Cultural Globalization: Challenges and Responses[1]

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Abstract: In an attempt to lay the groundwork for future analyses of the subject in Korea, the paper explores, drawing on the literature review, key issues in the controversy surrounding cultural globalization, namely, conceptualization of cultural globalization, cultural homogenization vs. diversification theses, the ascendancy of the cultural industry and commercial culture, issues in measuring cultural globalization, and government policy toward cultural globalization. Cultural globalization is a complex and multidimensional concept, and its definition should be approached as such. Cultural imperialism and Media imperialism represent cultural homogenization theories while such newer approaches as reception theory and hybridization advocate diversification thesis. There have been few attempts to measure cultural globalization. The existing scale is less than adequate, but improvements can be made with existing data. Cultural globalization is bringing about sweeping changes in the basic fabric of contemporary society. In government, cultural policy takes on new and expansive roles in order to cope with the pressures of cultural globalization. These range from developing cultural industries, building information infrastructure, to upgrading educational institutions to international standards.

Keywords: cultural globalization, culture, cultural imperialism, media imperialism, cultural policy, cultural diversification, cultural globalization index.

Cultural globalization is a most visible and directly experienced form of globalization today for hundreds of millions of people in countries across all continents. Everyday they spend hours watching the same news and entertainments provided via satellites by multinational media conglomerates and go shopping for consumer goods bearing international brand names at shopping centers run by some global retail giants. Yet cultural globalization, as opposed to economic and political globalization, began attracting research interests from social scientists only in the last decade or so, and it still remains a largely unexplored topic in Korea, remaining in the shadow of the study of economic globalization.

In an attempt to lay the groundwork for future analyses of the subject in Korea, the paper explores, drawing on the literature review, key issues in the controversy surrounding cultural globalization, namely, conceptualization of cultural globalization, cultural homogenization vs. heterogenization theses, the ascendancy of the cultural industry and commercial culture, and government policy toward cultural globalization. Cultural globalization has been defined in a wide variety of ways, causing much misunderstanding and confusion. It may be resolved, however, into two principal approaches, depending on

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the breadth of the definition of culture. Cultural imperialism and Media imperialism represent cultural homogenization theories while such newer approaches as reception theory and hybridization advocate heterogenization thesis. The rapid expansion of the cultural industry is bringing about sweeping changes, for better or worse, not only in our cultural life but also in the basic fabric of contemporary society. In government, cultural policy takes on new and expansive roles in order to cope with the pressures of cultural globalization. These include developing cultural industries, building information infrastructure, upgrading educational institutions to international standards, and so on.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

While the literature on cultural globalization has been growing at an accelerating rate, the term cultural globalization seems to remain ambiguous and inadequately understood. One writer has defined it as acceleration in the exchange of cultural symbols among people around the world, to such an extent that it leads to changes in local popular cultures and identities (Nijman, 1999). This definition appears at first glance very useful as it describes both the process and consequences of cultural globalization, but a closer look reveals its problematic use of 'cultural symbols" as a key term. It is not clear whether culture and cultural symbols are being used differently or not in the definition. Culture is symbolic above all else, and, in that sense, they could mean the same. Cultural symbols, on the other hand, can be interpreted as distinct from culture itself, as in the case where tangible and intangible cultural components are distinguished from each other. Furthermore, it should also be noted that cultural symbols are sometimes treated separately from non-cultural symbols, e.g. symbols of military power or wealth. The point is that the term cultural symbols could be interpreted in widely different ways, and therefore in need of further clarification in order to convey precise meanings.

There is also another way to define cultural globalization, a narrow approach taken by a few   so far. In one such study cultural globalization was described as the transmission or diffusion across national borders of various forms of media and the arts (Crane, 2002: 1). The author of this definition noted in the appendix that the term the arts could also refer to "ways of life," religions, and popular attitudes, saying that these were excluded for lack of space. This was meant seemingly to remind the readers that the author is not confusing art with culture. This note of caution is understandable, but discussions in the article are indeed focused on the flow of the media and the arts between regions and countries in the world, making the definition consistent with the contents of the writing. Not only is the definition logically correct, but   also   practical and realistic.. Debates and most of the literature on cultural globalization have been centered on the issues stemming from international transactions in arts, cultural industries and the media. The recent furor, for example, over the "cultural exception" clause in international trade agreement was about the import and export of movies, not cultural products in general. Similarly, the objects of the   controversies   relating   to   cultural   globalization   such   as   homogenization, commercialization of culture, and Americanization are mostly about popular arts and the media. Therefore, many of those writing on these themes often use culture and the art interchangeably. However, this does not mean that they put them up front as the same or matching concepts. The usual practice, instead, seems to forgo the definition of cultural globalization, and uses expressions like the cultural consequences of globalization

