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Topic Guide

"Cultural Globalization"

Introduction:

Cultural globalization involves the exchange of values, ideas and meanings throughout the world with the aim to extend and intensify social relations. The effect this has had is the increase in interconnectedness among various populations and cultures, which have been diffused through channels such as the Internet, popular culture media and international travel. There are a lot of benefits that come with this process including development and advancement in economics and technology (a significant impact being on developed countries) and the creation of a more homogenous world.

At the same time, some problems arise such as the loss of uniqueness of local cultures leading to a loss of identity and exclusion - an example is when traditional societies are modernized using imported models and not based on their context. Therefore, the approach that should be taken recognizes and respects the diversity of cultures while making the required changes for a more sustainable and progressive global community.

History on the Topic:

Cultural globalization is said to have a very long history because entities have been circulating the globe for several millennia. From the premodern civilization (early civilization - 1500) we have seen transformations that contributed to cultural globalization. These include:

1. Early human migration

2. The emergence of world religions

3. The early imperial systems

4. The development of transregional trade networks.

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1. Early human migration:

Early patterns of human migration are considered by some writers to provide evidence of cultural globalisation in the postmodern society. Human groupings have moved throughout the globe in order to ensure their own survival and to counter entropy. From the original migration of Homo erectus and Homo sapiens out of East Africa through the digitization of information in our own computer age.

One example of early human migration dates back to nomadic empires. Anatholy Kazanov (1984) identified different models of nomadic adaptation to new religions and places facilitated by the lack of established territorial borders. Nonetheless, the relationship between globalization and religion is one with new possibilities and further challenges.

2. The emergence of world religions:

Religions such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Hinduism emerged during this period carried in a large part due to traders and travellers. Their spread was also aided by the development of writing and European imperial expansions. Religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism or Confucianism remained Asian religions, and even today, while they have adherents globally, their spiritual centre remains in Asia.

On the one hand, while religion takes advantage of communication and transportation technology, it is at the same time the source of globalization's greatest resistance by acting as a haven for those standing in opposition to its power. On the other hand, because globalization allows for daily contact, religion enters a circle of conflict in which religions become "more self-conscious of themselves as being world religions."

3. The early imperial systems

As more and more empires extended, so did their religions. What all empires had in common was their incorporation of different cultural groups within a single geographical territory.

Such conditions facilitate both trade and cultural interaction. These multicultural empires, therefore, provided the authority that enabled cultural diffusion and the spread of ideas, and at the same time challenged local identities.

4. The development of transregional trade networks:

The major networks of trade that developed in the classical age were influenced by economic, cultural, environmental, and geographic factors. For example, the Silk Roads had their origins in Asia as nomadic and settled people exchanged goods. Merchants also became agents of cultural diffusion. Buddhism spread rapidly, leap-frogging from oasis town to oasis town. The process was facilitated by these towns which often built beautiful Buddhist temples to attract Buddhist merchants abroad.

The contemporary phase of globalization (1945 - present) consists of the free movement of people, information and goods. This period is clearly marked not only by the greater intensity of cultural flows (the movement of people, ideas, symbols, images), but also by the greater velocity with which we travel from place to place, deepening the forms of global cultural interconnectedness.

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Current Issues:

The contemporary era of globalization, with its unprecedented acceleration and intensification in the global flows of capital, labor, and information, is having a homogenizing influence on local culture.

While this phenomenon supports the integration of societies and has created millions of new opportunities, it may also lead to a decline in the uniqueness of local culture, which in turn causes loss of identity, exclusion and even conflict.

Education that was previously not available to remote cultures is now readily accessible. An example of the negative impact on education can be seen in Nigeria, where diverse local languages add complexity to the task of tutoring its citizens. Hence, in order to maintain cultural diversity, allowances must be arranged for a multitude of local languages. Meanwhile, the corresponding situation in Germany or China is in high contrast, as universities there offer complete courses in English.

Furthermore, such an impact also reflects on indigenous cultures, which are frequently exploited for tourism purposes. The consumeristic nature of globalization is often contrary to traditional indigenous values. The countries in which this type of tourism occurs often alter their policies to encourage the influx of tourists. Many indigenous groups are relocated from their traditional territories in order to enhance the experience for the 'Western Tourist'. The efforts of Western conservation organizations have convinced many African nations to modify their preservation policies to the point where there is a direct impact on the ability of indigenous individuals to continue providing for their people in their traditional ways.

While the changes brought about by globalization have offered plenty of new employment and education opportunities, they likewise lead to the erosion of values, as traditional societies and communities are exposed to rapid 'modernisation' based on models imported from outside and not adapted to their context.

Past action (by the UN or other authoritative bodies):

In 2015, the Member States of the UN adopted the landmark 2030 Agenda, which provides a blueprint for the transition to a healthier planet and a more just world, for present and future generations. The agenda is comprised into 17 sustainable goals; concrete targets, to end poverty and hunger; expand access to health, education, justice and jobs; promote inclusive and sustained economic growth; while protecting our planet from environmental degradation

At Asian forum, the UN Chief calls for more equitable globalization, urgent action on climate change. Noting that "Climate change is moving forward faster than we are"

Other examples of past action taken by the UN are:

- Millennium Declaration and Declaration and MDGs
- The UN World Summit on Sustainable The UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002 (Rio+10)
- World Summit 2005 World Summit 2005

Possible considerations for the future

Further and larger-scale cultural globalisation is inevitable, some might argue. With media becoming more and more impactful in our day to day lives, countries, and therefore different cultures, become increasingly aware of, interact with and influence one another more than they did so before. This could result in the formation of a single global culture. This is the idea that there will be a single culture shared by people around the world.

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Cultural globalisation can also lead to cultural homogenization (some might argue that cultural homogenisation has already happened), that is the reduction of cultural diversity through the widespread of cultural symbols such as values, norms and customs.

Cultural homogenisation could result in the breaking down of all barriers between cultures and therefore the global assimilation of a single culture. Now, this can be seen as positive and as negative, it is up for all debaters to decide what impact this can have on their own country, be it negative, positive or both.

Debaters could consider the following questions when thinking about the impact that cultural globalisation will have on their country:

- Is cultural globalisation a good thing that is occurring or not? Why? (give examples from your own countries and how they are affected by globalisation)

- What impact does cultural globalisation have on the economy of your country?

- Is the idea of a global culture plausible and if so, how would that look like? Will it have aspects of your country's culture?

Conclusion / Summary

Cultural globalisation has enabled the formation of shared norms and knowledge that we associate with both our individual and collective identities. While this allows us to have a greater sense of belonging to the worldwide community and brings a multitude of advantages, we need to be careful to avoid possible conflicts.

Bibliography / References

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