Globalization

Inquire: Is the World Becoming One Civilization?

Overview

Globalization is the idea that national boundaries and ethnic differences are all disappearing, and that soon it will be a “small, small world;” we will all be in one community. The predictions are there. Trade — including large business trade and small personal online commerce — and the influence of the media and Internet are bringing everyone into joint communication. These factors are tying the people of the world tighter together into one unified, mono-cultural society.

Is this really happening? Will we all soon be one culture? One economy? One government?

Big Question: What changes have occurred that lead people to believe globalization is a very real event?

Watch: “And that’s the Way it Is”

Legendary newsman Walter Cronkite, who was once called “the most trusted man in America,” anchored the CBS Evening News from 1962-1981. Each night, he ended his newscast with the phrase, “and that’s the way it is.”

The world is changing faster than ever. The “knowledge doubling curve,” as it’s commonly known, was created by Buckminster Fuller in 1982. To put this in context, in 1900, human knowledge doubled at the seemingly amazing speed of every 100 years. By the end of 1945, this had changed to every 25 years. And now? The estimate is every 13 months, with the human race quickly on its way (with the help of the Internet) to every 12 hours!

This knowledge — and the enmeshment of knowledge with the societies, cultures, and politics brought about by this ever-shrinking world — has brought major changes to the roles played by governments and individuals. This globalization has not occurred without impacting the countries, their citizens, and their governments.

Yet, the government of the United States — one of the most complex, confusing, and even frustrating entities man has ever created — continues to function effectively and efficiently in this radically and swiftly changing world environment.

Learning the intricacies of the U.S. government can introduce you to both the strengths and limitations of the American democracy. Remember, when the Constitution was written, the United States consisted of
the original 13 states and covered not much more than the Atlantic seaboard of North America. Now, over 220 years later, there are over 350 million people living in 50 states, encompassing almost the entire North American continent. This original Constitution has only been modified 27 times in over 220 years! From a weak, second-class upstart to the most powerful military, economic, and political power the world has ever seen, this government — this Constitution — has been sufficient to say the least, even in a shrinking world doubling in knowledge at blinding speeds.

Americans share a mutual sense of love, frustration, irritation, and admiration of this unique, never-to-be-duplicated government. As time goes on, may the Stars and Stripes wave on. As Walter Cronkite would say, "...and that’s the way it is."

*Wikiquote contributors; Walter Cronkite (2018); Wikiquote; https://en.wikiquote.org/w/index.php?title=Walter_Cronkite&oldid=2345939; Date Accessed: Friday, July 20, 2018


Read: “...And the World Will Be as One”

"What happens in the farthest corner of the world now touches us almost instantly... The world has become a more crowded, more interconnected, more volatile and unstable place." - Ernest Boyer, "The Globe, the Nation, and our Schools," Kettering Review, 1984

The world is separated politically into countries. But, does it always have to be? Checking a map from a few years ago reveals many changes in political boundaries. Looking at a map from 100 years ago shows almost total change. That fact is often hard for Americans to realize because the borders of the United States have changed only twice in the past 150 years — to include the new states of Hawaii and Alaska. Is it possible that in the near future, borderlines between countries will have little meaning?

Globalization

Ernest Boyer’s quote above is a comment on globalization — the increasing tendency for many interests and issues to be shared by nations. Many globalists warn that the very future of the earth depends on countries cooperating to solve major problems like instability in the world economy, pollution, overpopulation, loss of natural resources, hunger, international conflict, and climate change.

Revolutions in communication, travel, and technology make instant contact among nations possible. Many treaties and international agreements now bind countries together to address concerns over the economy, security, and the environment. Does this mean that nations and governments as we know them today will disappear? Some observers think so. Some early signs include the following:

- **International organizations.** The 20th century saw new experiments with international peace organizations designed to solve disputes diplomatically rather than through war. The League of Nations, established just after World War I, was generally a failure since it could not prevent the advent of World War II. The United Nations replaced the League and has had a mixed record as referee in international conflicts. However, about 160 nations belong to the UN, and the organization is still alive and well after more than half a century.

- **Regional organizations.** Regional organizations have existed for many years, but some experts are seeing a blurring of national borderlines in many recent ones. One example is the European Union, which started as an effort to create a common marketplace among European nations with trade restrictions totally removed. But now, nations are electing representatives to a European
A Case for Independent Governments

Most people cannot imagine nations ever entirely disappearing, even though the nation-state did not emerge in world history until the 18th century. There are many reasons that governments for individual countries still exist. Different people have different needs. Governments must vary according to the needs of the people they serve. Could the globe function under one world government, or even under tough restrictions from an international peace organization? People across the globe still have their differences. According to this point of view, independent governments adapted to their citizens still make the most sense.

