

Journal of International Scientific Publications:
Media and Mass Communication, Volume 1

ISSN 1314-8028, Published at: <http://www.scientific-publications.net>

GLOBALIZATION, CULTURE, AND THE ROLE OF MEDIA

Alevtina A. Kolosova, Fatemeh Deilami

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, 117198, Moscow



Abstract

This article focuses on the problem of globalization of culture and the role of media in modern world. The authors give the examples of different definitions of the terms 'culture', 'globalization', 'cultural imperialism'. The article presents current arguments about the relationship between media globalization and national cultures.

The aim of the article is to study the role of media in globalization process, the degree of their influence on national cultures and to determine tasks facing scholars.

Key words: globalization, culture, global media, cultural imperialism, identity

1. INTRODUCTION

It is no doubt that we live in rapidly changing times. Globalization is one of the main words of the 21-st century. We feel its presence in almost every field of our life: in economic life, politics, culture and media. It is believed that globalization of the media tends to undermine national cultures. Media might play necessary and active role concerning the meaning of culture, but is improbably to be called a "sufficient condition" for cultural resistance or submission. At what degree globalization of media can undermine national culture depends on a particular national culture.

2. KEY DEFINITIONS

2.1. Globalization

Globalization is a highly debatable concept among scholars. There are different and even contradictory definitions of globalization. As William A. Hachten and James F. Scotton argue in their book 'The World News Prism: Global Information in a Satellite Age', globalization is 'an inexact expression for a wide array of worldwide changes in politics, communications, business and trade, life styles, and culture.' [Hachten and Scotton 2008: Preface x]. The Asians often perceive it as 'Westernization' and the Europeans as 'Americanization'. Globalization is often called 'global integration', 'global construction', 'global orientation' or 'global expansion'.

In Britannica Concise Encyclopedia globalization is defined as ‘Process by which the experience of everyday life, marked by the diffusion of commodities and ideas, is becoming standardized around the world. Factors that have contributed to globalization include increasingly sophisticated communications and transportation technologies and services, mass migration and the movement of peoples, a level of economic activity that has outgrown national markets through industrial combinations and commercial groupings that cross national frontiers and international agreements that reduce the cost of doing business in foreign countries. Globalization offers huge potential profits to companies and nations but has been complicated by widely differing expectations, standards of living, cultures and values, and legal systems as well as unexpected global cause-and-effect linkages’ [Britannica Concise Encyclopedia].

Theorists of globalization consider that fundamental changes in the temporality and space of human activity are able to cross local and national boundaries in different spheres of social and cultural life. The German philosopher Martin Heidegger wrote ‘All distances in time and space are shrinking. [Heidegger 1950: 165]

Many contemporary social theorists associate globalization with:

- *detrterritorialization*, according to which a growing variety of social activities takes place irrespective of the geographical location of participants (electronic commerce, possibility of television, Internet, organization of academic video conferences);
- the growth of social *interconnectedness* across existing geographical and political boundaries (local events in one country can impact on the development of political, economic and cultural life in other countries).
- the *speed* or *velocity* of social activity (the proliferation of high-speed transportation, communication, and information technologies constitutes the most immediate source for the blurring of geographical and territorial boundaries);
- a relatively *long-term process*;
- a *multi-pronged* process, since detrterritorialization, social interconnectedness, and acceleration manifest themselves in many different (economic, political, and cultural) arenas of social activity [Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy].

On the one hand there are scientists considering globalization as reality. On the other hand, some scholars reject it. M. Gillespie argues that it is neither a universal assimilation in one homogenous culture nor a universal search for roots and revival of singular identities. She considers globalization as a more complex and uneven process [Gillespie 1995:18-19].

According to different points of view on globalization it is a system in which you may not choose to take part or not. It is growing at such a high speed that there is almost no way to hide from the effects of it.

The most significant features of globalization include:

- An increasing ease of information exchange between individuals, groups and nations.
- An accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few.
- A gradual corporatization of the world. Globalization affects culture [Marsen 2006: 178].

2.2. Culture

There are many definitions of culture because it is a complex concept. In modern humanitarian studies culture is often considered the core concept. American anthropologists Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn compiled a list of more than 150 different definitions.

Some scholars argue that the word 'culture' is derived from 'cultivation' and is linked with the concept 'civilization'. Others consider that the concepts 'culture' and 'civilization' are absolutely different ones.

Culture may be defined as the totality of the mental and physical reactions and activities that characterize the behavior of the individuals composing a social group collectively and individually in relation to their natural environment, to other groups, to members of the group itself and of each individual to himself. It also includes the products of these activities and their role in the life of the groups. The mere enumeration of these various aspects of life, however, does not constitute culture. It is more, for its elements are not independent, they have a structure. [Boas 1963:149].

