his well-known essay, *History and the Social Sciences: Long Duration* (1958) Braudel described the concept of *Longue Durée*, which became a methodological basis of global history and some other directions and schools in the late 20<sup>th</sup> – early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Braudel wrote '... A clear awareness of the plurality of social time is indispensable to a common methodology of the social sciences'.

In his essay, Braudel also proposed the principle of cooperation between the humanities and social sciences in solving relevant problems of the present:

The social sciences force themselves on each other, each trying to capture society as a whole, in its 'totality'. Each science encroaches on its neighbors, all

the while believing it is staying in its domain. Economics finds sociology closing in on it, history – probably, the least structured of all the human sciences – is open to all the lessons learned by its numerous neighbors, and is then at pains to reflect them back again. So, despite all the reluctance, oppositions, and blissful ignorance, the beginnings of a ‘common market’ are sketched out. This would be well worth a trial during the coming years, even if each science might later be better off re-adopting, for a while, some more strictly personal approach. But now the crucial point is to get together in the first place (Braudel 1977).

The essay *History and the Social Sciences: Long Duration* became a key event in the history of social sciences and historical science itself. The essay was translated into many languages, including Russian. In 2008, the Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems, and Civilizations (State University of New York – Binghamton) held the conference ‘Longue Durée and World-Systems analysis’,<sup>1</sup> devoted to the fiftieth anniversary of the publication (Khakimov 2009).

Global history studies cross-border social processes of ‘long duration’ and their dependence on particular environment. The main subjects of global history are as follows: migration of tribes and nations, settling of territories, regional economic development, trading routes, distribution of material culture, civilizations’ spiritual interference, differentiation and integration of languages, emergence of the centers of statehood and their relationship, distribution of technologies, anthropogenic changes of environment and physiological changes of a human being in long historical prospect.

The ‘global historians’ primarily focus on the history of globalization whose inconsistent concepts generate the problematic field for global history. One of the ‘founding fathers’ of the American school of global history, professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Bruce Mazlish says ‘The history of globalization – is both the heart and the novelty of global history’ (Mazlish and Iriye 2005: 19).

The question of what exactly constitutes the subject of global history is still one of the most debatable.

The institutionalization of Global History as a distinct field of study began in the 1990s. The initiatives connected with organizational formation of Global History were stipulated both by internal factors of development of the scientific thought, constantly requiring not only a substantial, but also a formal modernization, and by external ones including, first of all, global changes in the system of international order in the late 1980s and early 1990s and acceleration of globalization processes in the second half of the 1990s.

The requirements on the part of western education system, which is based on the principle of intense competition and is very sensitive to social demands, have become an impetus for ‘globalization’ of social and humanitarian discourse over the last two decades. Similar to parallel projects (Big History, World and Transnational History, Cross-Cultural Studies, Environmental History, *etc.*), Global History was institutionalized, first of all, within the framework of educational programs, and only then within the specialized periodical press and professional associations.

Great Britain became one of the largest centers of formation of Global History as a distinct area of study. London was the venue for the first seminar on global history (Institute of Historical Research, University of London, 1996) and the place where the first master program in Global History was set up (London School of Economics and Political

<sup>1</sup> The information on ‘The Longue Durée and World-Systems Analysis. Colloquium. October, 24–25 2008. Binghamton University’ is available at <http://www2.binghamton.edu/fbc/archive/nwslt-32.pdf>.

Science, 2000). It was in London that the research network in the field of global economic history known as The Global Economic History Network (GEHN) was created in 2003, and the *Journal of Global History*<sup>2</sup> was founded in 2006.

As Gareth Austin, the President of The European Network in Universal and Global History (ENIUGH) writes,

In London, global history began as an experiment and became a mission. The project began with a step which in retrospect seems modest and obvious, but at the time was innovative and even radical: the creation of a regular seminar in such a seemingly amorphous 'subject' as 'Global History in the Long Run'. This was convened (under that title) at the University of London's Institute of Historical Research by the Institute's then director, Patrick O'Brien, and Alan Milward, who at that time held the chair of economic history at LSE (Austin 2007: 99–111).

As O'Brien remembers, 'the seminar began and continued by discussing a then rather short list of famous books locatable in this new field: Wittfogel, McNeill, Braudel, Hodgson, Wallerstein, Gellner, Frank, Pomeranz and others' (O'Brien 2008). Today's list of works on global history comprises thousands of titles.

Austin notes three main trends in the institutionalization of Global History: educational programs, foundation of a new journal and organization of international research network (Austin 2007: 99).

A number of important works of LSE professorate on Global History and Global Studies could be added to these three trends, in particular, the works by a prominent British sociologist Anthony Giddens, which were published when he held a position of LSE director (1997–2003) (Giddens 1999, 2000, 2001).

In 2000, the London School of Economics and Political Sciences set up the first ever master's degree for this subject in the United Kingdom. This one-year program still exists (as an independent program and as a part of two-year program carried out together with universities of Leipzig, Vienna, Wrocław and Roskilde). Another LSE department – Department of International Relations – now also has a joint program on world history with the Colombian University (Third European Congress... 2011: 3).

With regard to the content of LSE master's program in Global History, O'Brien notes:

This degree is advertised as global history, but (as you might expect from a group of economic historians) with credentials that cover Europe, the Americas, Africa, China, India and Japan, the course is in effect an integrated programme focused upon the long-run history of 'material life'.

The syllabus was designed for graduate students to study what is (perhaps) the mega problem of our times, namely, when or why some societies (located largely in the West and North of our modern world) became and remain affluent, while the majority of the world's seven billion people who reside in countries (to the East and the South) are still poor. Demarcated into component courses the degree takes on board a range of themes that underpin most modern meta-narratives in histories of the world focused on environments, states, geopolitics, religions, cultures, gender, diseases and of course economic change (O'Brien 2008).

