

# **Economic Globalization: An Episode in Cultural Homogenization?**

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## **Abstract**

Globalization is one of the latest dominating issues of the everyday ways of life. The lives of ordinary people everywhere in the world seem increasingly to be shaped by the roles of local-global power dynamics. The global development agenda on the notion of empowering the local people incorporates this coordination of power dynamics, which indicates the notion of changing the traditional forms of everyday life. In this process, the western development partners promote the economic globalization with their own agenda, which organized and shaped the standpoints of local people. In this paper, I explored the interrelationships between economic globalization and the changing forms of local cultural lifestyles in Bangladesh. In this process, I chose (1) to pose the topic of culture in the title as the form of a question; and (2) to define culture in its broadest context. I am struck by the dominant presumption in the literature of the inevitability of globalization and the inference of its permanence. What is required is a new and inclusive perspective that has the capacity to embrace a wider domain beyond economics and which is driven by the imperative of social justice and the integrity of national cultures.

**Keywords:** Bangladesh; Culture; Development; Globalization; Homogeneity; Social Process; Technology.

## **Introduction**

Globalization is the latest ‘spin-off effect’ of the 1970s New International Economic Order (NIEO). Those who champion globalization seem to want to replace the Scandinavian style democratic socialism as the engine of reform preferred by developing countries (Francis, 2004: 76). The by-products of capitalism, including modernity (since, replaced by post-modernity), urbanization, industrialization, and technology are the ‘instruments’ used to promote globalization. With the help of information technology, the developed countries have seized the opportunity to try and reshape the world order to their likeness. This new political-economic environment is a mix of intense competition among the developed countries for strictly economic advantage that is combined with a condescending and paternalistic outreach to the developing countries. Although there has been lots of talk and ink spent in promoting globalization, the picture emerging is one that is heavily skewed in favor of the economic rationale supporting business, dismissal of the complex world of the labor sector and only scant attention given to non-economic issues (i.e. social structure). The best example of a one-sided orientation was the last (July 2005) failure of developed countries (notably USA and France) to reach agreement

on ending the national farm subsidy programs by their governments. The cheaper agricultural products of the developed world (reflecting the national subsidy programs) and the application of the World Trade Organization protocol on 'open markets' allow products from developed countries to enter developing countries at prices lower than the cost of production incurred by the Third World farmers.

The world witnessed the spectacle of the Presidents of France and USA, each claiming to be willing to end farm subsidies in their country if the other would guarantee that they would do the same. Each blamed the other and neither one would offer a guarantee, and so the conference ended and was recorded as a failure. Was it a lack of personal trust or a game to accommodate a powerful domestic political farmers lobby back home? This power dynamic reshaped the lives of ordinary people everywhere in the world, many times for the better: globalization is "the process of strengthening the worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local events are shaped by circumstances at other places in the world" (Giddens, 1990: 64). For example, many rural people of Bangladesh used "Fa" soap, which is allowed to sell in the context of local-global power dynamics. It is under those circumstances that I will explore the relationship between economic globalization, technology, and the threat of global cultural homogeneity in the context of Bangladesh.

Economic globalization should be a new corridor of opportunities for the entire world. Instead, it is structured to become a closed setting for international financial institutions that will, when it becomes necessary, designate their 'residence' of choice to be that of the Western developed countries that will make it possible to maximize profit. In the meantime, these institutions will selectively use the rest of the world to serve very limited economic interests at the expense of a wider community of countries and peoples. I am not opposed to firms earning profits, just so long as some minimum level of social justice is practiced and most importantly, that the cultural integrity of every country is respected. In this paper, I chose (1) to pose the topic of culture in the title in the form of a question; and (2) to define culture in its broadest context. I am struck by the dominant presumption in the literature of the inevitability of globalization and the inference of its permanence. I have read that similar views were held of European imperialism. What is required is a new and inclusive perspective that has the capacity to embrace a wider domain beyond economics and which is driven by the imperative of social justice and the integrity of national cultures (Lewellen, 2002; Appadurai, 1996).

