

'Despite the views of many optimists, there are clearly losers as well as winners from the process of globalization.' Evaluate this statement.

The statement at the head of the page assumes that Globalization creates both winners and losers. This is a view shared by many, but not all, theorists and commentators. There are many trends of thought regarding exactly who the winners and losers may be as well as what may be considered a prize or a punishment (e.g. some may sight the availability of McDonalds fast food throughout France an enrichment and some may see it as an unwelcome and unsavoury invasion.) Comparison between these opinions paints an interesting picture of what Globalization *is*, what certain parties *want it to be seen as* and what kind of world it *could* create. Anthony Giddens says "Globalization, some argue, creates a world of winners and losers, a few on the fast track to prosperity, the majority condemned to a life of misery and despair." This is a view shared by many theorists, however positive Globalists (perhaps naively) claim Globalization will lead to winnings for all and extreme pessimists exist who see 'Globalization' as the path to mass ruin and exploitation and as a vague buzzword umbrella from under which Governments may defend unjust or unpopular policies.

The other query I would raise when initially evaluating the statement is what exactly we mean by a 'process of Globalization' and does it mean the same thing to different people? The statement assumes there is a defined and universally accepted reading of the term and yet there are many differing views as to what 'Globalization' entails. 'Globalization' is a process said to affect several different aspects of the social world, mainly economics both global and local, global and local politics and global and local culture.

There are various definitions of what 'Globalization' *is*, and the effect it has on the world. Globalists believe Globalization is a real and evident process. They argue that examples of

a significant shift in the geography of social relations can be seen in terms of economics, culture and politics. For example the recent effects that the US economy's down turn had on the share prices of British companies who trade and deal largely within US markets. We can see that international trade and investment has increased in recent years with many companies (notable many of those within the FT500) having bases and influence in many different countries e.g. Rupert Murdoch's global media empire, News Corporation, which operates within nine different media on six different continents. Culturally we can see everyday examples of what Globalists would call Globalization. In Britain we eat McDonalds and Sushi, wear Issey Miyake perfume, watch Manga films and play Sony Playstation games. Politically nation states do not hold ultimate power over all policies and all behaviour as a whole. National governments have joined to create larger international organizations e.g. United Nations or G8 (USA, Japan, Germany, France, UK, Italy and Canada, with the recent addition of Russia). Globalization, and the Northern Territories embracing of it, allows the dogged pursuit of free and open trade, where nation boundaries do not stand in the pathway of Capitalism but where, through freer and less rigidly controlled capital and goods traffic, unwanted trades such as illegal drugs are also allowed to prosper freely.

Traditionalists would argue that the term 'Globalization' itself is merely a buzzword to describe a process that has occurred throughout history. In particular, they argue, the passage of goods and capital across national boundaries has happened for centuries, bringing with it the spread of different cultures and knowledge. Examples of this can be found e.g. Tobacco, paper, religion and medical beliefs and techniques. In the 19th century open trading and liberal economics relations were the norm and 'Globalization'

can be seen as an expansion of those ideals. Traditionalists are also ready to point out that not all economic and social activity has been handed over to global channels e.g. the European Union is an example of the increased importance of 'regionalization' and not 'globalization'. Traditionalists believe that there is still scope for national politics, for self-government of nation states and for national governments to not lose post-war welfare states in the pursuit of a globalized society.

The third standpoint is that of the Transformalists, a combination of Globalist and Traditionalist positions. Like the Traditionalists, Transformalists believe that Globalists have exaggerated their case and that nation states still have military, economics and political power (an example of this is USA's refusal to sign the G8 Keeto agreement despite being a founder member). But they also believe that Globalization is not a process to dismiss wholly, that it may still carry possible dangers and impacts.

Globalists generally fall into two categories; Pessimists (whose views will be explored later) and Optimists, who suggest, in terms of cultural globalization, that the world is moving towards a 'global village' and in terms of economic globalization, that the poor people of the world can only benefit from globalization, that what globalization brings to them, although it is not the full western lifestyle with all the trimmings and priviledges, that it is better than current and past conditions. The Optimists (or Positive Globalizers) have a clear and positive take on what Globalization is and what affect it will have on the organisations and citizens of the world. Optimists concentrate on the possible benefits of Globalization. They suggest that Globalization offers an improved quality of life, living standards and a chance to bring people together through improved connectivity throughout

the world. The Internet is one medium through which many theorists see stretched social relations and opportunities for sharing of cultures and understanding between different nations making us all 'world citizens'. Marshall McLuhan suggests that thanks to new technologies the physical place no longer gets in the way when creating a community. Huge worldwide telephone networks (offering both landlines and mobile telephone coverage), vast satellite television coverage, the Internet and Digital Radio for example, provide world wide easy, cheap and accessible communication. I would argue that it is naïve to assume that every person world wide has access to all or any of the technologies listed above e.g. telephone coverage is dependant on where masts are placed e.g they are not placed in the wilds of Africa or the 'Bush' of Australia, and how many African villagers have internet access? McLuhan promotes the notion of the 'Global Village', an idea that has had a recent resurgence due to the new possibilities of the Internet. In fact AOL's current advertising campaign advertises their service (a huge US Internet Service Provider) as a 'Digital Community', a strikingly similar phrase. To use the notion of global and digital communities to sell a product suggests how popular the idea of the 'Global Village' is and that widespread western belief in such a possibility exists.

