

Globalization: A Phenomenon of Cultural Dominance

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Abstract: Although the concept of globalization has not explicitly stated in a distinct definition, the phenomenon of its cultural dominance is one of the most complex ideas that confront radical intellectual criticism. Cultural globalization differs considerably, not only the stance of its theoretical meaning, but also the aspect of cultural convergence explanations. This academic article endeavours to explain the social and cultural theories of the twentieth century of globalization. It explains how the process of globalization enabled Western capitalism use developing policies in order to influence the least developed countries (LDCs). In contrast, it will highlight the counter-arguments of this phenomenon such as Anthony Giddens and John Tomlinson thoughts of cultural imperialism. It also suggests that the process of globalization allows the cultural imperialism to take effect. Finally, the piece will assess whether the phenomenon of cultural dominance is a product of globalization – as globalization became a device where powerful countries implicitly impose their cultural values to the less powerful states of the world.

Keywords: Globalization, Cultural Dominance/Imperialism, Interconnectedness, Media, Hollywood Movies, Industries, Consumption Pattern, Language.

1. INTRODUCTION

The theoretical definition of the twenty-first-century concept of globalization is one of the most contested and intensely debated concept in academia (Robinson, 2007). The idea of globalization lacks precise definition; however, the concept captures a widespread perception of the world's interconnectedness of politics, culture, environment, trade and economics (Held et al. 1999). The concept of globalization is widely used to illustrate the dynamic processes – profoundly the continuous global transformation i.e. what happens in one particular area of the world affects the other and every part (Mcbride and Wiseman, 1999), whether that is a disease, violence/terrorism/piracy, climate change, or development (Schipper, 2006). Moreover, the concept of globalization has not only lacked precise definition but it also, on the other hand, gathers and accumulates connotations of negative and positive remarks (Robinson, 2007).

Thus, the concept of the term has not clearly expressed. Maybe, this is the reason why the narratives of globalization differ, not merely the stance of theoretical meaning but also the other aspects of its explanations such as the political stance, cultural convergence, environment, tourism, trade and economics (Robinson, 2007; Ritzer, 2007). Of course, the mainstream concept of the term is the increasing interconnectedness of the world as a result of the contemporary upturn of the world economic trade (Al-Rodhan and Stoudmann, 2006). For example, the frequent assumption of the negativity of trade – the uneven trade benefits and disadvantages of the core and the peripheral countries. However, one of the most complex aspects of globalization is the implication of cultural convergence (Tomlinson, 1996). The specific question that this paper will address is the relationship between globalization and the case of cultural dominance.

Likewise, the other aspects of globalization, there are some disciplinary standpoints and contesting explanations that bring different theoretical analysis. In our contemporary globalized world, the rapid developments of trade, science and technology have created the complex process of worldwide cultural and institutional interconnectedness. Because science, technology and trade make the distances of spaces smaller, hence the social integration of the world society allowed cultural exchanges (Tomlinson, 1996). For instance, technology and science enabled the cultural exchange of the different societies to cross the borders between countries. Global orientation or global expansion as various schools of thought contend; globalization is a modern process of economic and cultural realm expansion of social modernity (Giddens, 1990;

1994a; 1994b). Globalization eased and enabled the amalgamation of cultures, and ‘tends to bring a universalized cultural value’ (Kaul, 2012). Under this explanation, (world’s homogenous culture) driven by globalization could be interpreted as a gradual cultural dominance from the civilized and most powerful nations to the least developed nations. Hence, this article focuses on the negative phenomenon of cultural globalization. It argues that the phenomenon of cultural dominance is a product of globalization – as globalization became a device where powerful countries implicitly impose their cultural values to periphery countries. The process of political, cultural and economic integration of globalization enabled cultural imperialism to take effect.

2. THEORETICAL EXPLANATION OF GLOBALISATION

The process of globalization as Giddens (1989) explained is a ‘single social system’ of interdependency as a result of the interconnectedness of the world economic, social and political system. In other words, Giddens stated again that ‘globalization could thus be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations, which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa’ (Giddens, 1991). The process of globalization and its significant growth also entails the global cultural integration caused by the development of the modern technology of transport and economic trade – and the means of immigration, which also accelerate the social integration of the world by making the world culturally homogenous (Castles, 2002; Stalker, 2000).

