

Globalization and the Changing World



Evaluate the arguments for and against the view that globalization is leading inexorably to the creation of a uniform global culture.



This is a question with hidden traps. The main one is to focus too narrowly or to veer off into the broader literature on globalization per se and lose track of the question. The best option is to offer a quite straightforward treatment of the arguments for and against the proposition, before reaching your own conclusion based on the balance of evidence to date.

The first part of your answer should define globalization. In doing so, you will have to discuss some of the disagreements around this concept, such as those in the section entitled 'Globalization' (pp. 126-7), including Table 4.6 (p. 137) which sets out in schematic form the differences between three perspectives on globalization. As there are clearly disagreements about exactly what constitutes globalization, you should look for points of agreement across the alternative perspectives in order to arrive at a working definition that will provide the backdrop for the rest of your answer. For instance, despite there being differing ideas of the globalization timescale, there is a measure of agreement that globalization involves closer, more systematic interdependencies between nations. There are other areas of broad agreement too and the emphasis should be on these.

There is a second part to the question though. You are invited to explore the idea that ongoing globalization is leading towards uniformity and a reduction in cultural diversity. Underlying this question is a hidden, normative debate about whether globalization is a good or bad thing, particularly for the poorer, less powerful nations in the developing world. With this in mind, two options are now possible. You might take this at face value as a debate about the theoretical or empirical strengths of the concept of globalization and pitch your answer in terms of the evidence for the uniformity of economic and cultural products, Western ideas and values and so on. This is a perfectly reasonable response to this question. Nonetheless, you may want to extend the discussion into the *normative* debate: is globalization, on balance, a positive development or not? Who is it positive for and who stands to lose out? It is important to bear in mind that the question demands you come to an overall evaluation, so it would not be enough simply to rehearse the competing arguments.

One thesis which should be included in your answer is Roland Robertson's counter-argument of *glocalization*, discussed on pp. 144-6. Bringing glocalization into the essay allows you to draw on some of the recent evidence that local and regional cultures are far from passive when brought into contact with the forces of globalization. For example, the chapter highlights Internet use in Kuwait to demonstrate how globalizing information technology may be readily accepted and adopted, whilst existing cultures make use of but are not radically transformed by it. You could scour the whole book for evidence on both sides of this argument and one useful shortcut is the quick reference guide in Box 4.2 (p. 127).



Finally, remember that globalization is wide-ranging and presents an opportunity to legitimately steer your answer towards your own specialism or preferred area of study. Thus, successful answers may use predominantly economic, political or cultural forms of globalization, provided they also demonstrate that these are driving human societies towards or away from a uniform *global culture*.