

## Globalization and the Muslim World

Mohd Abbas\*

### Abstract

History indicates that before the coming of modern globalization, the Muslims had their own version of globalization. During the Muslim era of globalization which coincides with the Golden Age of the Muslims, the West benefited immensely from the scholastic works produced by Muslim scientists and scholars. Modern globalization which started during the era of Western colonization of the East has now gone to every nook and cranny of the world. The usage of internet and other modern electronic media directly or indirectly has speeded up the process of transporting modern globalization to the world community. Modern globalization has brought about radical change in aims of education; it has marginalized local culture and language; it has caused brain drain everywhere in the world. Muslims, it seems, are perceiving globalization as identical to re-colonization. This paper intends to explore and investigate how modern globalization heralded by the west is different from Muslim globalization in the past.

**Keywords:** Muslim Globalization, Modern Globalization, Muslim World, Re-Colonization

### Abstrak

Sejarah menunjukkan bahawa sebelum kedatangan globalisasi moden, umat islam mempunyai versi globalisasi mereka sendiri. Sepanjang era globalisasi islam yang seiring dengan Zaman Kegemilangan Islam, Barat mendapat manfaat banyak faedah daripada kerja-kerja Ulama 'yang dihasilkan oleh ahli-ahli sains dan sarjana islam. Globalisasi moden yang bermula pada era penjajahan Barat Timur kini telah pergi ke sudut dan celah dunia. Penggunaan internet dan moden elektronik yang lain secara langsung atau tidak langsung telah mempercepatkan proses penyampaian globalisasi moden kepada masyarakat dunia. Globalisasi moden telah membawa perubahan radikal pada matlamat pendidikan, ia telah perpinggir budaya dan bahasa tempatan, ia telah menyebabkan saliran otak merata tempat di dunia. Umat Islam, ia seolah-olah, globalisasi mengerti sebagai serupa dengan penjajahan-semula. Karya ini bertujuan untuk meneroka dan menyiasat bagaimana globalisasi moden yang digembar-gemburkan oleh barat adalah berbeza daripada globalisasi islam pada masa dahulu.

**Kata kunci:** Globalisasi Islam, globalisasi moden, dunia islam, penjajahan semula.

---

\* Assistant Professor, Department of General Studies, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia.

## Introduction

The subject of globalization has drawn the interest of governments, scholars, business communities worldwide, economists, teachers, students, NGOs', and others. The passion and enthusiasm for the topic on globalization have led many people into conducting researches on many intricate issues that are interwoven around globalization. Seminars, dialogues, conferences and other forms of meetings that are taking place at the governmental and university levels on the issues on globalization all over the world are mainly concerned on its advantages and disadvantages. Moreover, at the international forums, the most frequently discussed and debated question with regard to globalization is who are the real gainers and losers of globalization.<sup>1</sup> By identifying the winners and losers, governments and concerned parties can prepare themselves well to make strategic plans to meet the challenges they have to face with the coming tides of globalization. Many scholars have highlighted the fact that globalization is something devised by the West and directed towards the developing and underdeveloped countries of the world. Globalization is a multi-faceted phenomenon, which infiltrates into all areas of human life.<sup>2</sup> In realizing the fact that globalization comes from the rich and powerful countries of the West, the developing and underdeveloped countries are doubtful as to whether they can benefit from it. This paper seeks to explore the nature and objectives of the Muslim globalization in the past compared to the modern globalization.

## The Muslim Era of Globalization

During the time of the Prophet Muhammad's (s.a.w.) there was not much of expansion of Islam to other parts of the world. During the early days of Islam in Makkah, only a small group of Muslims went to live in Abyssinia for a short period of time as

---

<sup>1</sup> Abbas Mehdi (2006), *Globalization Who Benefit Anyway?* (pp.130-142). In Samir Dasgupta & Ray

Kiely(eds.), *Globalization and After*, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

<sup>2</sup> Larry Ray (2007), *Globalization and Everyday Life*. London: Routledge, pp. 1-4

asylum seekers. Their mission there was more of protecting their lives from the dangers and oppression that came from the non-believers in Makkah. The real era of Muslim globalization started when the Prophet (s.a.w.) established the Islamic state in Medina in the year 622. Starting from that period of time, Islam as a civilization started to develop and expand to other parts of the world.