Several schools of thought coined the concept of globalization in various terms such as global orientation, the global construction and global expansion. It has been explained by many the cutting edge of modern capitalism that encompasses socio-economic, political and cultural realms worldwide (Babran, 2008). Furthermore, the process of globalization makes the peoples of the world to exchange cultures and incorporate into a single world society that communicates by sharing information and knowledge (Albrow and King, 1990). The dynamic process of globalization had made quite an impact on the various cultures according to most of the empirical sources. It spread through and became present in every part of the world by permeating the cultural boundaries. Such a process of cultural globalization resulted in cultural domination from the economically and technologically power states to the less powerful nations of the world (Kaul, 2012). Globalization is essentially capitalism on a global, rather than a national. This modern-day capitalism is far more complex because of its broad economic spectrum as well as cultural realm worldwide (Babran, 2008).

Nevertheless, as many have expressed different and contradictory explanations there is no general consensus in the discussion of globalization. When outlining the existing scholarship in the area, some academics emphasize the worse part of the process of globalization. On the other hand, there are others who believed that the process of globalization is an inescapable reality with irrefutable and unavoidable consequences (Giddens, 1999). The opposing thesis that explains the reasons against the virtues of globalization argues that the modern-day capitalism of globalization will create economic and political domination between the wealthy nations of the west such as Europe and the United States of America and the developing world (Babran, 2008). This refers that the economically powerful nations will always have the upper hand to control the economic and political order of the world. Therefore, globalization widens the gap of inequality and injustice between the unequal nations (Rupert, 2000).

However, Giddens opposed and challenged this school of thought and argued that wealthy nations be used as a scapegoat for the negative aspects of globalization. He stated that globalization is not a centralized system – there is no single administrative centre in which globalization operates. There are times when western countries are negatively affected by the trends of globalization – inverted colonialism is an excellent example of what Giddens called an impact of non-western movement on the development of western culture. Therefore, no particular group of countries dominate such an ever-increasing decentralized system (Giddens, 1999).

One could infer that any group does not dominate the decentralization of the globalization process, and profoundly the system is an undeniable reality with the inevitable consequence (Babran, 2008). Despite this, the fact of interdependence in the process of globalization is irrefutable. Moreover, even though the process of globalization holds the promise of development between the developed and the developing world, it can be argued that the situation on the ground is otherwise. Both culturally and economically there is a lack of consensus between the academics and social researchers about the reciprocity of globalization. Are all countries of the world equally benefit globalization? Alternatively, globalization is good and more favourable to the industrial and developed countries? What countries are at the disadvantage position? Is the process can be stopped or reversed? Although all the above questions deserve serious consideration, however, there is significant literature and persuasive arguments about the challenges and prospects

presented by the globalization process to the developing world in the areas of employment, trade and inequality (Aslam and Azhar, 2013).

On the other hand, the existing scholarship of globalization is not limited to the political and the economic aspects of the world countries, for instance, the advantages and disadvantages between the developed and developing countries. However, there is significant literature on the issue of global culture (Kaul, 2012). There are also significant controversies surrounding the issue of cultural dominance, or what some of the senior theorists call cultural imperialism. For example, some perceive globalization as a process in which the world identity is amalgamated; therefore, cultural values and local beliefs are universalized into a homogenous culture. While, on the contrary, others see the phenomenon of cultural globalization as an invasion that can cause a severe problem since it can erode the indigenous cultural identity as well as the traditional values (Kaul, 2012).