### **Culture and the Need for a Line in the Sand**

Post-modernists Harvey (1989), Baudrillard (2000) and Virilio (2000) critiqued the implied inference of a universal common culture as a natural outcome of globalization as if there is no place for accommodating the existing multiplicity of cultures, including multiple political cultures. Thus, the concept of 'global culture as product' is seen as the logical extension of capitalism being the standard bearer of globalization. Others like Robertson (1992), Appadurai (1996) in taking the position of 'cultural dynamics of globalization' seem to be suggesting the outcome is given, only that the world is at the stage of 'process' that will inevitably lead to a presumed outcome (Beynon and

Dunkeyerley, 2000). Both the 'process' and the suggested 'outcome' must be rejected as incompatible with the diverse makeup of the world. Also, to the extent that the worldwide society is still in accord with the principles of democracy and human rights any talk or hidden agenda of cultural homogeneity must be rejected as a non-starter. It is understandable that the integrity of the world's cultures should be seen as being threatened. The acceptance of capitalism as the handmaiden of globalization implies that the 'profit motive' is the driving force of economic globalization. However, should the world necessarily accept the sponsorship of capitalism with all of the attendant baggage, as if there are no alternatives?

In this essay, the concept of culture is used at different levels and covering a broad range of living experiences. "[C]ulture ... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor, 1958). These divisions will make it possible to distinguish between culture as a social capital and culture as a personal way of life, and the respective "setting" in the context of globalization. At the societal level, culture is foundational, in that it is critical to the history and integrity of the society at large. The second level is about what I will call "culture as lifestyle." For the purpose of this paper, I used two elements of culture: material culture and non-material culture (Ogburn & Nimkoff, 1964). Material culture is used here as the physical or technological aspects of our daily lives, including food item, television, internet, house, car, fridge, dress, and raw material. Non-material culture refers to customs, norms, languages, values, philosophies, governments, ideologies, attitudes and beliefs, which guide to accept or reject the material cultural elements. The discussion on culture in the context of globalization is focused on the foundational aspects of "culture as a way life". Most important, it is essential to be always conscious that every culture evolves through a process of borrowing and re-configuring the traits of other cultures so as to enhance one's own. Cultural hybridization is a process of recontextualization and meaning re-attribution whereby foreign cultural imports are assigned fresh meanings within a receiving culture (Beynon & Dunkerley, 2000; Lewellen, 2002).

### **The Language of Globalization**

Living most of my life in my native country of Bangladesh, I became familiar with the word "globalization". I heard the word on radio and television, in English and in Bengali, especially on BBC World, BBC Asia, and BBCISC<sup>1</sup>. The word would also appear quite frequently in newspapers, academic journals, and texts. Over those experiences, there were many occasions when the writers (especially) would fail to provide a clear statement of what constituted globalization. However, Modelski (2000) seems to have a different view. He writes that "[t]he process by which a number of historical societies were brought together into a global system might be referred to as 'globalization' (Modelski, 2000: 49). Given that the label of "historical society" is rarely, if ever, associated with the recently independent developing countries, those countries seem to be excluded from the casting of globalization or the author left the readers with an unexplained criterion. In a subsequent publication, a group of authors (Held et al.: 2000) makes use of certain socio-

economic patterns of behavior to determine the existence and/or the pursuit of globalization as follows:

[T]he concept of globalization implies, first and foremost, a *stretching* (what the authors refer to as ‘extensity’) of social, political and economic activities across frontiers such that events, decisions and activities in one region of the world can come to have significance for individuals and communities in distant regions of the globe. (Held et al., 2000)

This was expanded to include “the regularization of such activities that reflect *intensification* (labeled as intensity) or growing magnitude of inter-connections ... that over time results in the *speeding up* (velocity) of inter-connections between participant geographic sites in ways that ... the *impact* of distant events is magnified to the extent that they have enormous global consequences” (Held et al., 2000). The impact of globalization is expressed in distributive terms and in what the authors refer to as “the impact propensity of global flows” (of money, goods, and power).