(Breidenbah and Zukrigl, 2003), the impact of globalization on culture (Legrain, 2003), the cultural dimension of globalization (Thomplinson, 1996), and so on. This is a way not to get involved in terminological controversy but it does not help to clarify what cultural globalization is really referring to.

There is an inherent difficulty in defining cultural globalization because the hybrid term consists of two terms, which are themselves highly complex and problematic. To start with, culture is, an expert observed, one of two or three of the most complicated words in the English language (Williams, 1983). A widely known study in the 1950s reported more than 150 definitions by English and American researchers alone (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952). This would imply that culture is genuinely a generic concept encompassing a broad range of related phenomena, so that any single definition can describe only part of it. We will come back to this point later, seeking for a new approach that will cover the comprehensive scope of culture.

Globalization became part of the general intellectual currency only in the late 20th century, but it has already accumulated a long list of various attributes and particulars in diverse disciplines without a clear consensus on its definition. A political scientist remarked that the fashionable notion of globalization refers to increasing integration of world markets and the parceling out of different stages of the production process to those areas with the most obvious competitive advantages (Feigenbaum, 2002). The emphasis on the economics was often embedded in early popular and scholarly literature on globalization, which tended to treat cultural globalization as a byproduct of neo-liberal economic globalization, in which cultural production is manipulated to expand transnational markets. The key players in the economic approach are generally considered as business enterprises. Thus, globalization is said to be both an active process of corporate expansion across borders and a structure of cross-border facilities and economic linkages that has been steadily growing and changing as the process gathers steam (Herman, 1999).

The meaning of globalization has also been described from a comprehensive and general point of view. Globalization was taken to be, for example, the compression and intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole (Beynon and Dunkerley: 42, 2000). In a similar approach, globalization was also explained as a consequence of the institutional arrangements and technological accomplishments of social modernity, enabling and driving towards ever increasing action at a distance (Giddens, 1994). These are highly abstract descriptions, perhaps too abstract to be useful for empirical analysis. In comparison, contemporary globalization was referred to as the rapidly developing multidimensional process of complex interconnections between societies, cultures, institutions and individuals worldwide. And it is heavy with implications for all spheres of social existence: the economic, the political, the environmental, the cultural. Isolating any one of these dimensions risks misrepresenting the complex interact ional effects of the process as a whole (Tomlinson, 1996). The review of the various definitions strongly suggests that globalization is not a singular process with uniform outcomes and clear denotations. In fact it has been used in the contexts of perspective, process, and outcome, and even been called a myth. Globalization is considered as a myth because of its lack of credibility in global leadership consensus, its historical existence prior to the current global economy, and the overestimation that transnational corporations are beyond being regulated by the nation-state (Hirst and Thompson, 1996: 195).

Cultural globalization is clearly a multifaceted phenomenon whose diverse meanings

are not likely to be captured fully by any single definition. On the other hand, an attempt to find some generally acceptable definition may end up in too abstract concepts to be useful both theoretically and practically. One way to deal with the multidimensionality of cultural globalization is to describe it in two steps. First, cultural globalization simply refers to the global diffusion, exchange, and sharing of cultures. Then, different aspects or components are distinguished, e.g. among the normative, cognitive, and expressive dimensions. Sociologists have long made this distinction, so their relations are fairly well established. Normative culture concerns with what is right and wrong in society and includes normative values, institutional arrangements such as religion, political and economic institutions, and law. Cognitive culture concerns with what is judged to be correct and incorrect and consists of the stock of knowledge, human perception, education, science, skills, and technology. Expressive culture is the arts and artifacts in various types and forms, including music, painting, literature, film, dance, architecture, and so on. Making this distinction is necessary because these three spheres of culture do not always function together. For example, commercialization of culture happens usually only to some elements of the expressive culture, and the great global diffusion of culture which took place two thousand years ago refers to the transmission of what has since then become major world religions not the diffusion of culture in general. These are only two examples, but it is evidently clear from them that the adoption of adequate distinction among different aspects of culture would lead to a better understanding and resolution of controversies surrounding cultural globalization.

