

To what extent is it possible to speak of a 'global society'



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The main aim of this question is to examine how far globalisation is widespread enough to say that a global society exists. Is the globe becoming so interconnected by trade, communication and culture that instead of being made up of thousands of small communities, it is becoming one huge society? There are numerous plausible reasons to answer both yes and no to this question, but before doing this we must first define what globalisation actually is. The line of argument that this essay will take is that whilst globalisation is a very real thing with very real effects, but to say that a 'global ociety' is not wholly accurate.

In many years to come yes, a global community probably will exist, however at this time this society is still in its embryonic stage. A community is beginning to emerge but is not yet complete. After all, when taken into account all of the wars and terrorism attacks that have taken place because of different cultures and ideals, getting 6 billion people to live harmoniously in a monoculture is going to be a very long, drawn-out process. There are various definitions for what the term globalisation actually means.

The sociologist, Anthony Giddens, defines globalisation as 'a decoupling of space and time, emphasising that with instantaneous communications, knowledge and culture can be shared around the world simultaneously. '1 It also has often been described as the 'rapid increase in cross-border economic, social, technological exchange under conditions of capitalism. '2 Basically, a fully globalised culture should be taken as a single or multiple cultures for the whole world - either culminating cultures from around the world, or the world-wide domination of one culture set above others.

Really it should be the former, however many people see the latter statement to be true, that globalisation is the world-wide domination of one culture above all others. Obviously the culture in question is that of the West, in particular the US, which is why globalisation is often referred to as 'Westernisation' or 'Americanisation.' That there have been influences of some cultures upon others can hardly be denied. Such relations have always existed: much of ancient Roman culture came from Greece, and much of Japanese thinking, and even the writing system, was 'imported' from China.

In terms of the division of the modern world, these influences have largely been one-way, the cultures of the rich Western countries affecting other areas of the world; people in most of the world are now wearing Western dress, for instance, and it is much easier to get pizza in Nairobi than to get Kenyan food in Rome. There are a great deal of arguments to suggest that globalisation is causing the world to come together in a kind of global society, both culturally and economically, but it is true to say that the West has definitely had far more influence over the East than the East has had over the West.

Greater awareness of non-western cultures is learnt through education, interactions and the media - although rarely are any of these cultural traits adopted. Conversely, western cultures are often forced upon peoples through the media (predominately controlled by the technologically advanced West), company branding and the ability of westerners to travel across cultural boundaries (whilst their non-western counterparts may not be economically or politically able).

It is therefore hard for these non-western cultures to compete, and so cultural globalisation sees the emergence of America and the West. Think of all the so-called 'global' popstars, how many of these don't come from either England, Australia or the United States? True, they are global in the sense that their music reaches all over the world, but they are certainly not global in their origin. This without doubt is an argument in favour of the 'global society', however it is also another example of the West being responsible for globalisation.

Movies are watched world over by anyone who has access to a television or a cinema, yet how many of these are not made in Britain or America? Very few. These films are viewed in other countries, just dubbed in their own language. Yet to say that there is no influence coming from the opposite direction is untrue. Music, certainly in the UK, is increasingly being influenced by other cultures, particularly from parts of Asia and the Caribbean. There are also the 'Bollywood' films; musical movies which are made in India.

These are often shown on television in the UK, but usually on the less mainstream channels. Without doubt East and West are being united through the mediums of music and films, but the West definitely dominates these. There is another way however, in which non-Westerners have made moves toward a 'global society' which Westerners rarely take part in, and that is immigration. 'Over 30 million people have moved to Europe since the Second World War' and with them they have brought culture from the four corners of the Earth.

The West is becoming more and more integrated through immigration and in a fully globalised world, the whole planet would be like this, a fully integrated community. They bring with them food, music and customs from their homelands. Think of all the different take-aways and restaurants it is possible to get foreign food from in the UK. Through immigration we are taking huge steps closer to a 'global society'. Economically, globalisation is definitely beginning to forge the beginnings of a 'global society'.

A fully globalised economy would be one in which there is a single universally accepted currency and where there are no differences in economic policies between nation states, no trade restrictions or barriers, and where nations no longer have control over their own economy, as their own economy as such does not exist, it is part of the wider global economy. Clearly today we don't have this single economy, however in recent years there have been movements towards it, evidence of economic globalisation.

Europe now has the Euro, and it's important to realise that this isn't just a unit of currency, but shows how the different economies of Europe can effectively become one, as by signing up to a joint currency a nation is also signing away total control over fiscal and monetary policies. This again is evidence that it is only a select few wealthy countries that are perhaps undergoing some processes of globalisation, however poorer countries have also been Americanised through the often black-market use of the US dollar.

For example, in Vietnam and many other poor countries, US dollars are preferred as payments over predominately weaker and more vulnerable local currencies. Many people argue that not only is there not a global society, but

that globalisation does not exist at all. Sceptics often argue that economic globalisation is a myth, whilst what they actually mean is that we're not living in a global economy, they fail to realise that globalisation is a process rather than an end result.

Financial markets only exist on a large scale in wealthy countries; multinational enterprises and transnational companies aren't totally global; employment isn't always globally mobile; foreign direct investment is concentrated in the wealthy countries. '4 All are evidence that our economy isn't truly global, but none tell us that globalisation doesn't exist. In fact, they do quite the opposite, they illustrate various ways in which the economy has become more global over the years. Globalisation definitely has its opposers.

For example, one argument put forward against it is that globalisation reduces democratic controls by nation states and their communities over their economic affairs. '5 In conclusion, it seems that it is possible to speak of a 'global society', however what it is not possible to speak of is that this society is complete. It is far from it, however movements have been made towards it; it is in its embryonic stage. Economically, many advancements have been made; much of Europe has adopted a single currency and communications between nations from all parts of the world have been enhanced since the creation of the internet.

Culturally, globalisation has been equally as effective. Through the immigration of non-Westerners to Europe and America, people of all different races and religions live within the same community; it is possible to eat in Chinese, Thai, Cantonese and Indian restaurants; you can watch European

football which has been star-studded with the most talented footballers from South America, Asia and Africa. Globalisation is definitely occurring and one day the world will have a monoculture, a 'global society', but for now it remains a far off idea. A current fully globalised world is a myth, globalisation is not.