

Globalization and Culture*

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I. Introduction:

The literature on globalization is enormous. A web search (June 1998) by the author yielded about twenty two thousand hits. A cursory survey showed topics on most subjects of interest to the social scientists. The literature spans the political and ideological spectra. Following are two relatively more tempered samples of the debate

(1) A consultant on globalization summarizes it in the maximization of efficiency demonstrated through free trade. In his words: " 'Globalization' is the process of corporate structuring that focuses a company's core competency on a single, worldwide market, creating growth and profit opportunities through synergies and efficiencies in engineering, sales, purchasing, production and distribution."¹

(2) To Mahathir Mohammad, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, globalization is yet another garment on the body of the program for the Westernization of the world. It is another euphemism for the "white man's burden." It is like other Western floated concepts and programs such as modernization and democratization without even the promise of facilitating mass participation in politics and representation in governance. The view that globalization leads to democracy, better standards of living and freedom for all is held by its ardent supporters- the officials in the World Bank the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization [WTO], and the European Community. The argument for the forthcoming treaty-the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) is similarly based on these types of promises.² Others like Dr. Mahathir who see themselves on the other side of the barricades look at these arguments for globalization as so many slogans for the re-colonization of the world.³ However one defines globalization, it is an ancient process that under different names by means of military conquest or free commerce, has been going on for centuries by the followers of different ideologies and polities.⁴

II. Discussion:

This paper briefly discusses the following

- (1) Some of the arguments for justification of globalization
- (2) Its economics of education
- (3) The similarity of the debate on globalization, especially its tone and the rigid dogmatism on both sides, to the debate on Sovietization during the 1920s and the thirties (except that the word "fundamentalist" is used now for the "kulak"). Sovietism as a synthesis of several twists and turns on Marxism was the most recent program for the standardization of culture. I will return to this at the end of this paper.

Globalization and Culture Globalization demands some degree of structural changes in the various dimensions of a society.⁵ As can be expected the effects of these structural changes on the normative and value systems (and their attendant institutions)

of the non-Western societies are most dramatic. These "structural adjustments" have all too often created traumatic experiences for those who often find themselves helpless to prevent the erosion of their cultures and economic well-being.

It is not difficult to detect in the literature on globalization factual and methodological problems as the two samples noted above illustrated. It is, however, the similarities of these arguments with those that were offered for and against the Sovietization programs that are interesting.

The economics of education of globalization will also show that this movement will be difficult to stop by conventional means of free trade and competition among the developed countries of the so-called "North" and the relatively poor countries of the so-called "South." There are clearly many individuals and firms who benefit from this aspect of capitalism in all countries. But most of those who are negatively impacted are the people in the less developed countries.

To illustrate the points just made let us start with the argument that through some sort of trickle-down process globalization leads to democracy and a better standard of living for all. Democracy as a system of governance is achieved. It requires some degree of urbanization, some level of education some industrialization and a minimum [above poverty] level of per capita income.⁶ Some of these prerequisites like industrialization and urbanization are the logistics that facilitate the educational processes, like schooling, that are needed for the democratization of a society. Of course, it is possible to have democracy in a poor rural area. Here we are talking about democracy as a by-product of globalization. It is supposed to be a "new" operational method for economic development. [Development in the final analysis is the development of people]. We have recently witnessed many states that met the criteria for democracy mentioned above that opted to become highly authoritarian and totalitarian states of fear and violence. An adequate level of income per capita is necessary so that the individuals will cast their votes for or against a policy rather than selling them for food, shelter, and health care. Therefore, some degree of economic democracy is necessary for the political democracy to be realized.⁷

Globalization alone cannot do any of these in the developing countries even with the best intentions of the merchants who are its chief patrons. Globalization, however, can be carried out without any one of these prerequisites of democracy. It is probably due to the absence of one or more of these prerequisites that none of the former colonies ever became a democracy. The colonizers failed to embark on any meaningful programs for development as in creating organizations for wide spread schooling, useful literacy programs, and health care in their colonies after centuries of subjugation of the people and the plundering and in some cases the destruction of these lands.⁸ All of the present and former colonies have the potential of becoming globalized turf of the transnational firms without ever becoming democracies or hope for development. Globalization is not a prerequisite for democracy and democracy is not a prerequisite for globalization. Globalization requires one only to believe in free trade. Free trade can exist in the absence of other freedoms constituting the bases of human rights.