Four distinct types of impacts are identified: *decisional*, which reflects the degree to which the relative costs and benefits are influenced by global forces – influencing the consequential decisions, priorities, etc. *Institutional* is where the priorities, etc of government and corporations reflect the choice or range of choices that are set by global factors; *distributive*, reflects the dispersion of power among global actors and how the density of power is reflected in the social forces of globalization – the social configuration that is a by-product of the exercise of power; and *structural*, the form and manner that follow a given residue of power, the capacity to mobilize and store power will determine how an organization can expect to shift power (Held et al., 2000: 54-55). Thus, the authors end up with a definition of globalization as:

A process, or set of processes, which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions ... assessed in terms of extensity, intensity, velocity, and impact-generating flows and network of activity, interaction and the exercise of power. (Held et al., 2000: 54-55)

What is interesting about this broadly described process leading up to a definition of globalization is that the process could be arrived at so long as there are active initiators and without the slightest hint of a possible defiant interlocutor(s). A placid and/or cooperative interlocutor is implied and that globalization in the prescribed form is deemed to be inevitable. Despite this, the analysis does provide insights on elements of a process and possible context in which the main emphasis of cultural homogenization will be analyzed. The article concludes with a useful summary as follows:

Box 1. Historical forms of globalization: key dimensions

*Spatio-temporal dimensions*

1. the extensity of global networks
2. the intensity of global interconnectedness

3. the velocity of global flows
4. the impact propensity of global interconnectedness.

*Organizational dimensions*

5. the infrastructure of globalization
6. the institutionalization of global networks and the exercise of power
7. the pattern of global stratification
8. the dominant modes of global interaction. (Held et al., 2000: 59)

Panić (2003: 3) at a different time and in a different place, muses that "... there is little agreement about the meaning of the term 'globalization, and even less agreement about the process that brings globalization about, and no agreement at all about its effects". While this author shares the view of Held et al. (2000) that there is "the rapid improvements brought by extraordinary economic progress". He states his concern about "the possible loss of national sovereignty and the threat of rising corporate power" (Panić, 2003). Of particular concern is the success, so far, in undermining the role of national budgets as an instrument in initiating structural responses and correctives. The author notes that an increasing number of scholars in different fields are suggesting that these initial, purely economic developments have evolved into a much more complex process. This involves nothing less than a *long-term* fusion of national economies, cultures and institutions into a completely new world order: a single global market operating within the framework of a common global civilization that is increasingly supervised and regulated by supranational institutions. (Panić, 2003: 6)

Panić (2003) is clearly of the view "that globalization was set in motion by the economic dynamics of the international division of labor" a dynamic that began in the developed world, especially in America (i.e. Rostow, 1960). It is important to note that to the extent that capital flows are expected to counterbalance any advantage that labor resources may have accrued, the capital flow is from developed countries to the developing world via transnational corporations (TNC). Panić (2003) completed the circle by noting that "[a]s foreign firms in this case also come predominantly from the most advanced economies, the figures [of foreign direct investment] suggest a marked increase in the control of productive capacity in developing countries by transnationals from the developed world" (2003: 8). Therefore, he argues "... it is a mistake to treat globalization as just another term for international economic integration" (Panic, 2003: 10). To do so, it would be to disregard the direct impact on political systems and "... the implications for the non-economic aspects of globalization" (Panic, 2003: 7). This would be especially so if the conduct of these corporations exhibit shades of 'economic imperialism' (Crane et al., 2002: 2).

Kudrle (1999) uses a different angle in providing useful insights on globalization. His typology of "Three Types of Globalization" is intended to allow the reader to understand better "how international trade and investment linkages (are) more organic than was possible in previous periods, resulting in an unprecedented degree of 'functional integration between internationally dispersed activities'. The concept of *market globalization* covers most of the goods and services included under the heading of

international trade while still taking into consideration the new forms of settlement procedures now available in international finance. The second type is *direct globalization*, which is used to describe what economists call international externalities: non-market actions that affect persons across borders. 'The idea of externality can be extended to issues that go beyond physical interaction'. This may include the negative impact on a person as a result of knowledge of certain situations that exist in another country even though there was not any physical contact involved. This kind of externality is called trans-border externality and can be either positive or negative.