Islamic globalization was more obvious during the Umayyad dynasty (661-750).<sup>3</sup> The end of the Umayyad dynasty gave way to the emergence of the Abbasid dynasty (750-1258). In contrast to the Umayyad rulers, the Abbasid were more interested in the conquering of knowledge and science. It was the Abbasid period, which is known as the Golden Age of the Muslims. Rulers of the Golden Age supported scholars and scientists in their forward march in conquering technology and knowledge; natural and social sciences. The Qur'an and the prophet's (s.a.w.) traditions were the driving force in inspiring the Muslims to not only learn but to enlighten their souls through knowledge. In their endeavour in mastering new disciplines of knowledge and technology, Muslims had an open-mind in learning all that is positive and beneficial from others. With such an attitude they were prepared to borrow ideas from the Indians, Persians and Greeks as a way of enriching their own civilization. The Muslim leaders without any prejudice, employed Jewish and Christian scholars to conduct some translation works at the academia. Along their way in learning new knowledge, Muslim scholars got interested in philosophy, particularly the ancient Greek philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

Keeping in view the fact that not all ideas of the Greek philosophers were acceptable to their Islamic worldview, early Muslim scholars used the approach of adopt, adapt, assimilate, and integrate. Through this methodology, they took all those ideas

---

<sup>3</sup> Mahayudin Hj. Yahaya (1998), *Tamadun Islam*, Shah Alam: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, pp. 33-56;

<sup>4</sup> Majid Fakhry (1983), *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (2<sup>nd</sup>.edn). New York: Columbia University Press, pp 1-18; Majid Fakhry (2000), *Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism: A Short Introduction*, England: Oneworld Publications, pp. 6-10; C.A. Qadir (1988), *Philosophy and Science in the Muslim World*, London: Croom Helm

which were non-contradictory to their religious values and faith. They not only borrowed ideas from others but also went on to further develop and come up with new, original, and innovative ideas. This was the spirit and culture of learning that was prevalent during the early Muslim era of knowledge expansion and exploration. Similarly, Western scholars too had borrowed ideas from Muslim scholars during the Golden Age of the Muslims. Europeans were introduced to the philosophical ideas of the Greek when they read the translated and annotated works of the Muslim scholars. Moreover, they also learnt from many pioneering works done by Muslim scholars and scientists in the field of medicine, astronomy, chemistry, mathematics, algebra, trigonometry, etc. At the moment, only a few Western scholars duly acknowledge the great contribution made by the early Muslim scholars in the areas of science and scientific explorations.<sup>5</sup>

In assessing the Muslim era of globalization, one would come to realize that the expansion of Islam and its civilization to foreign territories happened due to its dynamic nature as a way of life revealed from God. The message of the Qur'an was appealing to its new adherents because it called for a balanced life style giving equal emphasis on the 'here and now' and to the life in the hereafter. The Book of Islam conveyed messages related to faith and also encouraged Muslims to acquire knowledge and science.<sup>6</sup> When Muslims took Islam to foreign lands there was no compulsion on the people in those countries to follow Islam.<sup>7</sup> The pages of Islamic history reveal the fact that Muslims were neither interested in plundering the wealth, nor in tyrannizing the people in those countries. The claim made by many Western scholars that Islam was spread at the point of the sword is unfounded. Islam was

---

<sup>5</sup> Mohd Abbas (2011), *Contribution of Iqbal's Dynamic Personality Theory to Islamic Psychology: A Contrastive Analysis with Freud and Selected Mainstream Western Psychology*. Selangor: International Islamic University Malaysia, p. 335

<sup>6</sup> Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1996), *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, pp. 103-106

<sup>7</sup> "Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error...."  
(Al-Qur'an, 2:256)

promulgated with beautiful preaching and good examples shown by the Prophet (s.a.w.) and early Muslims during their era of globalization.<sup>8</sup>

### Understanding Modern Globalization

According to Kilminster, the word Globalization first appeared in the Webster's English Dictionary in 1961.<sup>9</sup> Going back to history, the word Globalization was first coined by Roland Robertson. He believes that globalization is a pre-modern phenomenon that has already started in the fifteenth century with the European colonial policy of expansionism, aimed at subjugating large areas of Asia and Africa. Through colonialism the Western superpowers then tried to increase their supremacy and influence on the underdeveloped countries in the world. The slogan behind the coming of the Western powers was based on their three Gs—gold, glory and gospel. The Europeans were driven by the zeal and passion for the propagation of Christianity (mainly the Catholic version of Christianity) to the Asians and Africans whom they thought were steep in their animistic beliefs.<sup>10</sup>

Together with the political dominance over Asia and other parts of the world, the west also imposed on the colonized nations its own culture, customs, language, and system of administration. As to the moral issue, whether it was good to colonize another country, the Western powers always justified it by claiming that they wanted to provide knowledge, education, culture, religion, progress and development to the primitive and underdeveloped people. On the whole, by hiding their true motives, the Europeans justified their act of colonizing others as a process of civilizing the uncivilized people of the world.