In reality globalization directly threatens human rights everywhere, especially in the poor countries. Each year hundreds of billions of dollars from the developing countries are transferred to the developed ones in forms of terms of trade debt service, and profit flows. These transfers have detrimental effects on human rights by eroding funds for improving basic health, nutrition, minimum shelter and education in these poor

countries.⁹ One can recall that from the ancient times to the present many educators have known that effective learning can take place only if a child is endowed with the minimum nutrition, health and hygiene and shelter and peace.¹⁰ Eating before reading should become the mantra of those concerned with the schooling of the young McGinn, reviewing the literature on democratization also observed that "Most of the antidemocratic institutions can be associated with the set of phenomena called globalization, which weakens the effectiveness of institutions for democratic government..."¹¹

Others see globalization not only inevitable but also as a positive process. "Indeed what is striking out here...in Manchuria is that the same pressure on advanced economies to downsize and streamline government, to seek out foreign investors, to plug into global markets and to become more competitive and more diversified-is seen in this Chinese village as well. Almost no one is beyond globalization anymore. All politics are global.¹² Almost every one now is feeling the same pressures, constraints and opportunities, almost every government, no matter how big or small, is having to put on the same Golden straitjacket-which increases economic growth, but shrinks political choice."¹³

These and similar villages in China and most other places in the developing world have a long time to wait to approach the norm of the globalized world visualized by the transnational institutions in the West, however. We are told by an IMF official in April 1997 that only Singapore is a "converging" state-having more in common with the OECD countries than with its neighbors, and that other Southeast Asian countries are eight to ten years behind.¹⁴ This was stated barely more than two months before the currency crash in the Southeast and East Asian countries. Within a few months tens of millions of people in these regions fell below the poverty line and thousands of businesses, large and small disappeared. Only now the IMF, in a report, admits the errors of its subsequent policies in this region.¹⁵ We have to hear yet the full stories of economic debacles elsewhere in the world.

Another important theme in the globalization literature promises the fulfillment of one very important human yearning: the unity of the world. At the completion of globalization the states, apparently, "whither away" followed by the dissolution of nations soon thereafter.¹⁶ Only then can the constitution of a single global economy that the Director of the WTO and his colleagues are writing about be implemented.¹⁷

Already in this process of globalization, through unfettered trade, many institutions ordinarily attached to the state are being dismantled. In the economic and financial areas, for example, those who advocated multiple rates of exchange and tariff have become the equivalent of the "enemies of the state."¹⁸ Those arguing the case for the "infant industries"¹⁹ have been similarly punished "National mterst"²⁰ as defining the criteria for moral and ethical acts will become an archaic concept worthy only of academic discourse. In the globalized world it will be the corporations' interests that explain ethical and many of the new principles of economic behavior.²¹ All institutions individuals, and states that impede globalization of the market will be rejected. All of those human behaviors and aspects of peoples' cultures that are perceived to impede free trade become abnormal and will be removed.

From the above it appears that globalization is a reaction of the big business not only against the particulars of tribes and regions but also against universals like the nation-state.²² Similarly, "comparative advahtage"²³ as a legitimate expression for

specialization in production is defined in terms of power Individuals firms and countries that have what Clifton Wharton, Jr., called "developmental education"- the type of intellectual and physical infrastructure that facilitates marketing of their products- also have comparative advantages over those who lack this type of education or who have meager human capital.²⁴