The third type is *communications globalization* and its impact may be categorized in terms of *economic effects*, *cultural effects*, and the *comparison effects*. Given the particular focus of this essay on cultural homogenization, an elaboration of Kudrle's (1999) contribution, along with contributions of other scholars on the subject of cultural globalization will be covered in a separate section of the text. Suffice it to say that the term "cultural product" is not a restriction on any product; what is "cultural" is a function of its use and how it is perceived by the user(s) and by others who may be impacted by its use (Kudrle, 1999: 3-23).

### **Globalization: The Bare Elements**

Economic globalization means greater integration in the organization of production, distribution, and consumption of commodities in the global economy. Economic globalization is presented as a variable characteristic of the world system that is comprised of a complex network of nested, interrelated, interdependent, and overlapping macro networks. This includes individuals, households, neighborhoods, etc., at different levels of aggregation and organized around different interests; e.g. politics, religion. The non-material cultural elements involve intra and inter cultural forms, which play vital roles at the macro level interrelationship of the global context. In response to the economic networking and non-material cultural elements, all kinds of local, national, regional, interregional, and global networks and organizations have developed. These networks and organizational structures contribute to the new relationships that evolve between core, semi-periphery, and periphery groups (Wallerstein, 1974) which Frank labels "metropolis-satellite" relationships. If every country is able to reach maturity or "the age of high consumption", it is possible to identify and track the emerging international relationships. Sometimes, the interrelationship and interdependency between core, semi-periphery and periphery can be blocked if countries that belong to a traditional "pre-condition of take-off" stage, or at the take-off stage; seek to move directly to the stage of maturity (Rostow, 1960).

Within the discourse on economic globalization, there are two different schools of thought on whether economic globalization is compatible with cultural diversity or cultural homogeneity. One approach argues that the convergence of different cultures is a natural outcome of economic globalization. The supporters of this approach foresee the 'folding up' of cultural diversity into a cultural homogeneity (i.e. Bell, 1973). The supporters of the opposite approach emphasize the persistence of cultural diversity, despite the pervasive economic globalization (i.e. Huntington, 1996). The later belief

proposes that cultural diversity is relatively independent of economic globalization (DiMaggio, 1994).

Technology is one of the determining factors of all types of globalization. Cultural homogeneity is developing via an increasingly complex network of technologies (i.e. media technology, information technology, communication technology). The advent of the mobile phone, satellite television, and the internet means that communication between countries/cultures can be frequent and continuous. They are crossing national boundaries and connecting the world on an unprecedented scale and with previously unimaginable speed. The level of investment in telecommunications technology increased between 1990 and 2002 from an estimated \$29 billion to an estimated \$476 billion, the largest increase in the world service sector (UN, 2004). With the help from agencies like International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO), and World Bank (WB) in facilitating international trade and finance the technology has acquired a new shape, scale and speed. These sponsorships of economic globalization and technologies are collectively making an impact on the cultural homogenization of the world.

Globalization is an attractive, and some would say (e.g. Robertson, 1992), an inevitable element of present day society in terms of mobility of goods, information, communication products and services, and people. As an example, wherever I go in urban and many rural areas Bangladesh, I see evidence of Coca-cola, Sony, American Express, Pizza Hut, CNN, BBC, etc., to which a wide range of income classes are attached (Crane et al., 2002, p.5). Older film reviewers remind us the film of *Shree 420* (Mr. 420) of 1955 in which the main character Raj Kapoor, sings “*Mera Joota hai Japanese - My shoes are Japanese/My trousers are English /My red cap is Russian...*” (Shohat and Stam, 1994). The notion is also reflected in the notion of Robins, ‘your court might be produced in Turkey, your hi-fi in Japan, your car in Korea, your food in USA, your partner in Italy’. These examples argued the cultural diversity in the context of economic and cultural globalization. The supporters of this notion of cultural diversity incorporate the notion that there are many transnational distributors and local retailers who are only willing to coax us into purchasing from an array of “new” goods.

