

# Globalization: the homogenization of cultures



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The increased integration of humanity beyond the national borders is compressing the world into an interdependent global village. Today, many equate the process of globalization with the promotion of interests of the West, whose hegemony is propagated through the idea of liberalism. As a result of the Western superior power and cultural imperialism, the so-called “Third World” countries feel compelled to admit their superiority and subsequently to acculturate themselves, accepting the Western way of life as a norm. The greatest consequence of this is homogenization of cultures and the loss of identity in the process of implementing Western ideologies. Today, the world we live in is taking part in the process of an increased integration through the movement of people and goods. The growing development of communication makes the unification of the entire globe seem as something completely natural. Globalization of our societies and every day lives .....

However, the question that is being imposed upon us is whether this compression of the world into one global society means that the world is being enriched and unified, or will it be torn apart by nations’ self-interest conflicts in the battle for preservation of their identities?

The wide variety and diversity of our cultures and identities has always been, without a doubt, a part of who we are. Societies and cultures learn how to grow and prosper through overlapping and borrowing from each other. Some would argue that cultures should not be perceived as individual, but that they need to be examined in a more general way, since they constantly change and evolve. Cultures stopped being related to a mere geographical

area and its society; nowadays, they are linked to the contemporary time that they exist in, as well as to the entire globe. Thanks to the process of globalization, today we have unique emerging cultures, such as Internet culture, artists' culture, culture of the young people from around the world and others that are becoming a part of a universal set of values and ideas, turning the world into one global culture.

However, while this unification of cultures has its benefits, at the same time it brings along the risk of an intercultural and identity-related conflict. For some people, their culture is everything that makes them who they are, it is an essential part of their identity. For example, in a case of a possible dispute between cultures that have confronting views and prejudice against each other, their people will hold on strongly to their national identity and culture, because they feel intimately related to it and see it as their protection. In an effort to preserve ones culture, language or religion, people very often become involved in conflicts. Most importantly, these conflicts becomes aggravated by the consuming influence of biased media.....

Furthermore, as a result of negative stereotypes, different cultures may view each other as alien and threatening and can lead to a “ clash of civilizations”, as Huntington refers to it. FOOTNOTE NEEDED Additionally, an increased interaction between cultures can lead to the creation of a unified culture imposed by the more influencing and dominating one. Therefore, this would lead to the homogenization of the world. This brings around cultural imperialism as an inherent part, as well as a product of the overall process of imperialism, where one country with dominant economy, culture and policy has control over others. This causes the local cultures, especially those in the <https://assignbuster.com/globalization-the-homogenization-of-cultures/>

so-called “ Third World” countries, to be exploited and challenged by the dominant, most often Western values. Unsurprisingly, this comes as an effect of many centuries during which West had the chance to establish its dominance in the world. Cultural imperialism occurs when one culture is presented in such a manner that it seems undeveloped and non-modern when compared to another. Accordingly, the dominant culture’s standards and norms become gradually accepted by the locals who believe in its superiority. This is why some intellectuals equate globalization with the Western imperialism; they argue that the West is imposing its ideas of liberalism onto the rest of the world through the process of globalization and therefore ensuring and reaffirming its hegemony. Instead of physically colonizing the rest of the world, the West has chosen more subtle means of propagating its ideas. The spread of Western, namely American goods around the world is not a simple coincidence- it is a part of the process of cultural imperialism. In addition, instead of being a simple trend of consumerism of American products, cultural imperialism implies the implementation of American ideas such as freedom of speech and democracy. As a result, this process leads to the steady disperse of unique cultures across the globe as they succumb to the influence of the more powerful American culture.

So, what’s in it for the West and America and what’s their real motive? Many people believe that the main reason is the protection of the unlimited access to foreign markets, along with an actual and concrete belief in the American superiority by their citizens. However, it is simple to convince the Americans of their own superiority, but when convincing foreign cultures, they have to

be more assertive and creative. Thus, marketing, along with advertising, plays an extremely important role in the process of Americanization. Its importance lies in the fact that it has the ability to persuade others in the modernity and the advanced stage of development of those American goods. Consequently, they begin to dominate local markets, doing no good to the local economy; hence, the local production industry weakens and gives way to the American economic interests.

Another way of influencing local cultures and identities is through the vehicle of Internet. It plays a huge role in propagating the American culture, and enables it to be extremely exposed to the entire globe. However, the users of Internet that wish not to be exposed to the influence of American propagating contents can easily avoid it, since they are the active players in the seek of information online. Nevertheless, those who choose to be exposed to it, Internet can severely increase it. Governments are aware of this, and some of them, like the Chinese and Cuban, have restricted their citizens from the free flow of information, in order to prevent the Western influence. Oxymoronically, by restricting them, their governments are reassuring the fact that their citizens will not be the providers, but mere recipients of the Internet information flow.

On the other hand, there is a substantial number of scholars who believe that the process of "Americanizing" the world is, as a matter of fact, a good thing for the entire world. They argue that through globalization, people become aware of the importance of strengthening their identity so they work on its preservation. In contrast to that, cultural imperialism can also lead to the establishment of a homogenized global identity that would help bring the

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world together. Accordingly, it would have a positive effect, hence the world will be more secure and stable through the elimination of the diverse and conflicting cultures. The Americans are already on the way to establish a single world society with minimum or no cultural restraints. However, the question being imposed on us is whether the uncertain assurance of a world peace is enough to justify the gradual disappearance of the numerous local cultures. Even though indigenous cultures are aware of the growing impact of American cultural imperialism, there is not much they can do to stop it, since they are not strong enough to compete. They could try to limit the access to information, but that would contradict with the basic human rights which guarantee that everyone is able to attain free and unlimited knowledge and information through any means of media.

Theoretically speaking, every nation, religion, race and ethnic group are equal, as long as they fulfill the needs of their people. Unfortunately, having superior and inferior, dominant and subordinate cultures, equality among them seem to be impossible. However, domination is nothing new- it has always existed throughout the history of the world, especially during colonization when Western powers believed they need to “civilize” the indigenous nations, while they were in fact exploiting them.

### **The need for a cultural dialogue :**

When it comes to globalization and the issue of cultural imperialism, there seem to be two opposing views: some believe that the interaction and unification of cultures will lead to a “clash of civilizations”, while others claim it will bring around the greatly needed dialogue and cooperation. The global culture of today is, without a doubt, being shaped by the West.

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Nevertheless, it can and must be challenged by those that are being influenced by it, who should not just adopt their norms, but adapt and shape them so they fit the framework of their own culture and values. In addition, the fact that it is not just one culture influencing the other should not be overlooked; it is actually a process of mutual interaction and impact.

Despite the fact that it is one of the modern world's greatest challenges, intercultural dialogue is probably the best solution to counter cultural conflicts and crisis. Instead of simply succumbing to the influence, or doing the opposite- refraining and prohibiting the goods, people and world organizations should try appealing to the American governments to pass laws to restrain their companies from selling goods that endanger the survival of local market, and those companies should be prohibited from doing business. America must be fair and admit that perhaps what is good for its own economy, might not be good for the rest of the world and that the rights of people should be put before the need to make profit.