

## **Neville Borg Sociology A-level**

*In arguments concerning globalisation, controversy is quite evident.  
Discuss the positive and negative outcomes connected with this issue.*

In today's life we often encounter terms such as "*living in a global village*" and "*we all live in the same world*". Even simply switching on the television brings us face to face with events occurring on the other side of the globe. News broadcasts transmit not only the local news or the latest political propaganda being fed to the people, but also incidents taking place all over Europe, Asia, the Americas and even Africa.

We all witness this everyday, yet we rarely stop to truly think of the implications. What is the significance of virtually being a spectator in events across the world? What difference does this make to an individual? More importantly, what changes does this bring upon a society?

Many people consider globalisation a recent, modern phenomenon and associate it with today's highly technological age. After all, the world must be globalized if humanity is capable of breaching the frontier and sending man into space. However, the truth is that globalisation had much more humble beginnings. Ever since Christopher Columbus set foot in what is now America, and ever since the Roman Empire began conquering land to incorporate into its glorious empire, globalisation has been a vital social process.

The fact that this has been taking place for so long has ensured that no country is capable of surviving on its own because nobody is self-sufficient. People today are becoming more interdependent because a global mentality is being encouraged and taught. However, true globalisation was slowed until 1990, the end of the Cold War, because until then the world was

divided in two. Nonetheless, many colonised countries (including Malta) still display strong influences, especially in language and culture, adopted from their colonisers. Therefore, globalisation inflicts social change upon a country or area. People are being *socialised* into other cultures. However, this doesn't necessarily mean that a country is losing its own culture – it is simply updating it.

Technology and communications have had a strong impact on speeding up globalisation. What were first considered luxuries, such as television and Internet, soon became important factors leading to social change. This is because they led to an increase in information accessibility, product accessibility and education. Another aspect of globalisation is the fact that regionalism is decreasing. For example, organisations such as NAFTA started out as regional organisations but have expanded their horizon. The EU has agreements with over 100 countries outside Europe. Transnational corporations also open the doors to globalisation since they have many branches all over the world and have no borders.

There are 3 main outlooks on globalisation, which vary drastically from each other. Some argue in favour of this phenomenon whilst others try to prevent it from occurring.

The **Sceptics** believe that the whole argument regarding globalisation is being exaggerated. They say that this sudden debate about this topic is simply over-hyped. Globalisation has not emerged recently – it has just intensified in its interactions and scale. By stating this, the sceptics admit that nowadays there is more interaction and communication between countries than ever before. Sceptics also criticize economy because they believe that it is not truly globalise. They try to prove this by arguing that

certain countries are much more developed than others, and if the world were truly globalise countries would be equal.

Sceptics are criticized fiercely for what seems to be an old-fashioned and ethnocentric approach. An argument placed against them says that simply because some countries are not yet part of it, it doesn't mean that globalisation doesn't exist. They are also accused of discouraging globalisation because they fear that it will make people more interactive and interdependent, thus forcing their governments to share their power and money with others.

On the flip side of the coin, one can find the **Hyperglobalizers**. These believe that the world is one and globalisation covers the whole world and is a very real phenomenon that is felt *almost* everywhere. This process does not respect national borders or ideas of sovereignty. Hyperglobalizers base their arguments on aspects of commerce, trade and production. Kenichi Ohmae, a Japanese hyperglobalizer, stated that globalisation leads to a "borderless world". His argument presents an interesting association with the Marxist ideology, but from an opposite point of view. In fact, Ohmae says that money makes the world go round since it is invested all around the world, under one name. Therefore (like in Marxism) everyone works towards a single goal – the same world. Hyperglobalizers base their arguments on the changing role of each nation within the whole world, not simply within a region.

Like the Sceptics, Hyperglobalizers have been criticized for being overly biased towards a particular viewpoint. In fact, they consider globalisation to be indispensable and flawless and reject any negative influences it may bring about.

**Transformationalists** provide an alternative view on the subject. They believe globalisation is the central force in a broad spectrum of changes taking place throughout the world, which is not yet hyper-globalized. In fact, some countries are highly globalized (for example U.S.A., Japan and Europe) whilst others (such as African nations) are still very far behind in this process. Many of these countries are still uncertain on the benefits of globalisation and of what they want. However, countries that are globalised do *not* lose their independence or sovereignty. For example, although England are a member of the EU, they do not use the Euro as their currency, but the English Sterling (although some say that they may soon succumb to pressure and introduce the Euro).

This transformation brought about by globalisation requires people to adjust to the new situation and learn to live with each other and with people from other cultures and backgrounds. Transformationalists also say that globalisation is a two-way flow of images, not simply a one-way process.

The No Global movement is another notorious organization fighting against the occurrence of globalisation. They argue that it causes inequality between first and third world countries. They criticize rich countries for not helping poor countries and for not trying to bridge the financial and social gaps between them. However, help must not simply be acts of charity, where money is given to their governments, but more practical help at the root of the problem.

There are other NGO's discouraging globalisation, such as the Campaign for Global Justice, who see it as a completely negative process. These try to inform people that it must be slowed and, if possible, stopped. An argument brought up concerns the aspect of free trade. Whilst some people say that it solves problems of poverty and inequality, they state that

this only flows in one direction – the rich produce and the poor consume, thus forcing them to depend on rich countries. If it were truly free trade both would produce and consume, thus creating an equal situation.

Globalisation involves certain risks, such as environmental degradation due to development, shifting employment patterns leading to stress and anxiety, heightened job insecurity and de-skilling (such as the infamous 7-Up case in Malta last year), decline in traditional influences and loss of self-identity, erosion of family patterns, and democratization of personal relationships.

These are all problems one must consider when trying to evaluate the impact of globalisation, especially in light of the forthcoming referendum on whether Malta is to enter the EU or not. This is a subjective argument, however one cannot deny that without globalisation, the world would not be the same.