Jan Aart Scholte<sup>11</sup> gives various meanings to the word globalization. In his opinion, there are five broad definitions to the word globalization. First, globalization is another word for

---

<sup>8</sup> Al-Qur'an, 16:125

<sup>9</sup> Richard Kilminster (1997). Globalization as an Emergent Concept,( p.257). In A. Scot (ed.). *The Limits of Globalization: Cases and Arguments*, London: Routledge.

<sup>10</sup> David Block & Deborah Cameron(2002), *Globalization and Language Teaching*, London: UK:Routledge, p. 2

<sup>11</sup> Jan Aart Scholte (2000), *Globalization a Critical Introduction*, New York:Plagrove, pp. 15-17

internationalization. This definition explains the growth in international exchange and interdependence among the countries in the world. Second, globalization is liberalization. Through liberalization, countries remove restrictions on the movement of capital from one country to another by applying 'open', 'borderless' economy. Third, globalization means universalization. In this context, globalization is a process of spreading various objects and experiences to people living in the four corners of the world. Fourth, globalization is referred to Westernization or modernization (to the Americans it is the Americanization of the world community). Through the Westernization process, the pre-existing culture in the underdeveloped countries is replaced with the Western one. Fifth and the last, globalization is deterritorialization. This concept explains that incidents and events that happen in one region of the world is not confined to a particular region but they are transported and shared by other regions of the world through modern means of telecommunications.

The modern day experts in the studies of globalization expound that globalization means free flow of capital, people, news, and information via electronic media from one country to another, without being subjected to any form of restriction imposed by governments in the world. Globalization explains the scenario whereby people of the world live in a borderless world without any geographical restrictions and the world stands transformed into a single global village.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Shifting Aims of Education**

Education long ago in the distant past which started as a private enterprise was at the beginning mainly concerned in producing man with knowledge and skills for his well-being and for his salvation in the hereafter. Definitely this was true during the Western medieval time and in the early Islamic era after the time of the holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.). As political systems and boundaries and demarcation lines differentiating one country from

---

<sup>12</sup> See Manfred B. Steger (2003), *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*, New York: Oxford Press.

the other were drawn, governments' involvement in education came to be seen clearly through the establishment of the public schools.<sup>13</sup> The reason for such an involvement of the governments was to have a good grip on its citizens. With control on its citizens, the governments were able to have a common ideology inculcated and transferred to its citizens. As a result of this effort a common patriotic feeling was expected on the part of the citizens towards the nation-state. With this aim, nations around the world carved out educational plans for their citizens. This was thought by the authorities as a means to enhance the individual's cohesiveness with others in the society. In turn, such an effort was expected to bring unity among its citizens with common goals in their hearts and minds.

The idea of having public schools was to see education as a means of transmitting knowledge, skills, expertise, values, civilization, language, culture, customs and religion from one generation to another. To the question of what education is all about can be well understood by the following definition:

Any process, either formal or informal, that shapes the potential of a maturing organism. Informal education results from the constant effect of environment, and its strength in shaping values and habits cannot be overestimated. Formal education is a conscious effort by human society to impart the skills and modes of thought considered essential for social functioning. Techniques of instruction often reflect the attitudes of society, i.e., authoritarian groups typically sponsor dogmatic methods, while democratic systems may emphasize freedom of thought.<sup>14</sup>

All these lofty ideals and ideas of education that started with the establishment of public schools are now being overshadowed or overridden by the relentless pounding waves of globalization.

---

<sup>13</sup> Nicholas C. Burbules & Carlos Alberto Torres(2000), *Globalization and Education*, New York:USA:Routledge,p. 3

<sup>14</sup> Online Encyclopedia, <http://education.yahoo.com/reference/encyclopedia/entry/education>, 10/7/2011.

Though the old ideals of education are still there, much of today's perception on education and the reason why parents send their children to school have somehow been forgotten due to globalization and modern day lifestyle. Living in a modern and globalized world, education is viewed as a passport for achieving good life that promises material gains. Original values of education are slowly vanishing. It is not wrong all together to seek knowledge for material gains, but the sole motivation to seek material gains through education and learning makes the seeker of knowledge less concerned for the community and the well-being of the nation state. People of a country become more individualized and egocentric, if the true aims of education are missing. As for a nation, with the missing values and philosophy of education, it will fail in creating a common goal and national identity for its citizens.