Competition among nations is a well-established pattern. How could the countries of Europe, who have been at war for centuries, agree to submit to a single government? How could, and why should, the United States compromise with other governments if it remains the world's largest military superpower? The citizens of these nations have difficulty yielding their sovereignty — the right to determine their own affairs — to supranational organizations.

Globalization is not just a governmental or military issue, but also very much an economic one. The ability to buy and sell goods over the Internet continues to bind the world together. Shipping continues to get faster, and even large, bulky items can now be delivered in a fraction of the time it used to take to transport the goods. Buying and selling from other parts of the world is no longer a “business only” activity. Individuals are buying billions of dollars from other individuals and stores halfway around the world. It is truly becoming a global marketplace.

Will globalization be the answer to current world dilemmas? Or does globalization ignore the need for the continuation of nation-states? Whatever the future holds, governments will be a part of the attempt to address issues and solve problems. The systems may change, but the goals of maintaining order, creating prosperity, and protecting rights are unlikely to change.

Reflect Poll: For or Against Globalization?

Globalization: there are those who believe it is an amazing new path for the human race and those who see it as a bane that destroys unique and wonderful cultures and removes local autonomy.

What about you? Are you excited about a future driven by continued globalization, or do you want to reverse the process and redraw the boundaries?

- Yes, I am excited about globalization.
- No, I think it is destroying too much uniqueness and culture.

Expand: Economic Globalization

The Rise of Globalization in Economics

Recent decades have seen a trend toward globalization, which is the expansion of the cultural, political, and economic connections between people around the world. One measure of this is the increased
Globalization has occurred for a number of reasons. Improvements in shipping and air cargo have driven down transportation costs. Innovations in computing and telecommunications have made it easier and cheaper to manage long-distance economic connections of production and sales. Many valuable products and services in the modern economy can take the form of information. Examples include: computer software, financial advice, travel planning, music, books, movies, and blueprints for designing a building. These products and many others can be transported over telephones and computer networks at ever-lower costs. Finally, international agreements and treaties between countries have encouraged greater trade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Higher Income Countries</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>13.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>81.4</td>
<td>82.2</td>
<td>82.8</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>30.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>28.3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Middle Income Countries</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td>11.9</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>12.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
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<td>31.2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lower Income Countries</strong></td>
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The chart above presents one measure of globalization. It shows the percentage of domestic economic production that was exported for a selection of countries from 2010 to 2013, according to the World Bank. Exports are the goods and services that are produced domestically and sold abroad. Imports are the goods and services that are produced abroad and then sold domestically. The size of total production in an economy is measured by the gross domestic product (GDP). Thus, the ratio of exports divided by GDP measures what share of a country's total economic production is sold in other countries.

In recent decades, the export/GDP ratio has generally risen, both worldwide and for the U.S. economy. Interestingly, the share of U.S. exports in proportion to the U.S. economy is well below the global average, in part because large economies like the United States can contain more of the division of labor inside their national borders. However, smaller economies like Belgium, Korea, and Canada need to trade buying and selling of goods, services, and assets across national borders — in other words, international trade and financial capital flows.
across their borders with other countries to take full advantage of division of labor, specialization, and economies of scale. In this sense, the enormous U.S. economy is less affected by globalization than most other countries.

The chart also shows that many medium and low income countries around the world, like Mexico and China, have also experienced a surge of globalization in recent decades. If an astronaut in orbit could put on special glasses that make all economic transactions visible as brightly colored lines and look down at Earth, the astronaut would see the planet covered with connections.

Lesson Toolbox

Additional Resources and Readings
A Crash Course video covering globalization
   ● Link to resource: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SnR-e0S6lc

A Crash Course video asking whether globalization is good or bad for humanity
   ● Link to resource: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_iwrt7D5OA

A Crash Course Economics video discussing globalization
   ● Link to resource: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MpVjxplExM

Lesson Glossary

**gross domestic product (GDP):** the size of total production in an economy
**exports:** the goods and services that are produced domestically and sold abroad
**imports:** the goods and services that are produced abroad and then sold domestically
**globalization:** the expanding cultural, political, and economic connections between people around the world

Check Your Knowledge

1. Many globalists warn that the very future of the earth depends on countries cooperating to solve major problems.
   a. True
   b. False
2. Globalization is not just a governmental or military issue, but also very much an economic one.
   a. True
   b. False
3. One measure of increasing globalization is the buying and selling of goods, services, and assets across national borders.
   a. True
   b. False

Answer Key:
1. A  2. A  3. A
Citations

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