United Nations (2004) information on major Trans-National Corporations (TNCs) showed that the exposure of major corporations in different countries range from a low of nine to thirty-one countries with sales of \$22.5 to \$94.7 billions for 2003. It is important to note that most of these corporations are engaged in “life style” products, including cosmetics, computers, publications, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, movies, etc. that, to a large extent, cater to middle and high income households in Bangladesh. The built-in security that goes with investment in a steel plant has significant economic importance. However, the production of steel suffers from popular/public “distance” compared with the intimacy that one would associate with cinema, popular retail products. Deliberate or not, globalization seems to have targeted the socio-cultural-economic combination that will minimize any possible hostility that may arise from foreign ownership of the business sector. Yet, it is the low income groups in developing countries that are most vulnerable to threats of cultural dysfunction. What we are seeing is acceptance of globalization through a form of “choked development” that leap-frog from unsatisfied

basic needs to satisfied secondary needs (thanks to Western style advertising) that are associated with Rostow's 'advanced' stage of development.

Beginning in the 1980s, governments, civil society, and international organizations used the media to promote globalization in general and economic globalization in particular. International organizations like International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB) and some private sector organization (e.g. International Chambers of Commerce), all with the able assistance of the US government reformulated media regulations which opened new avenues for communication systems with satellite and digital technological access, ultimately to promote to institutional transnational media corporations (Crane et al., 2002, p.82). These organizations and the US government pushed the least developed and developing countries to reformulate their media regulations to accommodate satellite and digital technologies services to those countries. Informal conditions in the name of trade facilities, loans, development aid, investment, etc., used to promote the 'technology' agenda (Crane et al., 2002, p.12). There was a surge of expansion of the major Western communications industry into Asia, Africa, and English-speaking Central America (Crane et al., 2002, p.11). Along with television and radio, the advertising industry shared in the rapid growth and expansion. The major US communications corporations, CBS, ABC, NBC, along with BBC, and the likes of the Murdock News Corporation, Disney, Blockbuster Paramount, etc., are parts of what are now labeled as the "Euro-American orbit" (Robertson,1992; Crane et al., 2002, p.5). WTO rules on "open economies" are insensitive to the needs of developing countries for cultural protection from commercial advertising bombardment by the Western media (Crane et al., 2002, p.7).

Tourism is another example that has benefited from the glamour of globalization (Crane et al., 2002, p.118). The geographical scope of this industry has experienced significant growth in countries not previously known as locations for holidays. For example, Turkey had 13,341 thousand tourists with 'in country' expenditure of \$13,203 million excluding transportation in 2004 (UN, 2005). Hotels as TNCs are expanding their operations. Intercontinental Hotel Group PLC operates in 42 countries with 3,500 hotels and investment of \$4.742 billion. Side by side tourism and hotel, restaurant is now recognized as a TNC category. McDonald Corporation operates in 13 countries with total investment of \$25,525 million; Sodexo Alliance (SA) operates in 46 countries with \$8,812 million (UN, 2005).

The internet as a media technology and more specifically as an information technology is playing a vital role as a means of global communication system (Crane et al., 2002, p.7). Although the Internet consumer group is mainly from the upper and middle-income people, it is also developing in the lower income groups in the least developed countries like Bangladesh. The internet, combined with telephone services and private postal services meet the needs of the special international community of foreign immigrants from the least developed and developing countries for whom direct communications with family and relatives is essential. In that respect, the role of private postal services (e.g. UPS, FedEx) has a special importance in providing quick and reliable service, especially as it relates to developing countries whose postal service is usually inefficient and dishonest. These international networks are likely to expand to create a new formation of



commercial structures that will contribute to the intensification and flow of information and a strong mode for economic globalization. In that respect, Robertson (1992) defined globalization as both the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole.