### **The Impact of Globalization on Education**

Explosion of knowledge and information in the era of information technology has somehow helped the globalization of education. The introduction of computers and internet and other technology-mediated learning through the use of VCD, CD-Rom, Email, E-Chat, database, webpage, LMS, digital library, etc have helped in the dissemination of information and knowledge to millions around the world. The emergence of technology-mediated learning has revolutionized the teaching and learning process. For instance, through the digital library, a researcher can get access to books and research works done in other parts of the world without having the need to travel.<sup>15</sup> He has the opportunity to view articles, journals and other literary works with the help of his computer and the internet. Through the use of internet, VCD, course-wares and other electronic gadgets the learner can get access to knowledge and information twenty-four hours in a day without having to go and attend lectures at the lecture-halls.

Although this scientific and innovative way of learning has made modern man to fast access to knowledge and information, it has made people learn in a more personalized way which cuts off

---

<sup>15</sup> Douglas Kellner(2000), "Globalization and New Social Movements: Lessons for Critical Theory and Pedagogy" in *Globalizaion and Education*(ed). Nicholas C. Burbules & Carlos Alberto Torres, New York: USA: Routledge, pp. 299-321.



much of their interaction with the community/society and drive them more towards material gains. This idea has been heralded long ago, by a well-reputed psychologist:

Modern man is alienated from himself, from his fellow men, and from nature. He has been transformed into a commodity, experiences his life forces as an investment which must bring him the maximum profit obtainable under existing market conditions.<sup>16</sup>

Another aspect that is missing in the personalized form of learning is the interaction with the tutor or teacher. The proponents of the 'teacher and student' face-to-face interaction believe that it is very important for the learner to get acquainted with the teacher by physically being present in front of him. Besides that, raw information and data can be more meaningful when they are properly organized, presented and explained by the teacher. David Walsh opines:

We live in a human space where proximity between teacher and students make tangible communication possible. Body language, tone of voice, personality and emotion are all indispensable elements in the formal activity of instruction. More than the facts, we need the elusive intimation of how they are being received, comprehended and evaluated. Teachers convey more than the subject matter under discussion. No matter what the topic they also embody something of what it means to be a human being.<sup>17</sup>

Along with the wave of globalization, Western universities realized that a great opportunity was available in the third world countries, particularly in Asia and Africa, which were once the

---

<sup>16</sup> Eric Fromm (1995), *The Art of Living*. London: Thorsons, p. 67

<sup>17</sup> David Walsh (1999), "Plato Meets Technology" in *Washington Post*, 14<sup>th</sup> September 1999, p. A29

colonies of the West, to open campuses there. Many foreign universities and colleges came to sell their education, and their degrees and diplomas to the local students in the third world countries with a view to generating huge some of profit for their educational enterprise. Besides that, distance learning and twinning programs were also offered by the foreign universities in the developing countries. As a result, the cost of gaining access to higher education has risen tremendously. Due to higher fee structure, local students from the lower income group in the third world countries find it difficult in getting a tertiary education. These universities, at times, are mainly driven by market forces. As such they offer courses to cater for the job market.

### **Marginalization of Local Languages**

Due to the establishment of foreign universities, and the use of software developed in the English speaking countries, the internet and other technology-mediated learning have made the learning and mastering of English as inevitable for the people in the developing and underdeveloped countries. The greater usage of English in the underdeveloped and developing countries in the world has created lucrative business for the publishing houses in the United Kingdom and United States. These publishing houses in these countries are the provider of the relevant books, software and other materials needed by those countries that want to use English as a medium in disseminating knowledge and information.