3. THEORIES OF CULTURAL DOMINANCE: THE ISSUE OF CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

Economic Globalization became the subject of attraction when analyzing and defining the concept of globalization. A little attention has been paid to the cultural globalization in general. However, the existing scholarship is not limited. There are complete study and basic concepts in the field of cultural globalization (Crane, 2011). Classic writers and prominent theorists studied this issue of cultural exchange. This includes, Tomlinson, 2007; Robertson, 2001; Barber, 1995; Bhabha, 1994; Wise, 2008 and many others. The subject of cultural globalization is very complex and wide-ranging topic. The subject incorporates academics from different fields. Hence, the existing literature encompasses broad and diverse meaning as there are many forms of scholastic interpretation (Crane, 2011). Although the theorists of cultural globalization produced different notions of global culture, hybridization and cultural imperialism are the widely accepted principles of cultural globalization theories. Hybridization is perceived as the amalgamation of the different cultures of the world. In other words, the impact of globalization process creates new versions of global culture as globalization took control different cultures and make them contact to one another (Robertson, 1992).

Nevertheless, as the question of this piece suggests, cultural domination or cultural imperialism will be the focus and the central theme of this topic. Cultural domination or imperialism refers to the unequal relationship between the cultures of the powerful states such as the United States and the less powerful nations. It is the perception that the powerful nations are imposing their civilization and culture to the less powerful societies (Salwen, 1991). Therefore, the dominant cultures become the standard civilization of the world. Some parts of the existing literature show scholarly opposing viewpoints whether on the western culture dominates other cultures of the developing world (Tomlinson, 1991, cited in Crane, 2011). However, the general consensus of this issue is that; the process of globalization increased not only the economic interconnectedness of goods and services but also increased the cultural and social interdependency of the nations of the world (Held et al. 1999). For that reason, globalization created an environment where the human communities of the world exchange culture – a cross-border flow of transnational cultures. According to Crane “the term, globalization, is usually a misnomer, since cultural phenomena that transcend national boundaries rarely incorporate all nations in the world, or even all of its continents because of the enormous diversity of national cultures in terms of wealthy, power and resources for disseminating and receiving cultural materials and artifacts” (Crane, 2014). This “wealthy and power” refers that as long as the world is divided between poor and rich countries, the logic is that the process of globalization could implicitly enable cultural dominance to take effect.

Nonetheless, the framework of cultural globalization and the published empirical findings suggests that globalization and cultural dominance are somehow interrelated. For example, globalization plays the significant role of the modern capitalist world system in today’s world. Therefore, economic interdependency and cultural exchange shaped the social institutions of most of the individual countries of the world. It is the most “dominating stratum” that allows and promotes the centre of the dominating system. In other words, in the globalized economy of the world, it is the media from the powerful nations that penetrates the process of cultural dominance. This is because, the mainstream media itself is penetrated by the power of commercialization (Schiller, 1976). Moreover, the work of Michele Foucault of the definition of power as immaterial is worth noted as it also explains the transnational power structure of all systems of what he calls the concept of “governmentality” (Foucault, 1978). Whilst, at the same time, Edward Said’s postcolonialism notion refuted enlightenment as well as western knowledge construction of orientalism. According to Said, “enables the political, economic, cultural and social domination of the West, not just during colonial times, but also in the present” (Said, 1979). When referring to the social domination of the present, it can be argued that the process of globalization is a phenomenon itself caused by the advancing technology and science of the world. In other words, the cultural integration of the world is

the product of the development of the international transport, modern technology and global economic trade (Stalker, 2000; Castles, 2002). Thus, the economically powerful, and technologically advanced nations always get the greater chance of success.

However, such an implicit approach to the cultural process of globalization and the modern-day concept of capitalism is hard to refute. For example, still, the postcolonial perception often held by the developing nations believe that their countries are economically, socially and politically less powerful than other powerful nations – mainly the west. Therefore, they cannot compete against the powerful west. And the idea of Edward Said of the new colonialism phenomenon in which the powerful countries (the west) use to dominate the less powerful colonies could be argued in such explanation (Said, 1979). Cultural globalization becomes the device of a new phenomenon of cultural imperialism – where the advanced civilization can impose their norms and cultural values to the indigenous people. The critics of such notions argue; although the capitalist modernity of the west is somehow powerful in terms of technology and the economy, however, the western capitalism is not culturally powerful (Tomlinson, 1991), and Giddens argued that globalization is a decentralized system, hence there is no central command in which some countries, including the powerful, can control (Giddens, 1999). However, most of the empirical evidence explain the phenomenon of cultural dominance – something that the universal globalized economy has enabled. Accordingly, the cultural values of the powerful west can erode the indigenous cultures of the less powerful world (Kaul, 2012).