Clearly, the highly educated people, and firms and societies with "high level" human resources and sophisticated physical capital are found in the OECD countries. These countries are also home to most of the transnationals and have comparative advantages over those countries, peoples, and firms that lack these attributes. These countries are doomed to remain underdeveloped and become "out source" outlets of transnationals. One only has to note the footwear and textile industries in the US, among others that have become "out sourced" to the developing countries. There is nothing in the globalization agenda that points to another more prosperous direction and more general development of skills. For example, a transnational organization that uses what Schultz called the "new factors" of production has a comparative advantage over a firm that does not. The new factors of production such as education and health equip the user with the ability to effectively use the new technologies for production. The acquisition of relatively high level education and training by individuals, firms, and particular societies, increase their productivity. Countries that do not have any of these new factors or cannot use them with sufficient frequency and efficiency are those that do not have comparative advantages in participating in globalization and are again doomed to remain poor. The transnational fast food enterprises, for example that have replaced the local cuisine in many poorer countries illustrate the efficient usage of these new factors of production.²⁵

The transnationals use their relatively huge amount of resources and their allied organizations like the IMF, TWO, the World Bank, the MAI and their own still very powerful states as vehicles through which they can gain the necessary logistics in the marketing of their products to each other and the developing countries. The buyout of the real estate and other assets as if in "fire sales" in these developing countries (like the former USSR and the "crushed" economies of South East Asia) by firms and individuals in the advanced economies are another aspect of globalization.

As a result of globalization, beginning with mergers, acquisitions, and driving out of business the local firms and the other local institutions that cannot compete or that have become illegal [by the yardsticks such as the MAI regulations²⁶], more and more farmers and workers will join the ranks of the unemployed.

It is now quite clear that the poor countries, in general, have distinct comparative disadvantages to be participants in the international trade. They neither have the "developmental education" that Wharton talked about nor are they able to use effectively "the new factors" of production that Schultz argued for as prerequisites for development. Consequently, in the short-run globalization as transnationalization of firms not only widens the gap between the developed "North" and the underdeveloped "South," it also polarizes social classes in every country far more than they are now.²⁷

We already are witnessing the expansion of the new reference culture of technology and free trade that constitute the major components of the Western inspired movement. A globalized world makes free trade the content of any social action. The forms that these actions will take can be national or even tribal. In this world there is no room for the various cultures and traditions of the rest of humanity. This process of globalization that standardizes the contents of cultures is similar to the process of

"Sovietization" in the former USSR.²⁸ What follows briefly illustrates this.

After the failure of the COMINTERN (Communist International) to create a worldwide socialist revolution (the globalization of socialism) the Soviets, after eliminating the dissidents, invented the formula of socialism in one country- the USSR. Then, after looking at all available options, the Soviets argued that the USSR should embark in helping to create selective socialist regimes in many countries. This political agenda was cloaked with ideology. For example: it was argued that socialism will not happen by itself since some countries will still be in relatively primitive stages of development not yet ready for socialism. The obstacles in the path of socialism were removed in the former USSR as is well documented, by state violence and terror.

Globalization does not have prerequisites, as does socialism. We are told that societies move from feudalism to capitalism and from there to a higher level of development-socialism.²⁹ Globalization simply asks people to believe in unfettered trade. In practice it translates, after the implementation of the regulations of the IMF, the World Bank the WTO and the MAI, to experiences similar to Sovietization. The dissidents to this doctrine, like those in the former USSR, will be eliminated. Therefore, calling globalization a form of re-colonization similar to Sovietization of the former colonies of Tsarist Russia is another useful area of exploration in this debate. As a colonizing force, like all colonizing forces, globalization creates conflicts without just resolutions. It is inherently unjust and clearly unfair.

Another example from the former USSR that can serve this discussion involves culture. When the theoretical basis for the creation of the ideal Soviet Person was outlined, the profile that emerged was genderless raceless and nationless. The ideal Globalized Person has these same attributes. The ideal Soviet Person was also omni competent, internationalist, a humanitarian and a good communist. The ideal Globalized Person need not have any of these mutually inclusive and reinforcing attributes. It was argued, theoretically, that the Soviet Person was the product of the best aspects of all of the Soviet cultures. Ultimately, however, the literature describing the Soviet Person profiled an ethnic Russian. The major minorities within the former USSR resisted this program for Sovietization as another garment on the body of Russification that they loathed. A globalized person can be any one.