Globalization has made English a dominant language of the world; and it has also marginalized many local languages in Asia and Africa.<sup>18</sup> Consciously or unconsciously, the learning of English language as an international language has brought foreign culture and way of living to most countries in the East and to other parts of the world in general.<sup>19</sup> This invasion of foreign culture and way of life can obviously be observed in the way the young ones (the third generation of citizens) talk and dress in the countries that have attained independence from the West. This is also true with many

---

<sup>18</sup> Larry Ray (2007), op. cit., p. 8

<sup>19</sup> Robyn Bateman Driskell (2006), *The Impact of Globalization on Local Communities* In Samir

Dasgupta & Ray Kiely(eds.), New Delhi: Sage Publications, pp. 241-264.

youth in many Muslim countries. Muslim youths nowadays like to put on T-shirt which carries symbols and labels that are obscure in manner and wear jeans which are cut intentionally to expose parts of their body to be seen by others. Many Muslim scholars deem such a manner of dressing as immoral and un-Islamic in nature. Besides the dress, the youngsters too like to eat fast food like KFC and McDonald, drink Coca-Cola and entertain themselves by watching American movies. All these behaviors and preference for American items and way of life is causing the local culture to slowly disappear substituting with foreign culture.<sup>20</sup> In the process of globalization, the changing life-style of the people of the underdeveloped countries indirectly makes them adopt and apply the foreign value systems. This in turn has caused the local and Islamic value system to slowly diminish as it comes under the onslaught of the Western culture and value system.

### **The Brain Drain Phenomenon**

Brain drain refers to departure of talents from one country to another. It is taking place all over the world, particularly in developing and third world countries. The developed countries in the world look for the intelligent minds in the poor countries and allure them to work for their nation building and national agenda. With this the rich countries manage to maintain their status quo as advanced nations of the world, and make the poor countries in the world lag behind in terms of development and progress.<sup>21</sup>

Globalization has made the brain drain faster than before. Through brain drain, many countries in the East lose a great number of highly qualified professionals, academicians, researchers and scientists to developed countries in the West. Many foreign companies and institutions hunt for such professionals even while they are still in the universities in the West. Sometimes the potential candidates of brain drain are handpicked and given scholarship while they are doing their specialization in their own countries. Many factors have been identified which contribute to

---

<sup>20</sup> Annabelle Mooney & Betsy Evans (eds.)(2007), *Globalization: The Key Concepts*, New York: Routledge, p. 4

<sup>21</sup> Zainal Arifin(2004). 'Let us gain and retain the best brain' in Main/Lifestyle:p.2, New Straits Times, 27<sup>th</sup> July, 2004

this global phenomenon.<sup>22</sup> The reasons as to why it happens to the people in the East, particularly in the Muslim countries can be divided into two categories, the pull-factors and the push-factors. As for the pull-factors, the host countries in the West offer professionals and scholars handsome salary package, the host countries provide hi-tech and sophisticated research centres that can be a factor to consider for their personal development and progress in their area of specialization, good education for their children, interesting climate (four weathers), etc. The push-factors are poverty, poor living conditions in eastern countries, lack of intellectual freedom, dissatisfaction with the political system, political turmoil, threat of war, and civil wars.<sup>23</sup>

Apart from professionals migrating to the rich countries, foreign companies employ locals who are talented to work in the industries and labs established in the countries in the East, especially in the Muslim countries. Under such a situation, the research and findings of the Muslim professionals will either be benefited by the foreign companies or exported to the advanced countries. All research findings by the Muslim professionals become the copy right of those who employ them.

Since brain drain is happening at a fast rate, one most important issue that deserves due consideration on the part of the Muslim professionals is that, as to whether it is proper for the professionals and scientists from Islamic countries to be involved in the war industry and nuclear projects which are destructive in nature. There is a great possibility that Muslim talents and expertise are employed for producing sophisticated weapons that could probably be used for invading and destroying weaker nations in the Muslim world. If this happens, then it should be deemed that such Muslim minds have been employed for a wrong purpose; causing pain and misery to innocent people on whom war has been imposed.

---

<sup>22</sup> Robert L. **Barker**. (2003). *The social work dictionary* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: NASW Press, p. 50

<sup>23</sup> Johnson, A.G. (2000). *The Blackwell dictionary of sociology* (2nd ed.). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc. p. 30

### Impact on Culture

The proponents of globalization argue that it has brought rapid development to many parts of the world by bringing people in the third world countries out of their backwardness and old ideas, and put them on par with the people of the developed countries in the world. According to Chandra, the proponents of globalization highlight the following positive aspects of globalization:

1. Foreign direct investment (FDI) has helped reduce poverty by creating jobs and improving incomes.
2. The expansion of trade and foreign investment has accelerated social mobility and strengthened the middle class.
3. New communication and information technology have helped disseminate knowledge in many fields of study and disciplines.
4. Communication is cheaper and easier. Costs of telephone call as well as travel have fallen.
5. This makes it easier to understand one another. Communities, although heterogeneous, can be more cooperative now and there are more means of understanding each other.
6. Globalization makes it possible for humanity to have compassion for each other when calamities-natural or man-made-affect others.
7. Issues such as human rights, public accountability and problems faced by women are brought to the fore and addressed.
8. The rights of women are highlighted and the problems many women face are now addressed.
9. All of these are conducive to religious teachings.<sup>24</sup>

