

## CONTENT ANALYSIS OF IRANIAN DAILIES ON THE CULTURAL CONSEQUENCES OF GLOBALIZATION

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### ABSTRACT

The present research project evaluated the process of globalization and its various cultural consequences from the viewpoints of Iranian newspapers. Globalization and its cultural consequences for developing countries such as Iran and Malaysia have been an issue for debate in recent years. Furthermore, media in its different forms has an undeniable role in leading public opinion towards this important phenomenon in the world currently. The objectives of this study were to determine the viewpoints of Iranian dailies on the globalization phenomenon, identify positive and negative cultural consequences of globalization based on their viewpoints and finally to determine the most important concerns of cultural globalization based on Iranian dailies. One hundred articles from 15 different dailies were selected and were subjected to content analysis. The research results showed an overall more negative viewpoint by Iranian dailies toward the globalization process in 43% of the cases against 35% with positive viewpoints. In addition “Free circulation of global information and knowledge” was the most important positive cultural consequence for globalization process while “Facility for the west to overcome developing countries” was the most important negative cultural consequence. In conclusion, Iranian newspapers believed that continuation of the current process of globalization would cause a western hegemony over the third world and developing countries in terms of their political, economical, social and finally cultural identities.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Cultural globalization, Consequences of globalization, Iran and cultural globalization, Media and cultural globalization.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Globalization is an historical process and literally it is the process of globalizing and transformation of some phenomena into global ones. It can be described as a process by which the people of the world are unified into a single society and functioning together. This process or force is a combination of economic, technological, socio-cultural and political forces (Croucher, 2004). Globalization, as a term, is very often used to refer to economic globalization that is integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, foreign direct investment, capital flows, migration, and spread of technology (Bhagwati, 2007).

In regards to social and cultural consequences of globalization, debate abounds over whether it is good or bad for the self, the family, the nation, and the world. Actually, people are culturally safe when their cultural identity, rights and needs are respected. They are culturally unsafe or at risk when their cultural identity is diminished or their group disempowered (Polaschek, 1998). In an influential concept for globalization, the Mc Donaldization theory (Clark and Mathur, 1997) explains that cultural consequences for globalization are primarily flown from the United States towards the rest of the world. So the innate conclusion would be that the emergent global culture is simply the result of exportation of U.S. culture to the rest of the world. Philippe Lagraine (2003) believes globalization not only increases individual freedom, but also revitalizes cultures and cultural artifacts through foreign influences, technologies, and markets. On the other hand Fishwick (2004) believes that in this increasingly interconnected world one important thing which is not clear are those who benefit and those who suffer from this process of globalization.

Critiques of the current wave of globalization typically look at the erosion of traditional culture which occurs as a result of the economic transformations related to globalization (Stiglitz *et al.*, 2005). Finally, Helen Youngelson-Nea (2001) explains that cultural boundaries are important for sustaining a sense of cohesion for any given group of people. Collectively, a sense of purpose and a sense of meaning are to be found within cultural borders that separate “insiders” from “outsiders”. In summary, globalization can be considered as an inevitable forceful driving force for the development of global economy as well as communication. But, attached to the economic and communication changes that are the fruits of the growing globalization tree, some other results are going to be produced which can be undesirable for local and national level communities. Among them, cultural changes are considered as important issues which will repress the local cultures through damaging their cultural identities, traditions, languages and religions.

Hall (2004) showed that globalized anti-Muslim sphere which was produced by the western propaganda machinery had a negative impact on the social identities and thus on the well-being and cultural safety of Muslims in many Western nations. Similar results on this issue were obtained by other researchers including Fekete (2004) and Helly (2004). As a consequences many scholars believe that global culture is marginalizing national culture (Bird and Stevens, 2003). This observation suggests that the forces which are moving the world towards globalization are crushing national cultures, marginalizing them farther and farther toward the edge of worthlessness. Many scholars believe that global brands are “Trojan Horses” by which transnational corporations colonize local cultures (Falk, 1999 and Ritzer 1993). In addition and

to a large extent, globalization promotes integration of the world and calls for the removal of all cultural barriers. That is why Moussalli (2003) who tries to determine the impact of globalization on Arab countries reiterates that rapid economic, technological, social and political invasion of foreign culture into the Arab world may put their cultural importance at risk and will force people to be worried about the loss of their religious and societal characteristics.