The politics of the nationalities forced Stalin to suggest that as long as the content of the cultures remained socialist (Sovietized) the forms that the cultures took can be national. From this the Soviet slogan of "Socialism in content, nationalism in form" was born. The globalizers soon will be paraphrasing Stalin in uttering the slogan: "Globalism in content, nationalism in form."

A globalized world will be one monolithic violent world: strife ridden and rigidly stratified. The rich and the poor, they all will have to believe, however, in unfettered free trade and investment.

. Conclusions:

Globalization standardizes the contents of the cultures of the world into one single culture spread by the IMF, the World Bank, the European Community and the World Trade Organization in tandem at the expense of United Nations and its specialized agencies like UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, and the nation-states.³⁰

Resistance to globalization will be dealt with in two ways: either by destroying the cultures of minorities as has been done already in Siberia, North America, Australia,

and Latin America;³¹ or by trying to standardize the contents of other cultures as was attempted in the former USSR. That is, one can use one's language, music, and literature as long as their contents and themes reflect free trade and globalization. In creating poverty of the greatest magnitude in the world (due to the transnationals comparative advantages) the globalizers in the process will kill the proverbial "goose with the golden egg" - the consumer. The stockpiling of inventories in many industrialized countries testify to this unwise economic movement. Poor people cannot buy. If the whole reason for globalization was to enthrone free trade, it will collapse (like the former USSR) if there is no one to trade with at the other end. Also, in a world divided by two distinct classes of the "haves" and the "have nots", discussions of citizenship, democracy, and multiculturalism are not even on the globalizers' agenda.³²

Consequently, the best policy is the rethinking of concepts such as globalization, foreign aid, donor and recipient, partners and owners and recasting these and similar concepts into one concept that encompasses our hopes, reflects our confidence and proves the authenticity of our human community. The concept is EARTH HELP. It asks you to invest in the earth as if it was your own country, town and village. Because the earth is in fact all of these. EARTH HELP, therefore, is not foreign assistance or charity. With this approach to Earth there is no room for guilt or shame. With this approach all people are Prosperous. There are no Calibans.³³ In the light of the foregoing the present (and past) foreign assistance and the multitude of other bilateral and multilateral programs "for help" seem to be opportunistic and, ultimately, as we see all around us in the so-called "assistance programs" shortsighted and self-defeating.

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- 1 Fredrick Shepperd, "What is Globalization " Available:
[http : //wrrw.quadralgroup.com/globis.htm](http://wrrw.quadralgroup.com/globis.htm)
- 2 See below; and also see any document by these organizations on topics of trade tariffs, investment, and globalization. More on these topics are available at <http://ifg.org/>; <http://imf.org>; <http://gobalize.org/>
- 3 Mahathir Mohammad, "Globalization : What it Means to Small Nations," Speech given at the Inaugural Lecture of the Prime Ministers of Malaysia Fellowship Exchange Programme, Kuala Lumpur, 24 July 1996. Available [http: //smpke.jpm.my/pm3.htm](http://smpke.jpm.my/pm3.htm)
- 4 Stacy J.Stoyanoff, "From Alexander's World to Ours: A Cultural Paradigm for Globalization," Midwest Comparative and International Education Society Meeting University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, October 31-November 2, 1997.
- 5 Chakravarthi Raghavan, "Globalization and Sustainable Development Constraints and Prospects for the South," paper presented at the TWN-G77 Roundtable, New York,