HOMOGENIZATION OF CULTURE

The dispute between cultural homogenization and cultural diversification is one of the most enduring and controversial issues in the interpretation of the effects of globalization (Appadurai, 1996). Those on the side of cultural homogenization thesis warn that individual cultures all over the world are eroding in the process of cultural globalization, and will be replaced eventually by some form of dominant uniform culture. Cultural transactions across regional and national borders are not an even process just as free trade is not equal trade. Some cultures or cultural components are bound to circulate further and proliferate more than others, displacing weaker native cultures. Cultural globalization is, the critics argue, nothing but the massive introduction of all forms of cultural products and practices from the developed countries to underdeveloped countries. Four major variants of the homogenization thesis have developed over the years. The oldest and best known of them is cultural imperialism.

Cultural Imperialism

The term cultural imperialism appeared in the 1960s as part of a radical critique of Western capitalist societies dominating the rest of the world culturally (Tomlinson, 1991). The powerful nations of the West attempt to impose on the third world countries their values, knowledge, behavioral patterns and life styles in their pursuit of the expansion of economic and political interests. It is interpreted as an attempt by the West to reassert the power and influence it enjoyed during the age of colonization. The effect of cultural imperialism is considered as pervasive and lethal. The penetration and domination of Western culture takes place, according to the critics of cultural imperialism, in all spheres

of life in the third world, from ideological preference, institutional building, artistic activity and leisure patterns to social relations. The cultural onslaught results in an inevitable erosion of distinctive life styles and an eventual loss of national identities in the third world, leading to the homogenization of cultures in the world.

Cultural imperialism has been called sometimes as Americanization because of the country's singularly dominant position in the world. The term is employed particularly by French and other European intellectuals who are alarmed over the threat of the Americanization of European culture (Mathy, 1993; Elteren, 2003). Of course Americanization is not confined to Europe only, it is found the world over; people across the world listen to CNN news, hear music from MTV, eat at McDonalds, and movies produced in Hollywood dominate the world film markets.

Media Imperialism

The second type of homogenization theory is media imperialism, which has risen from recent advances in information technology and the resulting expansion of the media industry. It is much like cultural imperialism in its process and effect, but is opted for over cultural imperialism mainly because of two recent changes in the global cultural environment. One is the geometric expansion in the capacity of the media to produce, edit, store, and transmit cultural products and other information. Computers, satellites, internet, and countless other information processing devices and facilities are infinitely escalating the production and distribution capacity of entertainment and news media. As a result, the media has become the major driving force behind cultural globalization and those who control global media also control cultural globalization. The other is the oligarchic structure of the global media market, where a small number of multinational media conglomerates, based mostly in the West, control the production and the global distribution of news, movies, popular music, television programs, books, and so forth. Media Imperialism, its proponents claim, represents more accurately the new global cultural environment created by the combination of the two developments.

World Culture Theory

The third type of homogenization theory is world culture theory. The main point of the theory is that the continuous and intense processes of current globalization are giving rise to universal world culture, one that is accepted and practiced uniformly by people around the globe. It may have, wholly or partially, started out as particular national or regional culture, e.g. Western or American culture, but the world culture, once formed, does not belong to any particular nation or region. The world culture is, therefore, a uniquely distinct phenomenon. One definition describes it as the cultural complex of foundational assumptions, forms of knowledge, and prescriptions for action that underlie globalized flows, organizations, and institutions (Boli and Lechner, 2001). World culture comprises webs of significance that span the globe, conceptions of world society and world order, and models and methods of organizing social life that are assumed to have worldwide significance or applicability. The idea of world culture is not popular in academic circles yet. But it is beginning to gain ground among academics and laymen alike. Most literature on cultural globalization has taken the view that people eating at McDonalds, watching Hollywood movies, and conversing in English all over the world does not lead to the emergence of a uniform global culture. It is true that such convergence in taste does not