4. AMERICAN MOVIE INDUSTRY AND THE DOMINANCE OF GLOBAL COMMERCIAL SCREENS

Hollywood dominance in the global film industry has widely been discussed in the field of the commercial movie industry. The researchers of this field tried to find the reason of Hollywood's dominance of the global film industry. Some linked this with globalization and the economic success of the United States (Crane, 2014). In this argument, some researchers have also approached differently, for instance, some say the reason of dominance of Hollywood movie industry is the power of language and technology of the United States (De Zoysa & Newman 2002: 189). Others argue that it is the strategy of the movie industry itself, which managed to capture the interest of their audiences – and this is the importance of marketing and the high standard of organizational structure. However, this argument is not as strong as that of the power of technology and language. For example, the dominance of American film industry has not started from the establishment of the organization. Therefore, the assumption of Hollywood prior the process of globalization is a merely groundless hypothesis (Garnarcz 2002). The opposing views of the dominance industry production could be assessed the level of popularity between the dates of its production. There is a need for comparative analysis, to shed new light on the popularities of the industry between the 20s, and the 80s regarding global dominance (De Zoysa & Newman 2002:). It can be argued that Hollywood has attracted a large audience since the beginning of its establishment – mainly the middle-class Americans as the main target of the industry (Wasser, 1995).

However, shreds of evidence prove that the industry utilized the interconnectedness of the international trade. DeZoysa and Newman stated that the famous American film industry (Hollywood) generates half of its revenues and profits outside the United States after the Second World War (De Zoysa & Newman 2002). Nevertheless, the commonality of most of the above studies shows that the process of globalization helped internationalization of Hollywood. Firstly, what made Hollywood to become the most influential movie industry in the world is; the technological advancement of the United States (the internet) supported by the process of the world interconnectedness and the interdependency of international trade. Secondly, the power of the English language (De Zoysa & Newman 2002). One may argue that globalization is all about multinational corporations whereby the big industries of the west want to take advantage of the resources of the other parts of the world. For example, the process of globalization is an economic idea of neoliberalism and transnational corporations of profit making (Kerr and Flynn, 2003). Such a conceptualization is mainly focused on, and limited to economics. The concept of globalization is broader and multi-dimensional, and is not limited to the economic and political aspect in which the bulk of the literature focused on. Robertson and Tomlinson have stated globalization as a process in which different societies of the world is interconnected (Tomlinson, 2007; Robertson, 2001). However, the threat of cultural dominance is not only limited to the weak economies of the world. The powerful economies are worried about the negativity and threat of cultural diversity.

For example, the European Union assessed the impact of globalization on the media industry to reduce the risks of cultural globalization (European Parliament Report, 2001). The negative effect of the media industry is the risk of North American Companies predominance because of the power of English language, greater production, media advertisement

and investment capacity over the geographically small countries (small EU countries) with limited resources, ‘‘who speak minority languages’’ (European Parliament Report, 2001). On the other hand, it can be argued that the American film industry is not alone to what some argue ‘‘the cultural dominant force or Americanization’’. The globalizing production of the film industry and entertainment needs to be addressed differently. Other competing industries also utilized the technological advancement and the process of cultural globalization. For example, the critics against the idea of globalization as a case of western cultural domination refer the cultural impact of other film industry of Bollywood (Matusitz and Payno, 2012). The Indian movie industry of Bollywood clearly shows how the process of globalization is working for everyone.