- April 1977. Available: <http://southside.org.sg/souths/twn/title/nyd.cn.htm>
- 6 Seymour Martin Lipset, Political Man, New York: Anchor Books, 1963. To be sure, democracy is on a continuum. A perfect democracy is only a theoretical possibility.
 - 7 John Dewey in his "Liberty and Social Control," The Social Frontier, (November 1935).
 - 8 A horrific example is the former Soviet Union's colonization of Central Asia. There are many poisoned rivers and lakes. Some of them like the Aral Sea are dying. Mutated Kazak children and adults in semirichi area-the testing ground for the Soviet atomic bombs are symbols of the "modernization" programs of the former USSR. This area has also the highest concentration of pesticides. As a result relatively high numbers of fetuses are aborted by the Karakalpak mothers south of the Aral Sea and mother's milk is poisoned in almost all of Central Asia. These poisons are airborne which contributed to a relatively high incidence of lung cancer and other respiratory diseases. These all testify to the ethical and moral bankruptcy of the policy of Sovietization that was sold to the world as development and modernization. See Murray Fishbach. Ecocide in the USSR: Health and Nature Under Siege, New York: Basic Books, 1992.
 - 9 Martin Khor, "Globalization: Implication for Development Policy," paper delivered at the 8th General Conference of the European Association of Development Research and Training Institute, Vienna, 11-14 September 1996 Available: <http://panasia.org>
 - 10 Fredenck Wut and M Mobin Shonsh "The Uses of Comparative Ethnicity Research "Comparative Education Review" Vol.37 No I (February 1993), pp. 1-8.
 - 11 Noel F. McGinn "Education Democratization and Globalization: A Challenge for Comparative Education, "Comparative Education Review", Vol.4, N0.4, (November 1996), p.349.
 - 12 An apparent reference is made to the former Speaker of the US House of Representative, the late Tip O'Neal, who is reputed to have said, "All politics are local."
 - 13 Thomas Friedman "Get a Job", New York Times, (Tuesday March 17 1998) p. A31
 - 14 Robert Westcott, Deputy Division Chief of the IMF World Economic Studies Division, quoted by Berta Gomez and Jonathan Schaffer USIA staff writers "IMF Highlights Benefits of Globalization for All Countries," April 28, 1997. Available: <http://usis-israel.org.il/publish/econews/1977/april/ecooa28a.htm>
 - 15 The Japan Times, January 1999. See also Doug Bondow "IMF a Problem Not a Solution," The Japan Times, Sunday 24 January 1999.
 - 16 Ohmae Kenichi, The End of Nation State the Rise of Regional Economics, New York: the Free Press, 1995. This is the reverse of what happened a little more than one hundred years ago under the Treaty of Berlin when the compulsory states were created in the Balkans. These states are still trying to form their respective nations. See Kamal Karpat, "The Balkan National States and Nationalism; Image and Reality," Islamic Studies 36:2,3 (1997), pp.329-359. A precursor of a globalized region one may suggest is Afghanistan, where the state for all practical purposes does not exist but free trade is maintained through the corporate militia, the Taliban.
 - 17 Renato Ruggerio, WTO Director General, at the WTO Ministerial Meeting, Singapore, December 1996 is quoted to be writing the constitution of globalized world. Available at <http://www.citizens.org/gtw/>
 - 18 Currently many underdeveloped countries generate a substantial portion of their

revenues through taxation on imports and selective exports. Revenues from tariffs, for example, constitute about thirty eight percent of India's Budget. Statement by India's Finance Minister to BBC World Service 13 September 1998