### **Living in a Global Paradigm**

In Bangladesh, there is evidence that the development of communication technologies and liberal media regulations are producing emerging sets of beliefs, norms, values, and practices among the young generations. At one level, it also reflects competition among socio-economic groups. In the form of cartoons, children acquire attachment to comic and television characters like Batman, Captain Planet, and Meena (the last, in Bangladesh). These can be seen as having the potential of contributing to hybridization involving certain characters from the traditional culture. A comparable process and outcome applies to the attachment to famous ‘media personalities’ of television, movies and sports. It is an everyday practice for all age group people to watch television programs that feature the ‘personalities’ of choice. What usually follows is to mimic the language, clothing, and other ‘life style’ habits of the favorite personalities.

The favorable appreciation encourages and provides confidence to mimic the norms, values, roles, socially and culturally. This is the process by which meaning and knowledge produce a form of cross-cultural assimilation. The different media programs provide exposure for middle and high income households to get acculturated to different styles of clothing and other ‘life-style’ living that involves internationally famous individuals of fashion, sports, cinema, etc. It is interesting to observe the role played by international ‘stars’ who are fashion models, movie and recording stars, and famous male athletes, and how this is reflected in the younger generation in Bangladesh. What is certain is that Tiger Woods is popular among the recent university graduates of the professions and Michael Jordan (basketball player) or his successor holds sway among the high school dropouts, while the British soccer player, David Beckham crosses the income groups.

A very relatively small number among Arts and Social Sciences university students embrace religion as a vehicle for political, social and cultural action. It would appear that high school students would embrace anything but religion. Among teenagers it is usually a recreational mode about the mobile CD player with hybridized and Western music; and when copying is hindered by economics or availability it could lead to frustration (Crane et al., 2002: 5). As the society transforms from simple to complex, (Spencer, 1887), *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft* (Tonnies, 1887), mechanical to organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1933), homogenous to heterogeneous, and traditional to urban—a new formation of social structure emerges that favors capitalism. Depending on the role of technology, the process of change could be very rapid. A relatively new craze in Bangladesh involves mainly single male and female professionals who have well paying jobs. Some members of that group chose to copy their counterparts from India’s financial and computer sectors by spending weekends in the capital of Thailand. By all accounts, it all started after an exposé in one of Bangladesh’s English language newspapers.

It is a common scene in Bangladesh that lower income people own a cell phone with the handset of Transnational Corporation, which sells for a minimum \$70. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS, 2006) reported earlier this year that the number of cell phone subscribers in the country reached 10.8 million at the end of January 2006, up by 280% from 3.8 million at the end of 2004. Whether it is in the cities or the rural areas, and especially among university students, the cell phone has become a priority. It is generally accepted that those in the higher income bracket will be habituated to the global consumer culture. However, when the poor displays similar propensity for expensive goods and services with their level of income, it indicates that the social system is taking a new form. To facilitate this new craving, there was about \$458,402 invested by Transnational Corporations in Bangladesh during the fiscal year 2003-2004 (Board of Investments, Bangladesh, 2004).

With the domination by, or contribution from, the transnational media, when a new social formation is well established, the local media and other sectors must re-orient to meet the new challenge by re-examining their philosophy, programs, etc. for their own survival. Shohat and Stam (1994) termed the idea as Hollywood-centrism implying that capitalism, expressed through globalization, takes its queue from Hollywood. Therefore, another hybridization of a local culture occurs and is replicated across the globe. Capitalism in the form of investment in the media industry is re-configuring national cultures into a homogeneous entity that can be managed at the source from any part of the globe (Crane et al., 2002: 4). Moreover, the commitment of governments to capitalism as the economic ideology of choice is limited to the role of observer. There are many products, which are not possible to produce locally; the local business community makes use of the international trading facility and the national trading liberalization policy to serve the local market.