The foundation in 2006 of the *Journal of Global History* (JGH) published by the London School of Economics and Political Sciences and Cambridge University Publishing House, became an important step towards institutionalization of global history. The first issue of the journal opens with Patrick O'Brien's essay, written as prolegomenon, 'Histo-

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<sup>2</sup> *Journal of Global History* is available at <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayJournal?jid=JGH>

riographical Traditions and Modern Imperatives for the Restoration of Global History' (O'Brien 2006), in which Global History is described as cosmopolitan 'meta-narrative, capable to meet the demands of globalized world'. O'Brien defines the place of Global History in the tradition of universal historiography (from the works of Ancient World historians to modern World history) and notes that the methodology of global history is focused on the development of two fundamentals of the modern world: connections and comparisons through which the global perspective of historical process opens (*Ibid.*: 3).

The *Journal of Global History* is one of the main platforms where the subject of global history is shaping. The Journal addresses the main problems of global change over time, together with the diverse histories of globalization. It also examines counter-currents to globalization, including those that have structured other spatial units. The Journal seeks to transcend the dichotomy between 'the West and the rest', straddle traditional regional boundaries, relate material to cultural and political history, and overcome thematic fragmentation in historiography', the JGH editor's note says.<sup>3</sup>

In 2003, the Global Economic History Network (GEHN) was established, which, according to Austin, 'could be seen as a globalization of the earlier seminar' (Austin 2007: 99). Today, GEHN is an international network of academics with credentials in several disciplines (history, economics, economic history, anthropology, geography, and sociology) and affiliated to universities in Britain, Holland, Italy, Germany, the United States, Turkey, India and Japan (Global Economic History Network 2011).

The GEHN Mission Statement says

Global history seeks to broaden and deepen people's understanding of themselves, their cultures and their states by extending the geographical spaces and lengthening the chronologies that most historians normally take into their narratives and analyses.

Global economic history proclaims the need for long chronological and wide geographical perspectives (as well as recruitment of theories and insights acquired from the natural and social sciences) in order to represent its preoccupation with material life and to analyze the divergence in productivities and standards of living across time and space (Global Economic History Network 2011).

Creation of research networks is one the most distinctive features of shaping global history as an innovative (not only according to the contents, but also by the form) field of study. European Network in Universal and Global History (ENIUGH) is one of the largest networks. ENIUGH aims at bringing together scholars working in the field of global and world history. ENIUGH was created in 2002 by the initiative of Global and European Studies Institute of the University of Leipzig. The European Congresses on global and general history<sup>4</sup> became the most significant platform for ENIUGH. British scholars actively participate in ENIUGH, and even hosted the Third European Congress on Global and World History,<sup>5</sup> which took place in April 2011 at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

By analogy with the European Network in Universal and Global History, in 2008 the Network of Global and World History Organizations (NOGWHISTO)<sup>6</sup> was founded. The first NOGWHISTO conference was held in the framework of the 21<sup>st</sup> World Historical Congress, which took place in August, 2010 in Amsterdam.

<sup>3</sup> <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayJournal?jid=JGH>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.dup.uni-leipzig.de/~eniugh/congress2011/>

<sup>5</sup> The first ENIUGH Congress took place in 2005 in Leipzig, the second – in 2008 in Dresden.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~gwhisto/>

Global History and Culture Centre, the Department of History, University of Warwick, UK<sup>7</sup> has very interesting suggestions how to develop global history as an innovative field of study. The main distinguishing feature of Global History and Culture Centre is its studying globalization through intercontinental dissemination of technologies and cultural influences.

The Global History and Culture Centre's activities include symposia, conferences, day schools, series of seminars, honorary visiting fellowships, postgraduate exchanges and postdoctoral fellowships.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, it organizes exhibition projects together with the largest British museums.

At present, some Russian universities have Global History in their curricula too.

These and other initiatives show that global history has been a very attractive and actively promoted brand in the scientific and educational environment over the last years. Global History is one of the most prominent trends in historical research of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The papers from the last World Historical Congresses – the XIX<sup>th</sup> (Oslo, 2000), XX<sup>th</sup> (Sydney, 2005), XXI<sup>st</sup> (Amsterdam, 2010) clearly show the relevance of global history issues. We can also witness the increasing number of publications both on general and specific theoretical issues of global history.

Some scholars, however, do not accept the extent and scale of research on global history (Karpov [2009] in this context called them 'antiglobalists'). Nevertheless, the possibilities and prospects opened by global history are acknowledged by the majority of scholars working in other directions and schools.

Barry K. Gills, professor of the University of Newcastle, the series editor of the *Rethinking Globalization* series, and William Thompson, professor at Indiana University, author of a number of well-known works on globalization and World-Systems, assert in their article 'Globalizations, Global Histories and Historical Globalities' that 'history is a matter of perspective. Local perspectives yield local histories. Global perspectives yield global histories' (Gills and Thompson 2006: 2).

With penetration of computer technologies into social and historical research, huge data files became available in the spheres of historical research (including those that are not traditional for history). Machine data processing made possible an efficient implementation of complex research programs. It became one of the most important factors for updating historical science and qualitative expansion of its possibilities. Methodological achievements of such areas as quantitative historiography, cliodynamics, macrosociology, etc. paved the way for creation of theories at the global scale. The availability of empirical data at the global scale became the key precondition to form global history as a distinct field of study.

To the extent in which the global history uses quantitative methodology, especially mathematical modeling of processes of long duration, one might consider it as a part of new area of knowledge which is called Globalistics.

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<sup>7</sup> By the way, Warwick University is ranked first in Great Britain as regards the number of Russian students.

<sup>8</sup> About the Department of History, University of Warwick see at <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/about/>

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