In the Muslim world, scholars can generally be classified into two main groups with regard to the issue on globalization. The first group claims that globalization is not too bad an idea as it has some positive contribution in terms of trade and direct foreign investment creating plentiful job opportunities in the underdeveloped and

---

<sup>24</sup> Chandra Muzaffar (2002), "Globalization and Religion: Some Reflection", <http://www.islamonline.net>, Retrieved : 19 October 2004.

developing nations. The second group deems globalization as bad because it is a Western idea or ideology that works well to their benefit. According to this group, globalization is actually colonization in disguise. They further believe that the West has not changed in their mindset in their ambition like in the past which brought them to the East in greed of power, riches and dominance over the weak and downtrodden. Through their direct subjugation of the East and Africa, they managed to plunder all the wealth of the under-privileged countries. Globalization as seen by these scholars is nothing but re-colonization in a more subtle manner through sophisticated media like cable and satellite TV, internet and other modern means of communications. In describing the nature and contents of globalization designed by the West, Mohd Kamal candidly explained in these words:

Facing the challenges of globalization with all the negative impacts of Americanization, secularization, materialism, neo-imperialism, debt-bondage to World Bank and IMF, unilateralism, militant liberal capitalism, global media conglomerates' manipulation and deception, impoverishment and homogenization of culture, bullying by the powerful, imposed liberalization, dominance of the global market, international and regional competition, commodification of education, environmental degradation, moral decadence, high tech crime, violence and war-all these and more at a time when the Muslim world is divided, weak and poor.<sup>25</sup>

Globalization has brought Western culture and way of life to the East and to the rest of the world. At many times these values are atheistic in nature that does not regard the Supremacy of God Almighty. Through globalization, secularism practiced by the West is also transported to the minds of the people in the East, disrupting

---

<sup>25</sup> Mohd Kamal Hassan (2003), "*Setting the Muslim Mindset in Malaysia: Facing the Challenge of Globalization*", Keynote address delivered at the International Conference on Teaching and Teacher Education, Kuala Lumpur, 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2003

their Islamic and Eastern family core-values. Secularism advocates dichotomy in human activities, those meant for God and those directed towards state. The dichotomy that is prevalent in their everyday life gives people in the West to think of God only when they are in the places of worship and when they are elsewhere, they can behave and do anything and everything that suit their selfish desires. Such a philosophy of life is very much opposed and contradictory to the Islamic and Eastern life style where people live very much attached to their religious beliefs.<sup>26</sup>

Western idea that public education system should be value-free has played havoc to the education in the east. Knowledge and education in the globalization policy do not link the individual with God almighty. In Islam, knowledge is sought for self-improvement that humbles down man in the presence of his Creator. Knowledge is sought for the enlightenment of the human soul that brings man closer to God. In contrast to the Islamic concept of seeking knowledge, most people in the West believe that knowledge is value-free. The Western attitude of non-judgmental in the things they see, acquire, experience and assess is not applicable to the Muslim society. Islam calls on the Muslims to take a stand by being judgmental. One has to be clear in his mind as to what are the things that have been approved or prohibited by the Qur'an and the Sunnah. By referring to the religious guidelines, one can easily distinguish between what is good and permissible and what is bad and should be avoided.<sup>27</sup>

Parents, teachers and religious leaders in many Muslim countries fear that the call by the proponents of globalization that advocates for free flow of information, can be really detrimental to the family and social structure of the Islamic and Eastern society. They fear that globalization transported via internet and other modern means of telecommunication will somehow transport the Western hedonistic life-style. Many of these ideas and ideologies that come along through the media and internet bring along and

---

<sup>26</sup> Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas (1978), *Islam and secularism*. Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia, pp. 1-5

<sup>27</sup> Hassan Langgulung (1997), *Pengenalan Tamadun Islam Dalam Pendidikan*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, pp. 1-10; Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas (1999), *The Concept of Education in Islam*. Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, pp. 12-32

promote a way of life that is contradictory to the Islamic belief system and Eastern culture. One particular area, among others, that is feared by parents is sexual perversions. Homosexuality, lesbianism, and incest are acts of sexual perversion. In Islam, these forms of human relationship are not acceptable.<sup>28</sup> In the West, every individual has the right to fulfill any of his/her desire as long as it does not cause harm to another human beings, even though it might be against his/her religious beliefs. Islam forbids homosexual and lesbian marriages.

