

Book Review: Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World

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Berger, Peter L. and Huntington, Samuel P., eds.
*Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the
Contemporary World*. New York: Oxford
University Press, 2002. 374 pp. \$35.00 (cloth).

In an effort to illustrate the globalization process, Peter Berger and Samuel Huntington undertook a monumental empirical study that utilized an international team of experts—groups of well-established social scientists and their respective teams—who focused on the most feared issue in recent decades: the impact of the globalization process and its unexpected consequences. *Many Globalizations* is a collection of research endeavors on globalization and its forces in China, Taiwan, Japan, Germany, Hungary, South Africa, Chile, Turkey, and the United States. It is comprised of four parts, and as the list shows, each part illustrates a few examples of cultural and economic globalization from each of the four continents (excluding Australia) around the world. In completing this work, Berger/Huntington et al hoped that perhaps continental examples of globalization reflect some of the similar patterns that are noticeable in the neighboring regions.

One of the most interesting aspects of the discussion presented in *Many Globalizations* is its emphasis on cultural globalization. This is an important point of departure for the book that makes it unique when compared with other existing work on globalization in terms of 1) its diversion from being exclusively economic oriented and 2) borrowing from the macro-theoretical perspective. In addition, the discussion presented in this volume takes field and empirical work as its methodology and attempts to portray a new picture of globalization that has been missing in the literature. Thus, the series of the discussions presented in *Many Globalizations* tries to unravel the myths that surround globalization, and questions the notion of globalization as a predominantly American, imperialistic phenomenon.

This approach, of course, complements the studies of globalization in the sense that *Many Globalizations* is among the first academic endeavors that have raised concerns regarding the validity of “globalization” as a monolithic and viable option for solving economic problems in the contemporary world. However, *Many Globalizations* diverts from other studies by reminding the reader that there are emerging new patterns and trends at the global level that are non-economic in nature and multidimensional in char-

acter. According to Berger/Huntington et al, these emerging patterns may appear on the surface as adopting a kind of American “global culture,” but are not affected by its central classical imperialism—i.e., homogenization via “McDonaldization” or “metastasized Disneyland.”

The initial depiction of such a notion of globalization in the studies conducted here was one of Peter Berger’s original critiques of the literature that treated globalization as an extremely exaggerated phenomenon in research. In this regard, the globalization process for Berger/Huntington et al is a cultural one that symbolizes an alternative to economic globalization. The central thesis in *Many Globalizations* rests on the idea that neither economic nor cultural globalization is the great salvation or hope adorned with democracy, equality, and prosperity that everyone is expecting it to bring about. Although the two may appear to be intertwined, the studies that focused on India, Japan, and Turkey observed an emerging pattern of alternative globalization that could be defined as local “cultural movements with a global outreach originating outside of the Western world” (p. 12). This finding is particularly significant in the characterization of globalization because most everyone who subscribes to modernization theory assumes that globalization operates as an agent of modernization that originates from the West and spreads throughout the world. One can detect only one obvious implication in the idea of “alternative globalization” emphasized in this book: that there are other paths to modernization than the Western-oriented efforts. Hence, Berger/Huntington et al present the alternatives and the multifaceted complexity that such alternatives could bring about to the contemporary world. From this viewpoint, it is safe to say that *Many Globalizations* is a pioneering academic work. The fact that the studies reported in this volume did not confine themselves solely to the economic aspects of globalization — the focus on the cultural aspects of globalization and the impact they have on local and regional cultures — attest to this point.

In line with the above thesis, the findings in this book suggest that globalization is not a predominantly Western phenomenon. The collective research efforts in this volume show that not only aspects of Western popular culture have gained indigenous momentum when brought to local regions, but also indigenous cultures have taken off as global forces. Some examples include Neo-Buddhist movements in Taiwan, the Love Parade in Germany, African Indigenous

Churches, a Confucian frame of thinking among the merchant class in China, and the evangelical movement in Chile that have become global trends exemplify not only localization but also a form of hybridization that carries a non-American and non-Western message. The authors maintain that localization of this kind, however, is more far reaching than a simple diffusion of American or Western cultural practices or convergence. As a result, according to the studies cited in *Many Globalizations*, Eastern philosophies and religions have gained positive momentums, and their pendulums are having sweeping swings for attracting millions of people around the globe—especially, in the West. This is the area where Berger/Huntington et al seriously question a purely Western notion of economic globalization and show many globalization processes and globalizing forces that are emanating from non-Western countries. Their discovery is significant in that they reveal the nature of globalization as a reciprocal process between Western and non-Western societies. However, it is intriguing to see that the research cited here easily treats locality as a controlling interest; that is, the tension between global and indigenous cultures converges at a crossroad at the local level.

Although some of the studies in *Many Globalizations* focus on the positive aspects of globalization, most contributors are critical of the process of globalization—whether economic or cultural. In the meantime, these authors do not perceive globalization as a homogenizing threat. However, a common theme in all of these reports is their critical look at the literature and how other scholars of globalization have treated globalization as a simple process for solving global problems. The authors commonly believe that the shape that globalization has taken is a complex one and must be dealt with in conjunction with the plans and changes envisioned by each country's actors of globalization (elites and local governments). These actors are more likely to be the hybrid products of the local cultures, who are accountable for a localized process of globalization and their Western training or partnership encounters necessitate them to conduct their duties based on the assumptions, principles, and theories that are rooted in foreign (Western) cultures. Nevertheless, despite what is expected of the local actors, research in *Many Globalizations* uncovers a paradoxical behavioral tendency by these actors that reflects a combination of a sense of national-cultural pride and patriotism, on the one hand, and a sense of western education and training, on the other. Hence the overall discussion in this volume shows that cultural globalization is even more difficult than economic glo-

balization to control.

The research team put together for this project is another interesting feature of *Many Globalizations*. The contents of the research reports published in this volume show that the selected scholars are highly diverse in their orientation and perspective. The diversity in thought and outlook, and variability in their interests and expertise are among the qualities that have added to the overall perspective of the presentation in this book. As a result, the current work qualifies to be an amalgamation of a broader and more complete definition of globalization. The attention that the authors have paid to a variety of issues that relate to globalization—e.g., popular culture, tastes and preferences, Evangelical and conservative Catholic movements, and even the effects of Buddhism and modern Islam, etc.—all have contributed to the field in the following ways: 1) it is a groundbreaking and pioneering work in its own right, 2) it laid down the ground work for subsequent studies, and 3) it contains materials that can be of interests to a diverse audience.

In sum, *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World* gives a picture of the globalization process that contradicts the popular image that sees the emerging global culture as mostly Western, English speaking, and elitist. The collective message in the studies published in this book is that there is an emerging global culture, and the elites—who are predominantly functional in the areas of business, global trade, academic environments, and missionary religious groups—are the vehicles for its diffusion that cultural globalization is neither the threat nor the hope that some have envisioned in a homogenized world. Instead, we are facing an era in which indigenous globalizing movements are counterbalancing the forces of Western cultural hegemony and, most importantly, are producing many hybrid cultural innovations. This study, as Berger and Huntington rightly claim, contributes significantly to the study of globalization about which field research and the empirical data have been scant despite the volumes of published materials. *Many Globalizations* presents a variety of interesting discourse, as well as enough hints to launch other important studies. Because the book focuses on some of the pressing contemporary issues and explores their importance to developing countries in the globalization equation. The book makes an informative addition to the list of reading in social stratification, sociology of development, cultural studies, and international relations.