Dissemination of knowledge through education is an example of an activity with a long history of globalization. So embedded is the practice of cross-national exchange of information that any resistance from a nation-state will be criticized by civil society and the media. Visiting professorships has a long history involving universities from different countries. In many areas of professional education, there are examples of movement of practitioners between countries; some justifiable based on localized technical skills (e.g. lawyers, educationists, doctors) and for some, especially where the need is common across countries, e.g. medical education, the failure to establish common standards constitutes a failure of governments and the professions. Industrial technology has become so universal in the use of tools and technical processes, that some occupational labor markets are truly international. Academic education presents arguably the most open, generous, and democratic displays of camaraderie that cross national boundaries and give exposure to multiple groups of different cultures. In some countries, for example Bangladesh, it is a badge of honor to have attended LSE for Sociology, University of Chicago for Economics, Cambridge for Literature, and Harvard for almost any discipline.

Getting one's education in a foreign country is one of the more lasting experiences in socialization that tend to leave lasting memories. There is always the recall of ideas

gained from teachers or books that are permanent. There is always so much to share with family members and relatives, as they frequently carry their memories with them. When one returns to their native locale; city or country, the experiences travel along and recollections of one's memories are usually happy experiences. These make for professional links with people of varied backgrounds; NGO activists, human right activists, military bureaucrats, civil bureaucrats, teachers, leaders, bankers, and financial managers. At coffee, seminars, conferences, family programs, there are discussions or problem solving strategies about the university where one was trained. In Bangladesh, one way to be empowered intellectually is to talk about the University and country where one studied. These individuals help to reproduce the future professionals with the approach they received earlier, another way of expanding the network. The most impressive display of globalization in university life is the free use of the intellectual assets among fellow travelers. There is also the avenue of economic globalization in terms of books, journals, machineries, elements essential for physical sciences, social sciences, and arts education. The books, journals, machineries themselves are other mode of economic globalization. The book *Deglobalization* written by Walden Bello (2004) was published concurrently in Dhaka, Bangkok, Nova Scotia, Bangalore, Kuala Lumpur, Cape Town, London, and New York and marketed all over the world.

Dell, the American computer corporation, has its main manufacturing operations in Malaysia. Some parts of the completed product are made in China and marketed all over the world. These computers, books, and other items are very essential for a knowledge based society. The knowledge dissemination of globalization is also helping to establish a bridge between civil societies of the developed and developing countries, working together like engines of globalization. Some of the basic responsibilities of civil societies in Bangladesh are a local patron of democracy, human rights, equality, conformity, environment, peace, and poverty reduction. This bridge is helping to promote social mobility in developing and least developed countries.

### **Beyond the Mainstream: Globalization from the Perspective of the Third World**

In all aspect of globalization, language is playing as an important role, but with the potential of being divisive. In parts of the Indian sub-continent (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka), there is a popular statement that goes like this: "If you speak three languages, you are trilingual; if you speak two languages, you are bilingual; if you speak one language, it must be English, and you must be an American". The use of coercion or any degree of 'force' to use English as the means of communication has the potential of being not only a divisive factor in globalization, it may also lead to form of protest in affected countries that will be disruptive.

Already, there is publicly expressed concern in the countries mention that foreign English speaking countries are exercising their presence in Bangladesh to undermine the integrity of the dominant language of the country. The governments of Australia and the USA establish and operate English medium (Grades 4 to 7 equivalence) schools: (the American School and Australian High Commission School). These schools are accessible only to children from wealthy families, although some middle income families are trying

to gain access for their children so as to gain economic advantage. And it should be noted that language is not the only differentiating characteristic of these schools; certain cultural practices common to the Bangladeshi community are prohibited. It should be noted that English is the second official language of Bangladesh. However, the government does not provide any public funded means of learning the language. Of course, there is an advantage for those children who attend Embassy schools. In addition, all of the TNCs, IGOs, INGOs, in Bangladesh use English as the language of communications. In the name of language testing, the USA and UK earn billions of US dollars in non-English speaking countries. According to the official statistics of ETS and TOEFL USA they operate more than 6,000 institutions and agencies in 110 countries worldwide.