Media plays a fundamental role in controlling of public opinion and decision making of the politicians (Kennedy *et al.*, 2006). Based on this, the role of newspapers has advanced in reply to the changing desires of their readers. In developing countries nation most influenced by the globalization process, the press serves a range of purposes. The press is the source and medium of news and information about the world, national and local events and the means for instituting bilateral understanding. Based on Sommerland (1981), the press is the instrument for education which contributes to the development of human resources and capital in the process of promoting economic growth. Saffar (1996) proposes a perspective of power in evaluation of press systems. He suggests that ideology is only the surface layer and a pattern of powers lies deeply below this surface in any country's press system. The press has another function in investigating and understanding the environment for members of a society. To perform this role, press should have a particular rating system and this system can only come from a critical and deep consciousness of the social context and dynamics and from expressions (Oetama, 1989).

Thus developing countries in general should recognize the process of globalization as an inevitable process from which they would not be able to remain secured. The only way for them

is to understand this process and recognize its consequences. It is also important to understand the negative and positive consequences of cultural globalization, in order to be able to harness or boost them respectively. In this study, the focus is on the evaluation of the globalization phenomenon and particularly its cultural consequences from the viewpoint of Iranian newspapers, which have been published in the form of speeches, interviews, and articles.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Content analysis was used to evaluate the issue of globalization and its cultural consequences from the view points of Iranian newspapers. Fifteen newspapers with an online version and having potential for searching keywords through their archives were selected as the target population of this study. The study covered two complete solar years starting from 20th of March 2004 until 19th of March 2006, which is compatible to the Iranian calendar years of 1383 and 1384. Samples were selected based on their focus on the consequences of globalization, particularly with a cultural concern. Translated materials were also included in the study. To collect the samples, an extensive online search was conducted through the “archives” of the newspapers’ websites and articles with contents focused on “Cultural Consequences of Globalization”, were selected. In conducting archival search, the following keywords were used in order to narrow down the number of samples and to select the most appropriate and related articles; culture, globalization, culture and globalization, cultural globalization, globalization of cultures, cultural effects of globalization and finally cultural consequences of globalization. In addition, both of the optional search conditions including “title” and “content” were selected. In present research, “whole articles” were used as the units of analysis. Articles were categorized

based on firstly, the information regarding general and basic details of each newspaper including newspaper name, political orientation, date of article published, type of the article, source, size, the writers' specialty, main focus, overall direction and finally the main concern of the article. Secondly, articles were categorized based on the globalization phenomenon and its cultural effects including negative and positive consequences.

For positive consequences, 17 different codes were predefined as the most important positive cultural effects of cultural globalization. Some of them were promotion of local cultures into the global arena, free circulation of global information and knowledge, global perception, global convergence, convergence of believes and dialogues and assurance of cultural rights and freedoms. As for negative consequences for globalization of cultures, 22 different codes were also determined which include; synchronization of cultures, penetration of western culture, moral and religious relativism, consuming culture and English language propagation.

Data collected in this research were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) programme. The research results were reported in frequencies and percentages in order to compare the coverage of the positive and negative view points of different Iranian dailies towards the issue of cultural globalization. In addition, a pretest was done after two coders completed a 10 percent coding of the articles. The pretest results were used to calculate Cohen's Kappa coefficient of inter – reliability of coders which was greater than 0.7, that is the acceptable limit.

## RESULTS

One hundred articles were selected based on the extensive search which was done in 15 different Iranian dailies. Political grouping of the articles was done based on their political attitude towards current Iranian political categorization including left parties (Reformists), right parties (conservatives) and independent dailies. From the total of 100 articles 41% were from newspapers which belonged to conservatives, 45% from newspapers owned by reformists and finally, 14% were from independent newspapers.

Articles were categorized into seven different groups including news, news analyses, scientific article, speeches, interviews, announcements and analysis (investigative reports). Among them, the highest numbers of the articles (52%) belonged to scientific articles (Table 1).