constitute an autonomous cultural whole, but the patterns of such consumption themselves are meaningful cultural acts, and should be recognized as an indication of emergent global culture. More importantly, there exist today hundreds of global paradigms of institutions, values and norms, truth and knowledge for a wide range of human activities - in economics, politics, education, technology, law, environmental protection, sports, and recreation, which constitute the core of world culture. The advent of world culture has been viewed mostly with general pessimism because of its potential for cultural homogenization and domination. Lately, however, some have begun to express hope and optimism that global culture will help to create a better and peaceful world. When people across borders agree on common values and norms, have similar life styles, and use the same language, they will communicate more and understand each other better, creating a more harmonious and peaceful world order.

A recent theory suggests that cultural globalization leads to world culture along four concurrent paths of development (Berger, 1997). The first focuses on the emergence of global business culture and is called the "Davos culture,' named after the venue for the annual World Economic Summit in Switzerland. It is a direct product of economic globalization and consists of the values, norms, customs, and patterns of behavior embedded in international business transactions. Membership in the international business community nowadays requires skills to deal with computers, international customs procedures, hotel accommodations, and the ability to speak English, and so on. Also, it calls for a display of acceptable personal habits and social skills: there are dress codes to follow, personal hygiene to maintain, and certain styles of demeanor to display in public. Starting out as business protocol, the "Davos culture' spills over into personal life spheres, so the elite or the rich and powerful the world over have similar interests and life styles. They enjoy concerts and operas, play golf and go skiing, send their sons and daughters to internationally famous colleges, and appreciate tastes in fine wine and whisky.

Second is termed as the "faculty club culture," resulting from the diffusion and sharing of the values, norms, and know-how of the Western academic culture in the global intellectual society. It, too, is an elite culture, the main carriers of which are internationally oriented foundations, academic networks, universities, non-governmental organizations as well as governmental and multinational agencies with cultural and developmental missions. The values and norms of the "faculty culture" have spread over the globe in the educational institution, the legal system, medical institutions, and the mass media.

Popular culture is the third channel for the development of world culture. And it refers essentially to the global diffusion of American popular arts, commercial goods and consumption patterns - kids listening to rock music, wearing blue jeans, eating hamburgers, and drinking cokes. Grown-ups are involved in McDonaldization too - watching American sitcoms and Hollywood movies. The criticism that cultural globalization would lead to cultural homogenization and commercialization cannot be denied here. It should also be noted that the preference for the popular culture is not just a matter of imitating foreign fashion and life styles, but also involves acquiescence to alien values and norms underlying them. The attraction of rock music by the young, for example, is more than its loud sound and fast rhythm. To the millions of youths the world over, it stands for rebellion against authority, relief from tradition, an assertion of self-identity, and even released sexuality.

The fourth process of cultural globalization is shown in the global expansion of Evangelical Protestantism, especially in its Pentecostal version, into the regions to which it

has been historically alien - East Asia, Latin America, and South Africa. The propagation of the religion in these new territories has important cultural consequences in that it preaches the same "Protestant ethic" that Max Weber revealed as an essential spirit in the genesis of modern capitalism - a rational, disciplined, and realistic view of life and work. Evangelical Protestantism brings modern rational culture to these various developing countries, facilitating their transition into modern society, whose cultures are largely of Western origin.

DIVERSIFICATION OF CULTURE

Reception Theory

Reception theory is a demand side theory as it analyzes the effect of cultural globalization by focusing on the reaction of culture consumers rather than suppliers. It assumes that audiences and consumers respond actively, not passively, to cultural products from outside, and that various groups, regions, and nations use and interpret the same imported culture differently. So, the use or adoption of the same cultural products or traits does not lead to cultural homogenization automatically. Responses to foreign culture vary not only across different societies, but also among different social groups within the same society. For instance, studies have shown that preference for local and American television programs differ among social classes (Straubhaar, 1991). Reception theory tends to view that diffusion of cultures among societies would result in greater cultural diversity rather than homogenization.