Children if left unchecked in the use of the internet are exposed to the danger of entering into websites devoted to pornography and other unhealthy information. It is believed that such information can corrupt their innocent hearts and minds. It is feared that children with access to such information on the internet will be trapped in a vicious circle that might lead them to other social ills.

The exponents of globalization have also highlighted that globalization abolishes cultural differences among the diverse and multi-lingual societies of the world. Globalization promotes homogenous society changing the world of its heterogeneous nature that has been created by God Almighty. The present scenario in the world clearly shows that the process of homogenization is fast taking place. Dominance of English language as an important international language, obsession with American lifestyle in terms of their fast food like KFC and McDonald, preference over American branded items like clothing, music and movies are all clear indicators of the homogenization of societies in the world.

### **The Muslim Reaction and Response to Globalization**

Globalization has started without being realized by a large section of the Islamic Ummah. Since the tidal waves of globalization started to touch the shores of the Islamic countries, efforts need to be taken to prevent them from causing damage to their faith and Islamic way of life. As it has been understood from the preceding discussion that globalization is irreversible and

---

<sup>28</sup> Al-Qur'an, 17:32



inevitable, the Muslims have no choice but to prepare and safeguard themselves from its onslaughts targeting them from all directions.<sup>29</sup> Realizing that something needs to be done, Malaysia's former Prime Minister Tun Mahathir said the following in one of his addresses to the Islamic Ummah on the issue on globalization:

Muslim countries and Muslim governments have a duty to ensure that globalization will not result in the marginalization of their countries as happened with the Industrial Revolution and Industrial Age. We cannot afford it this time. If once again we miss this opportunity to keep pace with the radical and rapid advances now being made with technology and the sciences, and the changes they cause to the world's perceptions of things, the new ideas and concepts in human and international relations; if we miss all these and fail to handle them, then we will not only be marginalized, but be dominated and hegemonised permanently.<sup>30</sup>

Tun Mahathir's call is a reminder for the Muslims not to ignore and stay away from the events and progress that are taking place in the areas of information technology, multi-media, e-learning, e-commerce, etc. If the Muslims choose to stay isolated from others in this era of globalization then the Muslims will be the ones who will be left alone and become the losers compared to the rest of the world. A wise thing to do by the Muslims is to be active in mastering the new technology and use it for a good purpose that can bring progress, development and economic benefit to themselves and for the rest of humanity.

Other form of safeguarding the Ummah that can be undertaken by Islamic countries in this era of globalization is by cutting down on their dependency on the West in terms of technology, which also includes in the area of multimedia and

---

<sup>29</sup> See Chapter 9, Amer Al-Roubaie (2002), *Globalization and the Muslim World*, Selangor, Shah Alam: Malita Jaya Publishing, pp. 90-102

<sup>30</sup> Mahathir Muhamad (2003), *Globalisation and the New Realities*, Subang Jaya, Malaysia: Pelanduk Publications, P.53.

software development. Mental dependency on the West is a form of colonization. So long as the Muslim countries and leaders depend on the West for technology and expertise, they will be subjugated and put under their control. Islam as a way of life does not encourage Muslims to be ruled by others and live under the hegemony and dictates of others who preach against their religion.<sup>31</sup>

Oil rich Muslim countries should make attempts to re-channel their multi-billion investments from America and Europe to some of the developing and poor Muslim countries in the world. By doing that, it is hoped that the disparities between the rich and poor Muslim countries can be eradicated. This action also confirms what has been emphasized in the Qur'an that we should help one another.<sup>32</sup>

On the question of what should be the Muslims' stand on the internet as a powerful tool in disseminating knowledge and information, it is to be always born in mind that there are both positive and negative implications; Muslims should be smart enough to use it for getting knowledge and information; for disseminating information about Islam; and for staying connected with the rest of the Ummah living in different parts of the world.

Another important effort that needs the attention of Muslim countries is their willingness to invest in the area of research and development. This ability to do research during the Golden Age of Islam brought them to the pinnacle of their success and made European scholars to come to their centers of learning and research. After that period, due to complacency Muslims lost all the good qualities as good researchers to the Europeans. As a result of this, the Ummah started to lag behind the Europeans. Apart from that, colonization which forced Muslims into poverty also in a way made the strength of the Ummah to dwindle drastically. Even after attaining independence from the Western colonial powers, the Muslims have yet to reclaim the status they once had prior to the fall of Baghdad in 1258. In realizing this predicament, Muslims should exert themselves diligently in conducting research. This in turn will break their mental dependency on the West.

