

# Pandemic offers pause, not end, to globalization

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Mark Cleveland, Dancap Private Equity Professor in Consumer Behavior, sees distinct advantages in globalization to solve global crises, like climate change and, yes, pandemics. Credit: Adela Talbot // Western News

It'll take more than a pandemic to stop the march of globalization. In fact, it might be the offshoots of globalization that help humanity combat this and other global threats, according to one Western researcher.

"What's happening is a temporary pause in [globalization](#). The ebb and flow of globalization is a historic fact," said Mark Cleveland, Dancap Private Equity Professor in Consumer Behavior in the DAN Department of Management & Organizational Studies.

Economic integration has existed for more than 2,000 years—first under the Roman Empire. Prior to modernization, the world economy hit peak integration under the British Empire. Two world wars paused that progress, and it was not until the 1960s when globalization became reinvigorated by giant leaps in technology.

It has seemingly continued unfettered since—until a few weeks ago when the world stopped.

"Covid is the biggest threat to globalization that we've seen in decades. It will take years, maybe even a decade, but we will be back on the globalization road eventually," Cleveland said. "The pandemic doesn't change the fact that technology has greatly reduced the distance between people."

Pandemic isolation may be an opportunity for global consumer culture in different regions to become more local—at least for a time for a time, he continued. "It will be a bit of an opportunity, almost like a [petri dish](#), where things are going to perhaps produce some unique variants of global consumer culture."

In an ongoing research project with Ivey Business School student Georgia McCutcheon, BMOS'19, Cleveland has been tracking aspects of

globalization people find most threatening, including financial concerns, the movement of people and ideas across borders, and fears about the impact of technology.

The researchers believe the [pandemic](#) will make these threats loom larger in people's minds, making the potential downsides of globalization seem larger.

"People are looking for a scapegoat for the present circumstances," he said. "Some want to blame China. Some point to the World Health Organization. But the biggest target I've heard is globalization.

"Globalization has exacerbated global economic disparities—particularly in Western countries, which have witnessed wrenching deindustrialization—and it can also lead to financial contagion and, potentially, facilitate the spread of disease."

However, Cleveland sees distinct advantages in globalization to solve global crises, like climate change and, yes, pandemics. Global networks and connectedness can bring together the combined efforts of governments, scientists and health-care workers.

"Pandemics have never respected national borders. This is a global problem and we all need to work together. If we worked together instead of developing piecemeal strategies, we would have had a much better response to slow the spread," said Cleveland. "Global problems require global co-operation."

Provided by University of Western Ontario

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