Culture is both pervasive and largely invisible. Culture is like the water around the fish or the air around people' – [Barkai]. H. Triandis compares the culture of society with the memory of the person: When a person is socialized in a given culture, the person can use custom as a substitute for thought, and save time. [Triandis 1989: 511-512].

In the book 'Cultures and Organizations' published in 2010 Geert Hofstede defines culture as the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another [Hofstede 2010:6]. With his co-authors Gert Jan Hofstede and Michael Minkov G. Hofstede writes: 'Culture is always a collective phenomenon, because it is at least partly shared with people who live or lived within the same social environment, which is where it was learned. Culture consists of the unwritten rules of the social games' [Ibid.].

At last, one more definition of the term 'culture'. Sky Marsen defines culture as 'a system of activities and discourses, which have been codified and crystallized by usage, and which reflect the conventional practices of a group. [Marsen 2006 : 82].

2.3. Global Media

Twenty years ago people talked about Americanization of media in the world. Today they talk about globalization because it is apparent that although American media play a prominent role in the global scene media industries from a number of other countries spread all over the world.

The mass media are directly involved in globalization process. Sky Marsen explains this fact by two reasons. First, they connect the world through content that is broadcast or accessible in most parts of the globe; audiences world-wide watch the same television programs, and communicate with others internationally in real time through the internet. Secondly, the media, in their business capacity, are often owned by multinational corporations, and are regulated according to international standards generally set by agencies that support global uniformity and equivalence in media communication. [Marsen 2006: 179]. William A. Hachten and James F. Scotton point out to two trends in the process of media globalization: 'the triumph of the Western or liberal concept of the press and the reality that many more millions of people, mostly the Eurasian landmass, have joined the vast world audience of international communication. Both trends are integral aspects of the globalization of media' [Hachten and Scotton 2008: 34].

Nowadays the major institutions of news communication – world news services, broadcast systems, magazines and newspapers – have become internationalized or globalized [Ibid.: 78]. Globalization of

Journal of International Scientific Publications: Media and Mass Communication, Volume 1

ISSN 1314-8028, Published at: <http://www.scientific-publications.net>

mass communication 'is proceeding in response to the needs and economic opportunities of a shrinking world'[Ibid.].

As the west, mainly the USA, dominated the international flow of information and entertainment this globalization process is sometimes interpreted as "Americanization" by some scholars.

3. MEDIA AND CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION

3.1. *New communication technologies*

Martin Heidegger confirmed that new communication and information technologies would bring new possibilities for developing media: 'Distant sites of the most ancient cultures are shown on film as if they stood this very moment amidst today's street traffic...The peak of this abolition of every possibility of remoteness is reached by television, which will soon pervade and dominate the whole machinery of communication' [Heidegger 1971:65].

As D. Thussu argues, after the 1980-s the achievements in digital information and communication technologies and increasing deregulation and privatization in different sectors including media, led to great changes in the world of media. As a result of privatization different states began to lose their former power at the free market regulations enabled multilateral organizations to gain more dominance in the global arena [Thussu 2006:45]. Thus, states became ones of the players in the game rather than being the only ones setting the rules in countries, one by one began to privatize their telecoms and with the aim of private competition, public service role of telecommunications. With the advancements in technology and telecommunications, it became possible for immense amounts of data to be transferred to the other end of the world in seconds, which made a huge effect on trade and economy in general. Through communication technologies like the World Wide Web, people now have access to increasing amounts of information about what is happening in their own and other countries. This is especially important in countries where media are government controlled. Internet provides access to information about different events in the farthest parts of the world.

The using of the Internet and other media, referred to as Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) plays an important role in spreading and exchanging information between cultures and nations. Technology and so called new media are making it possible to send and receive information from different parts of the world and with rapid speed.

3.1.2. *Mass media vs. national identities*

On the subject of globalization, the most controversial debate is raised on the issue of cultural globalization and one of its main topics: the 'identity crisis' and the role of mass media as a facilitating tool for its expansion or limitation.

The notion of cultural globalization has prompted various reactions, reflecting contradictory implications. Some people perceive this phenomenon as an instrument for establishment of universal unity and democracy based on a global culture signified as the "Global Village". According to the principles of M. McLuhan we can think about globalization due to the expansion of new communication systems. However others disagree and contend that globalization has not resulted in a political and economic identity [Rajaei, 2001].

In contrast, cultural globalization has destroyed national identities. The American political scientist Francis Fukuyama challenges the idea of cultural globalization. He argues that despite external economic pressures, societies tend to pressure their individual identities and cultural values eventually determine the economic direction of the countries. This does not mean that societies will not be impacted by the globalization trend. However, there are more profound elements in national cultures

which resist the uniformity derived from economic and political ideologies. Critics argue that cultural globalization will result in cultural dominance and supremacy. The deterioration of endemic cultures will be replaced by a universal culture promoting excessive consumption and dominance of the economic and information technology powers of the world. These scholars believe that the Western world is unfit to provide a suitable response to cultural globalization because it is being challenged by numerous social and cultural predicaments itself.