Howard Rheingold, a leading figure in WELL (Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link), a San Francisco electronic community, promotes the progressive possibilities of the Internet. Rheingold's work is based on the arguments of Jurgen Habermas who discusses the notion of the 'Public Sphere'. The Public Sphere is a space free from state control where citizens without censorship or recording by Governments and other official bodies can debate politics and policy. Rheingold and Habermas see the Public Sphere as playing an intrinsic part in modern democracy. Rheingold's arguments focus on the structure of domination. We can see, by his rationale, that compared to the highly structured, power concentrated

mass media the new electronic structures e.g. Internet, Telephone text messaging, offer a high degree of freedom of speech and expression. (Although this is not always the case: computer hacking, ISP parental controls and police intervention (e.g. in suspected paedophile cases) can 'threaten' these channels of free communication.) Rheingold says that where CMC (Computer Mediated Communication) is accessible to people, virtual communities emerge therefore reflecting a demand for community (Rheingold, 1995, p6).

Rheingold says that global communication makes for a better world, but this could be seen as naïve. The growth in ownership, development and use of communications technology in global communications is occurring alongside huge increases in global inequalities. Not every citizen of the world has access to or knowledge of communications technology so the playing field is already unlevel. Pessimists believe that rather than equalising, the growth of global communications and cultural flows has exacerbated divisions between the Information Rich and the Information Poor, who lack electricity, hardware, software or knowledge. The way media power is owned has a dramatic effect on how information is controlled and how the media's power is used. Several companies dominate an increasingly homogenized media. With such a small elite controlling the mass media and therefore a huge percentage of the information spread, a limited and dominant group is mediating messages and therefore a dominant predominantly white, predominantly male, Capitalist view of the world is being perpetuated. A clear example of this comes again from Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. Rupert Murdoch's family own 30% of the company's stock, not only does the company dominate the market but a very small number of people dominate the company therefore a very small group of people (from the same background and culture) hold a huge amount of media power. Access to alternative

messages is consequently difficult, the emphasis may fall on the public to actively seek such messages rather than passively receive mass media information.

When viewing the impacts of Globalization, how those impacted are categorised in terms of winning and losing, depends on the ideological position of the viewer (or theorist). E.g. one person's cultural enrichment is another's cultural dilution or pillaging. To some the arrival of McDonalds in Moscow several decades back meant more choice to sample food from another culture, to some it was seen as yet another example of USA trying to dominate the world and forcing its cultural symbols in place of existing symbols, a type of edible Trojan Horse.

Economically, Pessimist Globalists would argue that the Optimists claims of a better world for all simply do not add up. There is only so much money in the world the more it is spread the less each person's share will be.

Cultural Imperialism is one theory behind what Globalization is and what its principle players' motives are. The argument is based on work carried out by the Frankfurt School of sociology (particularly by Adorno and Horkheimer). Cultural goods are seen as flowing to the rest of the world from America or the West as a whole, cultivating Western or US values in those recipient nations and paving the way for even more goods to arrive therefore more capital to flow back to US or West as a whole. Cultural flows are seen as imbalanced where dominant cultures e.g. US culture overpowers more vulnerable cultures e.g. Russian culture. An example of Cultural Imperialism is the structure of world news. The five major western news agencies are responsible for producing 80% of world news and

only a quarter of all world news focuses on the developing world. Therefore the dominant culture is focussed on and given precedence over the weaker. One argument, which could be raised to this Pessimistic view, is that Western countries are the highest consumers of news and media in general and perhaps the ratio of television receivers may also be a lot higher in developed countries as opposed to developing countries, in which case the supply reflects the demand.

It is clear that there are both winners and losers from the process described as Globalization. Broadly speaking, at the present time Globalization is of great benefit to Western Governments and Companies who are able to exploit the cheaper labour and resource opportunities of the less developed world while maintaining the flow of their own countries goods across the world. Economically these parties are winners, however with less work being fielded towards the more expensive workforce of their own countries these Government's and companies could be accused of shooting themselves in the foot as the economy of their own countries will suffer due to more unemployment. Workers in less developed countries could be seen as winning as, although mainly gutter -level, sweat shop jobs, the new employment opportunities offered by Western companies are still 'better than nothing' in the long run however, the long hours in terrible conditions plays havoc on the workers health and keeps them in a position of poor pay with no time to look for another job and no opportunities outside of the sweat shops.

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