**Table 1. Distribution based on type of the articles**

Type of the article	Frequency	Percent
Scientific article	52	52
News analysis (Report, News article, ... )	16	16
Interview	14	14
News	6	6
Speech	5	5
Analysis (investigative reports)	5	5
Announcements or declarations	2	2
Total	100	100

Categorization of the articles based on the specialty of their writers whether they are academician, journalist, politician, social/political activist, expert and undetermined group.

Based on table 2 the biggest group of the writers with a total of 50% of cases was from the category of academicians and the members of scientific boards of the universities (Table 2).

**Table 2. Distribution based on the writers of the articles**

<b>Writer's specialty</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Academician	50	50
Journalist	15	15
Politician	11	11
Social, political activist	11	11
A group of expertise	8	8
Undetermined	5	5
Total	100	100

In terms of the main focus of the articles, 41% of them have discussed the globalization with an emphasis on culture. The second major category belongs to the articles that have evaluated the globalization with more than one major focus (Table 3).

**Table 3. Main focus of the article**

<b>Main focus</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Culture	41	41
More than one	31	31
Economy	18	18
Politics	3	3
Communication	3	3
Education	2	2
Military	1	1
Religion	1	1
Total	100	100

Articles were also evaluated for their overall agreement or disagreement towards the issue of globalization. From the total number of articles, 35% considered globalization as a favorable

global process. However, 43% of the total number of the articles had a negative overall stance on the globalization phenomenon (Table 4).

**Table 4. Overall direction of the articles**

<b>Overall direction</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Negative	43	43
Positive	35	35
Neutral	14	14
Ambiguous	8	8
Total	100	100

One hundred articles included in this research project were assessed to determine the positive consequences for globalization which they have focused on. The positive codes considered in this project were extracted from Iranian transcripts which have tried to explain and clarify different aspects and consequences for globalization, particularly in respect to its cultural effects. As it is seen, free circulation of global information and knowledge was generally the most frequent positive cultural consequence for globalization with 67% coverage among a total of 100 articles (Table 5). From this (67%), 35.8% was mentioned by conservatives which is equal to 24 articles. While reformists have considered this code in 35 cases of their articles, which is equal to 52.2% of total number of articles, independent newspapers covered only 8 hits or 11.9% of the total number of articles.

The second most frequent positive consequence for cultural globalization which was mentioned in Iranian newspapers was “worldwide promotion of reciprocal linkages as well as connections” with a total number of 55 hits or 55% of the articles. Among these, 18 hits or 32.7% were made by conservatives while 27 hits or 49.1% of the total cases were from reformist newspapers. Independent dailies covered 10 hits which is equal to 18.2% of total positive cases. This code is the most frequent positive cultural consequence for globalization in the viewpoint of independent Iranian newspapers.

Facilitation in exchange and transport of goods, labor and investment was the third more frequent positive cultural consequence for globalization with 46 hits or 46% coverage among 100 articles under the study. 15 cases or 32.6% of total positive cases under this code were mentioned by conservative newspapers. Reformists covered 24 cases or 52.2% and independents covered only 7 hits or 15.2%.

Generally, in each category of Table 5, which shows the positive cultural consequences for globalization process, the numbers of hits made by the reformists was more than their political opponents, the conservatives. On the other hand, reformists have generally specified a higher percentage of the total positive hits for each positive code to themselves when compared to the conservatives.

Another important finding from the table 5 is about the code entitled “promotion of sexual justice”. This code has not been mentioned by any of the independent newspapers. From the total

of 7 hits that have been mentioned for this code, 5 cases or 71.4 % of total hits have been made by reformists. In contrast, conservatives made only 2 hits (28.6%) for this code.

Among positive cultural consequences for globalization, the statement entitled “decrease in profound religious, national and racial extremisms” had the lowest number of hits with only 5 cases equaling to 5% of total articles. Comparison among the three different groups under study showed that 3 hits which equal to 60% of cases were from reformist newspapers while only 1 hit (20%) was made by conservatives.