David Machin and Theo van Leeuwen in the article 'Generic Homogeneity and discursive diversity' compare the strategy of McDonalds with the publishing different versions of 'Cosmopolitan' in India, Spain, Greece and other countries and come to the following conclusion: 'Global corporate media may tell stories set in different settings and dealing with people that have slightly different values and looks, but the fundamental structural reasons for how they behave, for what they want and how they might attain it, will follow the same logic' [Machin and Leeuwen 2006: 441].

3.2. Cultural imperialism

Doubtless globalization has affected certain values rooted theoretical models of cultural globalization, cultural imperialism theory. Cultural imperialism theory argues that the global economic system is dominated by a core of advanced countries while third world countries remain at the periphery of the system with little control over their economic and political development. According to Galtung's theory of imperialism the world is divided into a dominant Centre (the powerful western countries and interests and dominated Peripheries (the undeveloped countries). [Phillipson 2008:52].

The theory of cultural imperialism argues that media from developed countries such as those of North America and Western Europe dominate the cultures of countries importing such media. Many scholars argue that television programs, films, music from the United States and western European countries are very popular and in demand in developing countries and media products from the USA are superior to those produced elsewhere and hence serve as a standard for quality work throughout the world.

Multinational or transnational corporations are key actors in this system producing goods, controlling markets and disseminating products, using similar techniques.

John Tomlinson identifies five ways of thinking about cultural imperialism: (1) as a cultural domination, (2) as media imperialism, (3) as national discourse, (4) as a critique of global capitalism, and (5) as a critique of modernity [Cit. by Martin and Nakayama 2010:370-371].

Cultural imperialism is defined as a kind of cultural domination by powerful nations over weaker nations. It is viewed as purposeful and intentional because it corresponds to the political interests of powerful countries. The effects of this type of cultural domination, reflecting the attitudes and values of Western, particularly American capitalist society are viewed as extremely pervasive and as leading to the homogenization of global culture. Imperialism with the concept of "Globalization" suggests interconnection and interdependency of all global areas "happening in less purposeful way" Despite its weaknesses, cultural imperialism, reconceptualized as media imperialism, remains a useful perspective because it can be used to analyze the extent, to which some national actors have more impact than others on global culture values, identities, and perceptions. Since the scope and influence of global cultures are rapidly expanding, these are important issues. In contrast with cultural influence is Western civilization, with non-Western and less developed countries viewed as being on the periphery as the receivers of cultural influences - the cultural flows or network model offers an alternative conception of the transmission process, as influences that do not necessarily originate in the same place or flow in the same direction.

Journal of International Scientific Publications: Media and Mass Communication, Volume 1

ISSN 1314-8028, Published at: <http://www.scientific-publications.net>

In this model, cultural globalization corresponds to a network which no clearly defined Centre or Periphery.

Many governments have become concerned about the amount of so called popular culture coming into their countries, especially the governments from developing countries.

Globalization as an aggregation of cultural flows or networks is a less coherent and unitary process than cultural imperialism and one in which cultural influences move in many different directions.

4. GLOBALIZATION AND LOCALIZATION

Some years ago national governments regulated communication and media industries, assuming that communication goods represent some kind of 'public good' both as a technological resource and as culture. Some scholars argue that the rapid proliferation of new technologies coupled with the decline of the role of governments in regulating national broadcasting and telecommunications would expand the range of choices for consumers. The expansion of private communication networks across national boundaries and the rapid circulation of information through new media – threaten the notion of state sovereignty and promise greater accountability and overall efficiency of communications services. [Chakravartty P., Sarikakis K.].

It has been argued that the globalization of media will result in the decentralization of power and permit more bottom-up control. Marshall McLuhan provides two important concepts: 'The medium is the message' and 'the global village'. This insightful phrase 'global village' was chosen by M. McLuhan to emphasize on his observation that an electronic nervous system, the media, was rapidly integrating the globe. Events in one part of the world could be experienced in other parts in real time. What human experience was like when we lived in small villages?

A. Giddens points out the tensions that exist between globalization and localization. According to A. Giddens, globalization is 'the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant locations in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa' [Giddens 1990: 64].

The cultural damage from globalized media might be overstated. Let us admit that there are many American cultural goods distributed around the world. But some researches provide evidence that home-produced programs top the ratings. Furthermore, imported media operates at a 'cultural discount', judging by its popularity among local audiences [Cited by Tomlinson 1997].