---

<sup>31</sup> Amer Al-Roubaie (2002), *Globalization and the Muslim World*, pp.90-102

<sup>32</sup> Al-Qur'an, 5:2

In the area of news broadcast, the Muslims cannot rely totally on the Western media like CNN, BBC, ABC and other international news agencies. At the moment, there has been a small breakthrough in the area of news media with the emergence of Al-Jazeera.<sup>33</sup> Before this, the Muslims like others were all dependent on the Western media to know what is happening in the Islamic world and other regions of the world. Most of the time, these Western media provide a bias reporting on what is happening to the Muslims. Through the manipulation of the media, the West has portrayed the Ummah as dangerous, backward and threat to the world community. All these false reporting and prejudices can be contradicted with the Muslims having their own news media broadcasting the truth by reporting the actual and factual happening in the Muslim world.

All the strength and riches cannot help the Muslims to fight the tides of globalization if the whole Muslim world does not come together as a one united Ummah. The message of the Qur'an calling the Muslims to be united has yet to be materialized fully by the Muslims.<sup>34</sup> Besides this, the Westerners have also taught us one of their own mottos that says, "United we stand, divided we fall". It seems that the Muslims have not learnt from their bitter experiences in the past, living under subjugation and also their failures have not taught them lessons to mend their ways to attain the status Allah has mentioned in the Qur'an as the best Ummah (*Khaira Ummah*).<sup>35</sup> Being united under organization like the OIC (Organization of Islamic Countries) gives the Ummah its lost dignity in the eyes of the other nations of the world. The state of being united makes the Ummah more vocal in sending a common message to the UN when making decision pertaining to the problems faced by the Muslims, be it political or economic. People like Tun Mahathir, Chandra and Mohd Kamal believe that the UN, World Bank and IMF are all part of the forces of globalization, working to the advantage of the rich and powerful nations of the world. If the Islamic Ummah is weak and not alert of the forces that

---

<sup>33</sup> See 'Al-Jazeera' in Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al\\_Jazeera](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al_Jazeera), retrieved on 14<sup>th</sup> Jan 2007

<sup>34</sup> Al-Qur'an, 3:102

<sup>35</sup> Al-Qur'an, 3:110

are at work to destroy it then it will suffer forever at the hands of the predators of globalization.

### **Is Globalization Identical to Re-Colonization?**

Five definitions of globalization, as mentioned earlier, provided by Jan Aart Scholte, which explain globalization as Internationalization, Liberalization, Universalization, Westernization/Modernization and Deterritorialization, reveal the true nature of globalization. If colonization is to suppress and oppress others to make one nation to stay high and mighty, globalization definitely shares a lot in common with colonization. Globalization an idea and ideology that comes from the West is mainly intended to make them rich and place them high above the Asians, Africans and others. Globalization is in fact colonization in disguise. Using it as a tool and a means, the West intends to control the hearts and minds of the people in the underprivileged countries of the world. They control us with a press of a button using the internet, international media and other modern and sophisticated ways of telecommunication. The manner of controlling the developing and poor nations of the world from far was clearly witnessed during the Asian economic downturn in 1997-1998<sup>36</sup>. Due to the manipulation of the stock-market in the Asian region by Western currency-traders and foreign fund managers, all the 'Tiger Economies' like Malaysia, Thailand, South Korea, Indonesia, Philippines suffered a lot due to devaluation of their currency. All economic strength built by these countries after their independence within the period of 40-50 years fell drastically, making these countries impoverished overnight.<sup>37</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The globalization has far reaching impacts on the world positively as well as negatively. Muslims should have an open-mind to examine all that come from the West and should pick and

---

<sup>36</sup> Manfred B. Steger (2003), op. cit., p. 47

<sup>37</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *The Challenges of Turmoil*, Subang Jaya, Malaysia: Pelanduk Publications, 1998, pp. 7-13

choose whatever is relevant to their needs and discard all that are dangerous and harmful to their existence as a community and nation. Certainly the Muslims cannot live in their own enclaves in total seclusion and isolation running away from globalization. They must view globalization as a challenge and look for solutions to overcome the problems that come along with globalization. The West on its part should cast away its past mentality of colonizing and intruding into the affairs of the East. It should not impose its hegemony on the East through colonization, neo-colonization or even through globalization.