

George Yazbeck

Topic Essay 4: Globalization

Globalization, which is a part of today's society, is defined as the process through which uniform or similar ways of life are spread across the planet¹. As most of the world was colonized for at least 400 years by various European powers, certain customs were handed down (forcibly or peacefully) from the colonists to the conquered; the adoption of these customs amongst many lands ultimately gave forth to a more globalized community. Certainly so, there are details to be mentioned with regards to the background of the globalization process. As historical events from one region influences others, the method of connecting various unrelated lands under one rule (with similar customs) has been diverse and multifold. Additionally, there is much to be said on the various viewpoints of globalization in asking if it was ultimately a good thing or bad thing to have had happen in certain societies.

The historical development of globalization covers a range of hundreds of years, all the way back to when the Europeans colonized the Americas. The first few hundreds of years that passed by after were marked by world colonization (in the Americas, Africa, Asia and the Pacific Islands) by the empires of Britain, France, Italy, Germany, etc. But truly, the 19th and 20th centuries is what marked a new era in globalization to the extent where the ideals that were adopted at the time later formed the basis of growth of newly independent second and third-world countries—case in point being the spread and integration of western or European economical practices². The regions that were affected by this influence include but are not

limited to: Japan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, South Africa, and Brazil. All these countries, before and after their independences, have adopted economic practices in the form of capitalism and importing/exporting goods and resources. One direct result of this adoption is the growth and development of urban areas in centers of such economic activities (i.e. Hong Kong, Macau).

Oftentimes, wars that are waged by two or more powerful adversaries can lead to dire circumstances on all sides which include death, starvation, and destruction of a country's image (government, economy, identity). The Cold War isn't a typical war that falls in such category, not that all the above were simply ignored. The Cold War was a struggle involving two superpowers (the U.S. and the Soviet Union) and their intentions of grabbing as many nations/regions under their sphere of influence as possible into two distinct camps—democracy and communism. Although detrimental to a nation's well-being for it to be “absorbed” by a superpower like how the Soviet Union unionized many former republics into one entity, there are positives that can be drawn from this. Most notably, the Cold War spheres of influence had instilled a uniform political and socioeconomic society among many nations³. Even after the breakup of these influences, some countries have forged their independence and constitution upon the ideals forced on them (democracy, socialism, capitalism)—and with many numbers of countries today that share this trait, a sense of connection in globalization can be therefore viewed here.

Staying on topic with regards to wars and its relation to globalization, World War I and the effects that came from it have played a huge role in recognizing and strengthening the idea of a widespread communication effort. Namely, this is one of

the first wars where a large amount of combatants involve multiple countries/empires from all over the same region (Europe). Due to these coalitions, either within the Allied or the Central Powers, a sense of intercommunication amongst different nations gave forth in the rise of a globalized Europe—a Europe where one nation's politics and economics mattered to/depended on another's. In addition, at the end of the war, an ideal of internationalism rose as most countries wanted to show eagerness for international cooperation and assistance for an effort to maintain world peace⁴. This idea later formed the basis of the precursor of the United Nations, called the League of Nations—an intergovernmental organization that added to the meaning of globalization as it brought together many different countries under a uniform community of set goals and visions.

Globalization today looks at many different issues that run the gamut: from trade, the environment, and media to education, health, and international law. One example of an issue that truly defines globalization is technology⁵. What more can be said about world communication than with what technology has offered in phones, computers, social networking, internet, and much more. The fact that businesses could operate from multiple countries via internet or how one person can circumnavigate the world in plane says a lot about making the world a smaller place. Furthermore, technology has unified many regions into virtually one entity with the advent of complex highway systems which provide the necessary transport of goods, people, and easy access to far distant areas—the European Union being a prime example of this and a globalized effort of its very own.

To end off, the question ultimately that needs to be asked is if globalization was the best thing for certain societies; for a large majority, it has certainly benefited them in every way possible but for some others, remaining disconnected from international affairs in favor for its own interests has been more important (in an effort to maintain national identity from becoming diluted with new and foreign ideals). Even with the existence of such divisions, it is inevitable that the world will remain interconnected for any hope of peace and prosperity among all peoples of all backgrounds—almost anywhere in the world.

Footnote Sources:

1. “The World” by Felipe Fernandez-Armesto
2. “A Tour of Globalization” by Bruce Mazlish
3. <http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/coldwar.htm> (timeline)
4. <http://www.preservearticles.com/2012010119278/the-causes-effects-and-importance-of-the-world-war-i.html> (timeline)
5. “Globalization 101”