Hybridization Theory

The second theory of cultural diversification is hybridization or creolization theory. This theory explains that cultural globalization increases diversity in world culture because interactions between different cultures would give birth to new cultural patterns, adding to the existing stock of cultures. A case in point is the adaptation of foreign dishes across societies. Chinese restaurants are in business in every major city in the world, but the food they serve is different from country to country. For instance, Chinese restaurants in Seoul prepare many dishes with hot spices, while the same dishes may taste sweet and salty in London. Fusion food restaurants go even further. The so-called fusion restaurants, especially popular among young urban white-collar workers, specialize in providing new dishes that are created by blending traditional recipes from the Eastern and Western culinary cultures. Another example is West African popular music. A blend of mainly Brazilian music, blues, and British Rock, accompanied by local and Western musical instruments, is popular for its distinctive sound and rhythm in many parts of the world. Cultures come together from many sources, interact in unexpected ways, and transform into new and varied forms and styles, enriching diversity in world culture.

Multiculturalism or Cultural Authenticity Theory

The third theory of cultural diversification is multiculturalism or cultural authenticity theory. Familiar ideas that have been around for some time, and multiculturalism or cultural authenticity theory came about as a reaction to cultural globalization, and, before it, the spread and domination of Western culture. The multiculturalism or cultural authenticity

theory is an intellectual movement fused with nationalism and anti-commercialism, a central tenet of which is cultural relativism, the belief that all human cultures are equal. Its advocates put strong emphasis on the need to maintain diversity in world culture, arguing that diversity is an essential condition for the cultural vitality of the world. Most of the western culture that displaces other traditional cultures in the process of globalization is commercial culture - the fashions, artifacts, consumer goods manufactured and marketed for profit by businesses in rich countries. They are not real and genuine culture inherent in human social life, from which people get pride and comfort in their own identities. Multiculturalism or cultural authenticity theory has become a mainstream intellectual and social movement with many followers in both industrial and developing countries. Many organizations, both governmental and non-governmental as well as international, provide diverse programs designed to preserve and foster traditional and minority cultures of various kinds - from museums, concerts halls, independent film festivals, to ethnic food restaurants. They are like a coalition of small armies fighting against the onslaught of commercial culture from multinational cultural corporations.

MEASUREMENT

Few studies have attempted to develop a scale that can be used in measuring the extent of regional or national cultural globalization. An exception is a cultural globalization index developed recently to gauge specifically the level of a country's cultural globalization (Kluver and Fu, 2004). The index is obtained by measuring a nation's exports and imports of print publications, including books, periodicals, and newspapers. Then the dollar amount obtained for each country is divided by its population in order to normalize the data. The resulting figure is then used to indicate the country's level of cultural globalization. The choice of mass media as proxies of culture seems appropriate, since they are the primary conduits by which values, norms, and ideas are transmitted. There are, of course, other important media such as television, radio and movies, which also have a significant impact on cultural globalization. These were not included in the index, it was explained, because of a lack of available data.

Personal contacts across national borders are also missing in the index. The media may have become the prime channel for international cultural flow in the information age, but people still remain an important carrier of international cultural traffic. The number of international travelers, tourists in particular, has been growing fast during the last two decades and the trend is expected to accelerate in the future, as those in newly industrializing countries join in international tourism. International migration is also a major vehicle for global cultural transmission, and should be reflected in a cultural globalization index. Personal contacts through the international telephone service and on the Internet have become commonplace nowadays, so they must be taken into account too. The volume of international telephone traffic and the number of Internet users and Internet hosts are readily available, and so is the number of secure servers through which encrypted messages are transmitted. Formulating a comprehensive index of cultural globalization will take more time and effort, but it is clear that we can easily make improvements to the existing scale using existing data.

PROSPECTS

The opponents of cultural globalization fear that it is destroying local cultures and national identities and spreading, in their place, shallow commercial culture from the West. Supporters, on the other hand, point out the resilience of traditional culture, and that interaction between different cultures leads to greater diversity instead. There is, however, no doubt about the fact that cultural globalization is already here and will continue into the foreseeable future. Again, there can be no doubt about the fact that cultural globalization is, by itself, neither a blessing nor a curse. It only has the potential to be either of them. Like most great social changes, cultural globalization will have complex and varying impacts on people and countries. Its effects will not only be different between advanced and developing countries, but also among social groups in the same society. Therefore, the advantages and disadvantages of cultural globalization listed below represent only some of the general effects it may bring to newly industrialized countries like Korea.