**Table 5. Positive consequences for cultural globalization. Comparison between rightist, leftist and independent newspapers in Iran**

Positive Consequences Code Title	Political Orientation							
	Total		Right Party		Left Party		Independent	
	Fr.	%	Fr.	%	Fr.	%	Fr.	%
Free circulation of global information and knowledge	67	67	24	35.8	35	52.2	8	11.9
Promotion of global interconnections	55	55	18	32.7	27	49.1	10	18.2
Facility in exchange and transport of goods, labor and investment	46	46	15	32.6	24	52.2	7	15.2
Global perception, global convergence	41	41	11	26.8	23	56.1	7	17.1
Nurturing of democracy across the world	35	35	9	25.7	20	57.1	6	17.1
Increase in respects to human rights	29	29	2	8	20	80	3	12
Facilitation of cultural exchanges	25	25	13	12.5	17	70.8	4	16.7
Behavioral convergence	24	24	5	26.3	12	63.2	2	10.5
Promotion of local cultures into global arena	19	19	4	25	11	68.8	1	6.2
Assurance of cultural rights and freedoms	16	16	4	25	10	62.5	2	12.5
Promotion of social justice	16	16	2	13.3	11	73.3	2	13.3
Convergence of beliefs and dialogues	15	15	3	21.4	8	57.1	3	21.4
Seeking cultural identity	14	14	3	23.1	7	53.8	3	23.1
Cultural refining	13	13	3	25	8	66.7	1	8.3
Promoting of visual culture	12	12	1	12.5	4	50	3	37.5
Promotion of sexual justice	7	7	2	28.6	5	71.4	0	0
Decrease in extremist behaviors	5	5	1	20	3	60	1	20

Negative consequences for globalization were also compared in terms of the number of hits and percentages for the conservative, reformist and independent newspapers. The results showed that the most frequent negative consequence for cultural globalization which has been mentioned in

Iranian newspapers was the “Facility for west to overcome developing countries” which had 59 hits. From this, 35 hits or 59.3% of cases were made by conservatives (Table 6). Reformists had mentioned this code in 18 cases of their articles which is equal to 28.8% of the total number of hits. Finally, 7 hits or 11.9% of the hits were due to the independents. The second most frequent negative consequence for cultural globalization was “Penetration of western culture into local culture” with 53%, followed by “Decrease in social justice”, with 41%. The third and fourth negative cultural consequences for globalization mentioned by Iranian dailies were “Deepening of cultural and social gaps” and “Synchronization of cultures” with 37 and 30% respectively.

An interesting finding was regarding the code “Drain of brains”. As a negative consequence for cultural globalization, brains drain was mentioned in an equal number of 4 hits or 50% of the total cases for both of conservative and reformist newspapers.

Commercialization of culture was another negative consequence for cultural globalization which was also mentioned equally often in both conservative and reformist articles. This statement has been stated 3 times in each of the group of articles that comprised 37.5% of total hits.

Based on the information in Table 6, it can be concluded that most of the articles emphasizing on the negative cultural consequences for globalization were from conservative newspapers, except for three particular codes. On the other hand, in each of negative consequences (apart from those three) the number of hits made by conservatives was obviously more than the reformists. Those

three negative consequences that had a reformist dominance were: “Consuming culture”, “Weakening of home and school roles” and finally “Reflective extremism”.

**Table 6. Negative consequences for cultural globalization. Comparison between rightist, leftist and independent newspapers in Iran**