The film industry of Bollywood demonstrated the idea of the uniformizing trend of Westernization and Americanization. It can highlight that globalization give chances equally to the societies and cultures of the world; therefore, an in-depth analysis from a variety of angles would be significant (Matusitz and Payano, 2012). Therefore, the critical scholarship of cultural imperialism, the idea of Americanization and the concept of media and global Westernization are often a Neo-Marxist paradigm and methodological logistics in which to demonstrate the huge imports of US media products as a worldwide dominance (Biltreyst, 2002). However, such a Neo-Marxist argument lacks the amount of empirical research on the definition of the term of globalization itself. The theoretical explanation of globalization is extensively used to elucidate the dynamic processes – profoundly the continuous global transformation, which means, what happens in one particular area affects the other part of the world (Mcbride and Wiseman, 1999), whether that is a disease, violence, terrorism, or climate change and development (Schipper, 2006). Globalization eased and enabled the amalgamation of cultures, and ‘‘tends to bring a universalized cultural value’’ (Kaul, 2012). Under this explanation, (world’s homogenous culture) driven by globalization could be interpreted as a gradual cultural dominance from the civilized and most powerful nations of the world to the least developed world. If that is the case, the contemporary global influence of culture, on what is known cultural dominance, or cultural imperialism is somehow a product of globalization (Tomlinson, 2007; Wise, 2008; Barber, 1994; Robertson, 2001). This is because, globalization turn out to be a process in which most powerful nations of the world indirectly impose their cultural values to the less powerful states of the world. The reason why cultural dominance is taking effect is the inequality between the nations of the world. The technologically less advanced and economically poor states adopt the civilization and powerful cultures of the powerful (Salwen, 1991; Crane, 2011).

5. THE CULTURAL DOMINANCE OF LANGUAGE AND THE CONSUMPTION PATTERN

The English language became the dominant language of the world. It is because of the process of globalization of cultural interconnectedness and social interdependency in our contemporary globalized economy (Held et al. 1999). The modern capital system of the world of globalization (Giddens, 1990) has accelerated the process of the English language evolution. Globalization and the economic interconnectedness of the international system made the English language a global language (Crystal, 2003). English became the native language of the neoliberal powers such as the US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. English is also the first and second language of the former British colonies as well as other countries of the world. Globally, the English language is the dominant language of international trade, academia, the language of international relations/law, intergovernmental organization, INGOs, and science and technology (Leedham, 2014). Moreover, English as a global language occupied the ‘‘singular position among languages’’ (Hjarvard, 2004). Four or five decades ago, there were several active European languages. During the colonization era, Spanish and French were competing for world languages, but today, in our contemporary globalized economy they turned out to be regional languages. While English according to Hjarvard has become a world language. Hjarvard stated ‘‘ English has become the lingua franca of the global network: where the TCP/IP protocol secures technical communication between computers via the internet, English is the ‘‘protocol’’ for oral and written communication across national frontiers’’ (Hjarvard, 2004). On the other hand, the interconnectedness and the international market integration shaped the local consumption patterns of the individual countries of the modern world economy (Ohashi and Konya 2004). For instance, the impact of international trade regarding income convergence whereby similar trade patterns between the developed rich and the developed economies of the world require being examined and explained (Williamson, 1996).

The process of globalization is driving the consumption behaviour of the trading countries towards homogeneity (Spring, 2000). The powerful and multinational corporations dominate the global marketplace by producing and standardizing one product while denying consumers desires and accessing products other than their own (Ohashi and Konya 2004). This shows the negative phenomenon of cultural globalization and how powerful states of the world influence the homogeneity consumption preference across the globe. The process of McDonaldization and how this principle of rationalization of American fast food is spreading through the world is a good example (Ritzier, 1983). On the other hand, the general

consumption preference of Nike is worth mentioning in terms of benefits and risks in which the company inherited from the process of cultural globalization (Locke, 2002). Moreover, Coca-Cola found its global market share because of the influence of the United States. The reason behind “Coca-Cola’s global circulation to become increasingly pervasive” with major competitive advantage is the direct and indirect soft power such as humanitarian aid assistance and economic influence from the United States (Hymson, 2011). This demonstrates how globalization become a device where power countries like the United States impose their consumption pattern, political ideology and other cultural values to the less powerful states. The critics of cultural globalization point out” the world’s preference structure is relentlessly homogenized” (Levitt, 1983). This ‘homogeneity’ refers how globalization standardized cultural preferences of consumption whereby less powerful cultural inheritances die gradually because of globalization. Meanwhile, the civilized cultures of the powerful countries expand and prosper “into the mainstream global preferences” (Levitt, 1983). The western music and the Chinese food are empirical evidence that supports the process of cultural homogenization and how globalization as a case of cultural dominance is taking effect.