Advantages

- Increased consumer choice and welfare
The infusion of new ideas, arts, knowledge and cultural products from outside provide people with a greater choice of life styles. To many it only means more affluence and abundance of consumer goods and fashions. But to some, it may give the opportunity to throw off the shackles of tradition and pursue a new and better life, as in the case of those women who were allowed to go to school for the first time and get a job after a religious ban on women's activities outside home was lifted in the modernization process.

- Chance for cultural enrichment and artistic innovation
The infusion of new culture increases cultural diversity in society so long as it does not displace traditional culture. It even offers an opportunity for cultural growth and enrichment through a selective adoption and appropriate utilization of foreign cultures including new knowledge, technology and skills. This has in fact been a major avenue for cultural and social development in history. Also, foreign arts often provide the inspiration for the birth of major artistic innovation.

- Expansion of cultural industry and economic growth
Global cultural business is experiencing a continuing expansion as a result of cultural globalization, and the importance of cultural industry in national economies is similarly increasing. A larger Global market would allow the countries with a small domestic market to develop their cultural industry by export trade.

- Promotion of global civil society
Increases in worldwide communication and travel, and exchange and sharing of cultural experience create an environment conducive to engendering greater consensus among people across the globe on basic values and norms concerning human rights, war and peace, conservation, etc. The hope is that a global civil society may be in the making through the creation of global culture (Berger, 1997). Optimists find plenty of evidence for the emerging world society. First, the number of global institutions, e.g. WTO, and international regimes of various types keeps growing, giving ever more structure to the world order. Second, there are many standardized global models for various fields of

activities - science, business, education, government, and even leisure (Boli and Lechner, 2001).

Disadvantages

Some of the potential harm of cultural globalization has already been discussed and does not need to be explained again here.
- Loss of cultural identity
- Degradation and loss of traditional culture
- Commercialization and leveling of culture
- Cultural conflict
    The collision of different cultures is a source of conflict between societies as well as within societies (Huntington, 1996). Intergenerational conflict often arises from a cultural clash.
- Cost of cultural assimilation
    People on the receiving end of cultural globalization have to invest considerable efforts and money to adopt foreign cultural elements. Learning a foreign language is such an example; in Asian high school, English sometimes take up one fifth of the curriculum. Yet, some dissatisfied parents send their children abroad just to study the language. At a societal level, transforming traditional institutions frequently causes dissention, frustrations, and sacrifices in society.

Strategies

As the list of advantages and disadvantages indicate, cultural globalization has profound implications for the future of a country, not only in the cultural sphere but also in economy, and politics, and so on. A successful response of a government to the pressures of cultural globalization is of vital interest for a country's cultural, economic, and social development for decades to come. This is especially true for newly industrializing and developing countries that have been mostly on the receiving end of global cultural flows.

Governments may choose among three strategies toward cultural globalization; proactive, reactive, and intermediate strategies.

The proactive strategy accepts cultural globalization as an opportunity for national development through the enrichment of national culture and the expansion of cultural industry. Not only does it set an open door policy towards global cultural flows but also actively seeks out for the adoption of valued cultural practices and material from abroad. The reactive strategy takes the opposite view. Cultural globalization is regarded essentially as a threat to national culture and economy, and is a cause for social conflict. Cultural policy is primarily focused on the control of cultural flows across the national border. Foreign media are particularly suspected of spreading decadent ideas and life styles, corrupting the youth and degrading cultural tradition. The intermediate strategy is a combination of both the pro and reactive strategies.

Obviously, it is the proactive strategy that is recommended here, and listed below are some of the measures essential for its implementation.
1) Development of global orientation and skill of the national leadership.
2) Innovation of domestic institutions and laws to meet global standards.
3) Adjustment of laws and customs for freer cultural exchange.

4) Upgrading educational systems to global standards at all school levels.
5) Consolidation of cultural infrastructure.
   - language infrastructure.
   - technological infrastructure.
   - entrepreneurial infrastructure.
6) Promotion of cultural industry and trade

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