### **The Open Global Markets for Capital, Goods, Services ... but not Labor**

The discipline of Economics teaches that the factors of production that facilitate every economy are capital, entrepreneurship, risk-taking, management, land, and labor. I suspect this listing requires updating to account for technology. Under globalization, with the exception of land, the other factors are physically mobile. The risk-taker must go to the land, or maybe one should account for the flexibility in the location of land. The forms of income payments (or proxies) are: profit and/or interest, depending on the source of financing the early stages of the venture; “rent,” in the form of depreciation of goodwill, depreciation in the form of using owned assets, wages and salaries. The advocates of globalization champion the free movement factors across state boundaries as one way to ensure the efficient allocation of the factors. There is no question that social welfare is enhanced through the freedom of movement of factors. WTO has been consistent and loud in its call for “open markets” for goods and services (Lewellen, 2002: 9).

It stands to reason that if capitalism is the driving force in the globalizing process that the environment would be business friendly. One cannot deny either that globalization has brought some benefits to workers, although the retrenchment of the workforce has been brutal and with relatively very little benefit to governments that now face the task of increased social needs and declining tax base. The orderliness (predictability) of business is in sharp contrast to the loose and untidy arrangements for the labor market, which must depend on the moodiness of national immigration policies to somehow wish into place an orderly process of labor market adjustments. The existing situation can only be justified on ideological grounds.

One must accept the current state of worldwide immigration as the vehicle that will balance out any supply-demand mismatch for labor services and examine its relevance to globalization. Many states that receive immigrants are now considered to be ‘multicultural’ in terms of the mix of the population. It should be noted that how the multicultural character is expressed depends on the policy that is associated with the official process of settlement of new immigrants to their new country of residence. The Government of Canada encourages new immigrants to integrate into the broader Canadian society while holding on to whatever elements of their birth culture they wish

to keep. This is less so in European countries. The official policy of the USA, labeled “the melting pot” approach, strongly and explicitly promotes a complete embrace of the prevailing American culture that implies dropping all elements of one’s birth culture.

In spite of the official policy, the media, business, and the professions continue to view and comment about the immigrant community using labels that recognize the country of birth as part of the identifying marker of individuals and groups; a fact that apparently does not bother the individuals and groups concerned. Thus, regardless of the country of settlement, an immigrant from Bangladesh generally accepts being labeled as Bangladeshi-Canadian, Bangladeshi-American, etc. This reflects two important facts: not wanting to abandon one’s heritage; and acknowledging acceptance of how one is viewed by citizens of the new country, government policy notwithstanding. As citizens, these people are contributing to the development of receiving countries and sending countries. Among the eighteen Least Developed Countries, of which Bangladesh is one, remittances are the major contributor to foreign exchange reserves of respective countries in all but two cases. Here is an important (indirect) contribution of globalization to a more orderly world that has not received very little attention by the literature (Kapur, 2004: 17).

## **Conclusion**

The “newness” of globalization poses a challenge to the world. The challenge is to use the initiative to serve a common good that is derived from a conscious effort that is not driven by special interests that have the power to impose their views on those who exist at the margins of society. It should not be about capitalism or any other ideology. What is at stake is the need for a shared interest that gets to the core of the cultural, social, political, and economic issues that dominate the priorities that originate from the varied experiences and conditions of the world’s peoples. The process will at various times and circumstances tilt in the direction of different interest groups. However, the larger perspective should always be the focus and must subsequently tilt elsewhere to bring about a socially accepted ‘balance’ among the moving preferences. Unfortunately, the existing tilt seems to be permanently focused to serve a selected interest at the expense of all others. In the end, the practicalities of human organizations will always call for governments that serve respective states. That situation emerged from history and is not likely to be discarded any time soon. The twenty-first century is blessed with the presence of the largest and most dispersed collection of brilliant minds and the most driven and astute mass of ‘ordinary’ peoples across nations including Bangladesh, ever. Globalization is an opportunity to show that we have accepted the logic of social justice and that we have the energy to pursue that goal with sophistication.

## **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Indian Sub-Continent – comprised of India and four currently independent countries, which at some time was a part of India: Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

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