6. GLOBALIZATION AND THE ROLE OF MEDIA: A NEW ERA OF CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

The 1960 thesis of McLuhan explored that the world is integrating and moving into a global village because of the advancement of electric technology and the fast and rapid movement of information (McLuhan, 1960). It can be argued, however, that the debate of global village became stronger when the Berlin wall crumbled, soon after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Some say this was the era and the beginning of the ‘new world order’. For example, an era that replaced the sentiments of nationalization that created the First and the Second World Wars. Others say it is an era of the state of geopolitical tension of the Cold War (McAnany, 2002). After bipolarity of the international system disappeared, a replacement of new world order of economic and technological interconnectedness has taken place. This is where the modern communication and information technology of economic trade have incorporated all nations into a single market (McAnany, 2002). Media with the help of internet is the centre of the modern global communication. It is the vital components of the new information technology that shapes the minds of its users. Media became the most influential soft power tool, and thus globalization and the reality of communication technology empowered the powerful mainstream media of the west to take control.

Critics of this concept argue the powerful countries manipulate the international mass media. In other words, the national identity of the smaller nations has lessened because of the globalization and the homogeneity of the media from the larger nations (Boyd-Barrett, 1977). It can be argued that such a critical notion of “media imperialism” is a national focus – a tension between globalism and localism of a cultural paranoia (Morley and Robins, 1995). However, this view is not as strong as the explanation of Edward Said’s paradigm shift of orientalism that has changed the accepted beliefs of “West and the Rest” relationship orthodoxy (Hall, 1992). The theoretical explanation of the media imperialism became a justification of a general critical reflection in which the developing countries reject the western models of modernization (Fejes, 1981). Therefore, the media imperialism discourse is a description of western modern communication media – an expansion of cultural domination led by globalization and the interdependence of the international system (O’Brien, 1979; Schiller, 1979). Nevertheless, most of the empirical data in the field of media and globalization demonstrate ways in which the process of globalization created the global culture whereby the powerful west economies influenced the power of media because of technological advancement, economic power and political ideology.

7. CONCLUSION

Primarily, in this piece, I contextualized the main theoretical sets of the twenty-first century of globalization and how this concept sometimes lacks precise definition by referring the contemporary contrasting explanations and definitions (Robinson, 2007). On the contrary, the piece put forward how the idea of globalization captures the widespread perception of the world’s interconnectedness (Held et al. 1999; Al-Rodhan and Stoudmann, 2006), the continuous global transformation as well as the dynamic process of the world (Schipper, 2006; McBride and Wiseman, 1999). It illustrated how the rapid development of technology, science and trade shaped the cultural interconnectedness of the world and later facilitated the cultural exchange of the different societies of the world (Tomlinson, 1996). It demonstrated ways in which globalization relates with global expansion or orientation as some various schools of thought argue – the social modernity and the process of cultural realm expansion (Giddens, 1990; 1994a; 1994b). In other words, globalization universalized the cultural values of societies and enabled the amalgamation of cultures (Kaul, 2012). It focused on the contemporary cultural theories of globalization. For example, globalization increased the socioeconomic gap between the developed and the developing nations of the world (Williamson, 1996). Therefore, the so-called cultural exchange of globalization

between the different countries of the world turned out to be cultural imperialism. Because of the unequal relationship between the cultures of the dominant states against the less powerful nations (Salwen, 1991). It suggested that the advanced civilization imposed their cultural values to the indigenous and less powerful countries (Said, 1979). Finally, the piece has arrived at this conclusion by denoting the negative phenomenon of globalization – the gradual cultural dominance from the powerful civilized nations to the least developed world. It concludes globalization as a phenomenon of cultural dominance (Held et al. 1999; McAnany, 2002).

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