



What is globalization?

The term *globalization* describes the increased movement of goods, services, technology, and money throughout the world. Although globalization is not new, its pace has increased with new technologies, especially in the area of telecommunications. Throughout history there have often been periods of international trade, movement of people and goods between countries, and cultural exchange between countries. But globalization today has some new characteristics:

- *Free trade*: There are agreements between many countries to reduce taxes or restrictions on trade across borders, so that goods, services, and money move more freely.
- *Free market*: National governments are becoming less involved in controlling international trade.
- *International trading blocs*: In order to sell more goods and buy goods at cheaper rates, countries enter into trade agreements with other countries to buy and sell as large blocs or groups (e.g., NAFTA, European Union...).
- *Transnational corporations*: Large companies, usually owned by people in the most developed nations, operate in many countries at the same time, taking advantage of lower labour and operating costs in less-developed nations.
- *Greater international cultural influence* because of the mass communications technologies (e.g., television, films, video, radio...)
- *Increased international trade and tourism*
- *Greater sharing of information* across borders, through the Internet, the telephone, and greater sale of books across countries
- *Greater immigration*, including illegal immigration, because of the world transportation network
- *Greater number of international standards* (e.g., copyright laws...)

The debate about globalization

Supporters of globalization say that it is a positive trend for these reasons:

- It helps less-developed countries improve their economies by providing more jobs and more industrial development.
- It allows the sharing of new technologies (e.g., communications, medical treatments, agricultural methods) and knowledge (e.g., education, books, democratic government) across more nations of the world.
- It gives people in all parts of the world access to a greater variety of goods and services at reasonable prices.
- Through control of the world economy by international organizations, such as the World Bank and the World Trade Organization, the richer countries will be forced to consider not only their own country's quality of life but also quality of life around the world, thus reducing poverty in less-developed countries.
- Because of greater worldwide communication and exchange, cultures will gain a better understanding of one another.

Opponents of globalization are concerned because they are asking:

- Who will control the international corporations? These companies exist to make a profit for their owners, not to enhance quality of life.
- What will happen to the minority cultures in the world? Will they disappear, since communications are more controlled by the cultures of the richest and most technologically advanced nations?
- How will we make sure that the less powerful nations are getting a fair price for their services (e.g., labour) and their goods?
- How will we make sure that international corporations protect the environment when they operate in less-developed nations?

Sources:

Government of Canada, *The Canadian Economy, Globalization:*

<<http://canadianeconomy.gc.ca/english/economy/globalization.html>>

Artpolitical Political Encyclopedia, *Globalization:*

<www.artpolitical.org/infopedia/gl/Globalization.html>

The World Bank Group, *Globalization:*

<<http://www1.worldbank.org/economicpolicy/globalization>>

"There has been globalization of crime, drugs, terror, hate, the weapons trade, pornography, and financial speculation. But civil society, citizenship, and civic virtue remain properties of the democratic nation-state.... Yet the struggle for democracy continues. Citizens have begun to look for ways to influence matters beyond their national boundaries."

- Patrick Watson and Benjamin Barber

"Globalization has increased contacts between people and their values, ideas and ways of life in unprecedented ways. People are travelling more frequently and more widely. Television now reaches families in the deepest rural areas of China. From Brazilian music in Tokyo to African films in Bangkok, to Shakespeare in Croatia, to books on the history of the Arab world in Moscow, to the CNN world news in Amman, people revel in the diversity of the age of globalization."

- UN Human Development Report 2004: <<http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2004>>