Negative Consequence Code Title	Political Orientation							
	Total		Right Party		Left Party		Independent	
	Fr.	%	Fr.	%	Fr.	%	Fr.	%
Facility in western's ruling over poor countries	59	59	35	59.3	17	28.8	7	11.9
Penetration of western culture	53	53	30	56.6	18	34	5	9.4
Decrease in social justice	41	41	26	63.4	10	24.4	5	12.2
Deepening of cultural and social gaps	37	37	22	59.5	11	29.7	4	10.8
Synchronization of cultures	30	30	20	66.7	8	26.7	2	6.7
Identity crisis	29	29	14	48.3	12	41.4	3	10.3
Moral and religious relativism	28	28	16	57.1	10	35.7	2	7.1
Abolishment of local and regional cultures	25	25	16	64	8	32	1	4
Evolution of image culture	24	24	13	54.2	9	37.5	2	8.3
Profiteerism	21	21	14	66.7	6	28.6	1	4.8
Consuming culture	20	20	8	40	11	55	1	5
Racism and racial discrimination	19	19	12	63.2	5	26.3	2	10.5
Social security crisis	16	16	13	81.2	2	12.5	1	6.2
Weakening of the democracy	13	13	10	76.9	2	15.4	1	7.7
Growth of the crimes	12	12	6	50	5	41.7	1	8.3
Individualism	11	11	6	54.5	4	36.4	1	9.1
Increased psychological and personality disorders	11	11	6	54.5	4	36.4	1	9.1
Weakening of home and school roles	9	9	2	22.2	6	66.7	1	11.1
Commercialization of the culture	8	8	3	37.5	3	37.5	2	25
Brain drain	8	8	4	50	4	50	0	0
Reflective extremism	7	7	3	42.9	4	57.1	0	0
English language propagation	5	5	2	40	2	40	1	20
Sexual discrimination	2	2	2	100	0	0	0	0

## DISCUSSION

The newspapers selected for conducting this research were from both reformists (left parties) and conservative (right parties) political factions while some of the independent dailies were also included. From the total of 100 articles selected based on the extensive search in the newspapers' archives, 41 articles belonged to the conservatives and 45 and 14 articles to reformists and independents respectively. Most of the articles under the study (52%) were scientific articles, meaning that the most of the debates and discussions presented across the articles were from a

scientific point of view. This conclusion can be supported by the fact that 50% of the writers of articles were academicians.

Based on cultural globalization theory, globalizing processes and forces will make the countries closer and facilitate their communication (Salamandra, 2002). The geographical borders will be functionally eliminated and the world will be changed to a “Global Village” (Clark and Mathur, 1997). One of the consequences of this global phenomenon will be cultural transformation of the nations. In this global single village, trade will be done using a single currency (USD or Euro) which will conduct money transactions across a free global market (Bhagwati, 2007). The same process will rule on the cultural evolutions of nations. A single global culture will be created through the mixture and hybridization of different national cultures (Hannerz, 1996 and Miller, 1998); a single and unique world culture made up of all local cultures. However, the point is that not all of these local and national cultures have the same or equal share in creating the global culture. Their respective cultural shares will be determined based on the potentials of the country or community particularly in the areas of economy and communication technology. Those countries with bigger shares of the worldwide economy and stronger tools of communication will dictate and penetrate their culture into the final cultural mixture or hybrid. So, weaker countries including developing nations will experience deeper cultural changes. The final outcome in an optimistic manner will be Westernization of the world culture while in its pessimistic view the result will be the Americanization of the global culture (Clark and Mathur, 1997).

However, there is another viewpoint towards the issue of globalization, as well, which is somehow against the theory of “cultural globalization” and the concept of “Global Village”. This distinct viewpoint has risen based on the “Hybrid Cultures Theory”. Proponents for cultural hybridization believe that recipients of cultural products are not completely passive (Nederveen, 1995 and Werbner, 1997). On the other hand, this is not a situation of western culture dominance. Rather, in the globalization process, cultures will mix in together and then become standardized (Tomlinson, 1999). As a result, recipients will preserve their own identities but they change and localize the imported cultural products to make them compatible to their own cultural standards and digestible for their needs. Through this, cultural products from other nations will be adopted and transformed based on local culture and standards which is called “Glocalization” (Robertson, 1995 and Wilk, 1995). Based on this viewpoint, cultural globalization through hybridization will not destroy local cultures or dissolve them in the homogenized world culture. By preserving local identity and standardization of cultural indices, local cultures will remain parts of global homogenized culture.

In terms of Iranian newspapers viewpoint towards the cultural hybridization theory, it seems that they do not agree to its application for the current situation of international cultural transactions. Based on the research results, the overall Iranian dailies’ viewpoint is that in the composition of the final homogenized world culture which will become dominant over the globe, the shares for powerful western countries will be much more significant. It means that developing and third world countries will experience a huge change in their local culture which is going to become more westernized or in other words, Americanized, day by day.