As Paula Chakravartty and Katharine Sarikakissay say, 'The IT and telecommunications industries, often amalgamated in one mega industrial complex, expand their reign over more traditional cultural economies and are integral gatekeepers in the organization of the Information Society [Chakravartty P., Sarikakis K.].

5. CHALLENGING TASKS FOR SCHOLARS

It is going without doubt that globalization is developing and spreading rapidly. Scholars in developing countries are concerned about the problem of preserving national cultural identity. They are trying to find reasonable and practical solutions to this problem in order not only to keep and protect their identity, but also to integrate into the globalization process. Using national mass media is one of the important and most effective methods for the solution of this problem. One of the most challenging tasks is to attract new listeners and viewers. It is impossible to do without referring to national values and cultural traditions.

Journal of International Scientific Publications: Media and Mass Communication, Volume 1

ISSN 1314-8028, Published at: <http://www.scientific-publications.net>

Some scientists in the field of mass media believe that one of the most effective means to preserve national identity is to develop national mass media.

The best instrument for filling this cultural gap, especially in the countries of the South is the appropriate utilization of the immense influence of the media on education in strategic planning.

According to A. Giddens, nations are bound to redefine and review their identities in the modern age. It is essential to renovate the old institutions or establish new ones worthy of the globalization era. We could and we should strive to gain more control over world events. This objective is only attainable through an effective and timely response to the incoming challenges. We cannot ignore the changes and cannot continue doing business as usual. Globalization is a lasting, not a mere accident [Giddens Ibid].

6. CONCLUSION

There are many ways to study the problems of media influence on globalization and national cultures.

Discussions about globalization, cultural and media imperialism which began at the end of last century continue today.

They include the problems of different approaches and definitions of the concepts 'globalization' 'culture', 'cultural identity' and others.

It is difficult to determine with much certainty the degree of media influence on the life of different societies. But we can watch the globalization general trends and their influence on the processes taking place in the developing countries for which access of people to increasing amounts of information through communication technologies like Internet is an important and challenging issue.

One of the main tasks facing modern scholars is to find reasonable and practical solutions to the problem of preserving and protecting national identities and integrating into the globalization process.

The most effective method of combating the aggressive cultures and preserving the cultural identity of nations is to utilize the new communication technologies rationally to hold on to their traditional audiences and be able to attract new viewers and listeners as well. In the context of new global world this objective can be achieved on the way of synergizing the development of technology and the national cultural values and using the media potential in the field of education.

REFERENCES

1. Barkai J. What's a Cross-cultural Mediator to Do - URL: <http://www.cojcr.org/vol10no1/43-90.pdf>
2. Boas, F. (1963 - orig. 1938) *The Mind of Primitive Man*. New York: Macmillan.
3. Britannica Concise Encyclopedia – URL: <http://www.answers.com/topic/globalization>
4. Chakravartty P., Sarikakis K. *Media Policy and Globalization*. (2006): Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
5. Giddens, A. (2002) *Runaway World: How Globalization is Reshaping Our Lives*. London. Routledge
6. Gillespie, M. (1995) *Local Uses of the Media: Negotiating Culture and Identity*. Television Ethnicity, and Cultural Change. London: Routledge.

Journal of International Scientific Publications:
Media and Mass Communication, Volume 1

ISSN 1314-8028, Published at: <http://www.scientific-publications.net>

7. Hachten W., Scotton J.(2008) *The World News Prism: Global Information in a Satellite Age*, globalization. Singapore: Blackwell Publishing.
8. Heidegger, M. (1971) 'The Thing,' in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, N.Y.: Harper & Row.
9. Hofstede G. (2010) *G. Cultures and Organizations: software of the mind: intercultural cooperation and its importance for survival*. – 3rd ed. – N.Y.: McGraw-Hill.
10. Machin D., Leeuwen T. *Generic Homogeneity and discursive diversity*'. In: *Communication Theories. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*. Ed. by Paul Cobley. L.,N.Y. 2006, Vol. 4.
11. Marsen S. (2006) *Communication Studies*, London. Palgrave Macmillan.
12. Martin J.N., Nakayama T.K. (2010) *Intercultural Communication in Context*. Fifth edition. N.Y.: McGraw-Hill.
13. Phillipson, R. (2008) *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford University Press.
14. Rajaei, F. (2001). *The phenomenon of globalization*, Tehran: Agah Publication.
15. Spencer-Oatey H., Franklin P. (2009). *Intercultural Interaction: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Intercultural Communication*. L.: Palgrave McMillan.
16. Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy. URL:
17. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/globalization/>
18. Thussu, D. (2006) *International Communication: Continuity and Change*. L. and N.Y.: Oxford university press.
19. Tomlinson J. (2001) *Cultural Imperialism: A Critical Introduction*. London and New York Continuum