

# Globalization Unchecked: How Alien Media is Suffocating Real Culture

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Theme: [History](#)

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A Muslim family sits across of me in café, in a largely Muslim Asia country. An older woman shyly hunches over and desperately trying to avoid eye contact with the giant plasma screen TV, blazing loud music on the popular music video channel, MTV. The scantily dressed presenter introduces her 'top song' for the week. Beyonce, dressed in so very little, annoyingly reiterates that she is "a single lady." The old woman's son is mesmerized by what he sees. He pays no attention to his mother, young wife or even his own son who wreaks havoc in the coffee shop. The man's T-Shirt reads: "what the fxxx are you looking at?"

Respecting the message on his T-Shirt, I try to keep to myself, but find it increasingly difficult. The wife is completely covered, all but her face. The contradictions are ample, overwhelming even.

The attire of the family, the attitude of the ladies and even the man with the provocative T-Shirt are all signs of the cultural schizophrenia that permeates many societies in the so-called Third World. It's a side effect of globalization that few wish to talk about.

It's almost always about trade, foreign investment, capital flow and all the rest. But what about culture, identity, traditions and ways of life; do these things amount to anything?

True, Globalization has various manifestations. If viewed strictly from economic terms, then the debate delves into trade barriers, protectionism and tariffs. Powerful countries demand smaller countries to break down all trade barriers, while maintaining a level of protectionism over their own. Smaller countries, knowing that they cannot do much to hide from the hegemonic nature of globalization, form their own economic clubs, hoping to negotiate fairer deals. And the economic tug-of-war continues, between diplomacy and threats, dialogue and arm twisting. This is the side of globalization with which most of us are familiar.

But there is another side of globalization, one that is similarly detrimental to some countries, and profitable to others: cultural globalization – not necessarily the domination of a specific culture, in this case Western culture, over all the rest – but rather the unbridgeable disadvantage of poorer countries, who lack the means to withstand the unmitigated takeover of their traditional ways of life by the dazzling, well-packaged and branded 'culture' imparted upon them around the clock.

What audiences watch, read and listen to in most countries outside the Western hemisphere is not truly Western culture in the strict definition of the term, of course. It's a selective

brand of a culture, a reductionist presentation of art, entertainment, news, and so on, as platforms to promote ideas that would ultimately sell products. For the dwarfed representation of Western culture, it's all about things, tangible material values that can be obtained by that simple and final act of pulling out one's credit card. To sell a product, however, media also sell ideas, often one sided, and create unjustifiable fascinations with ways of life that hardly represent natural progression for many vanishing cultures and communities around the world.

Recently in some Gulf country, a few Turkish teenagers turned an Internet café into a shouting match as they engaged one another in some violent computer game. I desperately tried to mind my own business, but their shrieks of victory and defeat were deafening. "Kill the Terrorist", one of them yelled in English, with a thick Turkish accent. The "Rs" in "terrorists" rolled over his tongue so unnaturally. For a moment, he was an "American", killing "terrorists", who, bizarrely looked more Turkish than American. As I walked out, I glanced at the screen. Among the rubble, there was a mosque, or what was left of it. The young Turkish Muslim was congratulated by his friends for his handy work.

There is nothing wrong with exchanges of ideas, of course. Cultural interactions are historically responsible for much of the great advancements and evolution in art, science, language, even food and much more. But, prior to globalization, cultural influences were introduced at much slower speed. It allowed societies, big and small, to reflect, consider, and adjust to these unique notions over time. But the globalization of the media is unfair. It gives no chance for mulling anything over, for determining the benefits or the harms, for any sort of value analysis. News, music and even pornography are beamed directly to all sorts of screens and gadgets. When Beyonce sings she is a 'single lady', the whole world must know, instantly. This may sound like a harmless act, but the cultural contradictions eventually morph into conflicts and clashes, in figurative and real senses.

More, it makes little sense, for example, that Asian audiences are consumers of Fox News and Sky News, while both are regarded as rightwing media platforms in their original markets. And what can Nepali television, for example, do to control media moguls and morphing media empires all around? Young people grow, defining themselves according to someone else's standards, thus the Turkish teenager, temporarily adopting the role of the "American", blows up his own mosque.

Globalization is not a fair game, of course. Those with giant economies get the lion's share of the 'collective' decision-making. Those with more money and global outlook tend to have influential media, also with global outlook. In both scenarios, small countries are lost between desperately trying to negotiate a better economic standing for themselves, while hopelessly trying to maintain their cultural identity, which defined their people, generation after generation throughout history.

The Muslim family eventually left the coffee shop. The husband watched MTV throughout his stay; the young wife, clicked endlessly on her iPhone, and the older woman glanced at the TV from time to time, then quickly looked the other way. One is certain that a few years ago, that family would have enjoyed an entirely different experience. Alas, a few years from today, they might not even sit at the same table.

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