- 19 Some countries prohibited the import of some goods in order to foster the development of similar or identical industries at home ostensibly to save on foreign exchange.
- 20 In the name of "national interest" the states often resort to acts that are clearly immoral and unethical. Sometimes, acts by the states on behalf of their "national interests" are in conflict with those of transnational organizations.
- 21 International Forum of Globalization, "Should Corporations Govern the World?" Available: <http://ifg.org>
- 22 That state has assigned to itself the task of defining the criteria for the proper moral and ethical actions. Any action is proper if it guarantees the survival and the prosperity of the state. By making itself the sole arbiter of the proper moral and ethical behavior the state has usurped the authority of the family, the religious organizations, and the multilateral international institutions like the UN and its affiliates. It is interesting that globalization not only undermines the state [a universal] to create the "united world," [another universal]. It does this by stifling other post-modern claims by making the Global Moral and Ethical Doctrine [GMED] that has been drafted by the merchants, as the new "universal" manual for proper behavior. See Rolland Paulston "Mapping Visual Culture in Comparative Education Discourse, "Compare", Vol.27, No.2, 1997, p.138, for a similar cyclical scenario explaining historical eras.
- 23 Sometimes countries that had a relative abundance of high quality human resources or some form of natural endowment competed effectively with others. They also impede the development of alternative goods or technologies that may be more cost effective. A case in point is the fossil fuel "alliance" that makes it economically difficult for the development of less harmful sources of energy
- 24 Clifton Wharton, Jr., "Education and Agricultural Growth: The Role of Education in Early-Stage Agriculture," in C. Arnold Anderson and Mary Jean Bowman edition of Education and Economic Development, Aldine Publishing Company, Chicago, 1965, pp.202-228.
- 25 T. W. Schultz, Transform in Traditional Agriculture, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964.
- 26 International Forum on Globalization, "...the MAI: the Multilateral Agreement on Investment. 29 countries are not locked in secret negotiations in Paris, completing a new treaty that gives unprecedented powers to global investment bankers, money speculators, and transnational corporations. The MAI will reverse present-day regulatory processes: Instead of regulating corporations, the MAI will regulate your local, state, and national governments. The balance of power between corporations and government will be forever altered: In effect, corporations will govern." Available <http://ifg.org>
- 27 About 228 individuals in the world own as much or more than half (2,500,000,000) of the world's population. See UNDP Report, released September 1998.
- 28 The literature on socialism and the former USSR is enormous. One only has to consult the basic texts on these topics for a fuller account of this discussion
- 29 The Soviets when faced with the vast nomadic population like the Kazaks, first

forcibly settled them. Then, they imported manual weaving and ginning devices to the areas of these newly settled nomads. After a few weeks the Soviets declared that the former nomads have moved from the stage of feudalism (nomadism) to that of capitalism (weaving). Soon the former nomads were declared as full participants in the building of socialism. The Kazaks, needless to say, had their own version of what constituted political development in the social structure of the Kazak Aul. They maintain that that structure was far more sophisticated than what they were saddled with during the Soviet era and even now. See Thomas Winner, The Oral Art and Literature of the Kazakhs of Russian Central Asia, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1958; Martha B. Alcott, The Kazakhs, Hoover Institute, 1995.

In another instance, in the isolated outpost of Kharug, in the Mountainous Badakhshan (in Tajikistan) which did not have any manufacturing devices school children were taken to the local barbershop to see capitalism in action. Later this barbershop and few other imported mechanical devices were used as adequate proof of Kharug's mature capitalism, ready to move up to socialism. See M. Mobin Shorish "From Nomadism to Socialism: An Inquiry into the Soviet Educational Policies in Kazakstan," in R. Lawson, V. Rust, and S. Shafer edition of Education and Social Concern: An Approach to Social Foundations, Ann Arbor, MI: Prakken Publications (1987), pp.160-174.

- 30 Matthias Finger "WTO Globalization and Development," paper presented at the World Conference of the Society for International Development, 23 May 1997, Santiago de Compostella, and Spain. Available: <http://southside.org.sg>
- 31 G. Psacharopoulos and Harry Patrinos, (ed.), Indigenous People and Poverty in Latin America: An Empirical Analysis, Washington: The World Bank.
- 32 All of the on-going discussions on power, equality, justice, and equity (as in the universities, for example), as if in a closed economy, will become even more irrelevant. These discussions ignore the worldwide economic ramifications of globalization. As such they seem to be brawls about the distribution of the spoils of war. They are soulless, cold, and disingenuous. See E. Fuat. Keyman, Globalization State Identity/Difference: Toward a Critical Theo of International Relations, Atlantic Highland, NJ.Humanities Press International, 1997.
- 33 M. Mobin Shorish, "Messianic Foreign Assistance and Education in Developing Countries," to appear in Silk Road, Baku, Azerbaijan.