The most important findings of this study can be summarized in the following order:

1. An overall negative viewpoint toward the globalization process was determined in 43% of the cases against 35% with positive viewpoints.
2. From articles with an overall negative viewpoint towards the cultural globalization, 72.1% were from conservative newspapers against 23.3% from reformists.
3. From articles with an overall positive viewpoint towards the cultural globalization, 65.7% were from reformists against only 14.3% from conservatives.
4. “Free circulation of global information and knowledge” was the most important positive cultural consequence for globalization process, which has been mentioned in 67% of the articles in Iranian newspapers.
5. “Facility for west to overcome developing countries” was the most important negative cultural consequence for the globalization process, which has been mentioned in 59% of the articles in Iranian newspapers.
6. Left party (reformist) newspapers place more emphasis on issues such as increase in respect to human rights, nurturing and promotion of democracy throughout the world, increase in

cultural exchanges and increase in social justice as the most important positive consequences for the globalization process.

7. Right party (conservative) newspapers place more emphasis on issues such as facility for the west to overcome developing countries, penetration and domination of western culture, decrease in social justice, and deepening of cultural and social gaps as the most important consequences for the globalization process.
8. In general, Iranian newspapers believe that continuation of the current process of globalization will cause a western hegemony over the third world and developing countries in terms of their political, economical, social and finally cultural identities. To avoid this hegemony, people of these countries should be more prepared by consciously strengthening their cultural foundations in order to face the waves of globalization. They also should try to overcome the negative effects of cultural globalization.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research findings, the most important positive cultural consequences for the globalization process mentioned in Iranian newspapers were free circulation of global information and knowledge, worldwide promotion of reciprocal linkages and connections, facilitation in exchange and transport of goods, labor and investment, global perception and global convergence, nurturing of democracy across the world and increase in respects to “Human

rights”. Although, Iranian newspaper have referred to these positive consequences for cultural globalization, the results have shown that they are more concerned about the negative cultural consequences on Iran’s national culture in particular and developing countries’ in general. That is why, 43% of the total analyzed articles had an overall negative viewpoint of the globalization phenomenon while only 35% had a positive overall concept towards this issue. Iranian newspapers believed that as western countries have a more powerful political and economic influence on the global situation during the process of globalization, they would also have a more prominent share from the final globalized single culture. They emphasize that as the economic power of western countries is going to dominate the third world and developing countries, western culture would challenge their national and local cultures and will replace them.

From the viewpoints of Iranian newspapers negative cultural effects produced by the waves of globalization such as: facility for west to overcome developing countries, penetration and domination of western culture, deepening of cultural and social gaps, identity crisis and so on are considered as threatening the local cultures of developing countries. They believe that, although the unified future global culture will be a mixture of various local and national cultures, in this final mixture, the share for developing countries would be completely insignificant and tiny. Those who have a greater parts of the global markets for goods and media propagation will have greater influence on the homogenized global culture. That is why the global culture will move towards westernization and even Americanization. As such the eastern world will face important challenges such as identity crisis, social security crisis, destruction of local cultures and domination of western culture.

The differences between political factions of Iranian newspapers towards the issue of globalization of cultures were also evaluated. Both of the two important factions of Iranian political sphere, the reformists (left party) and the conservatives (right party) believed in “free circulation of global information and knowledge” as the most important positive consequence of this process as stated in 67% of the total number of articles. However, in regards to positive consequences, reformists and conservatives had different viewpoints. For instance, 80% of the hits for the statement “increase in respect to human rights” were made by reformists who believe on this issue as an important necessity for Iranian society today. In contrast, conservatives had only 8% of the hits for this statement.

When it came to the negative consequences for globalization, differences in the viewpoints of both political fractions were also obvious. Conservatives believed that the most important negative consequence for globalization of cultures would be “facility for west to overcome developing countries”. On the other hand, the most important negative effect for the reformist could be “penetration and domination of western culture”. As a general comparison between the two political groups, from 43% of the articles that had an overall negative viewpoint towards the globalization process 72.1% were from conservatives against only 23.3% from reformists. These numbers reflect how different their viewpoints are, which is compatible to the authors knowledge about these political groups.

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