

*Review*

# Globalisation and Americanisation – the hijacking of indigenous African culture

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This is a conceptual analytical article which explores Globalization and Americanization. The former is extremely controversial with regard to Africa when it comes to the rise of a global culture dominated by Americana. The idea of Globalisation requires intense critical reflection if we are to begin to comprehend its fundamental nature. This article investigates the cultural dimensions of Globalisation and identifies when it began, what the difference is between Globalisation and Americanisation if any. American cultural norms and practices are permeating the globe as the accepted standard of living and behaviour. The result is that African culture is being diluted, to the extent that it is atrophying. Thirdly, the characteristic differences between cultural forms of Globalisation and what has come to be termed Americanisation are discussed. There is often a convergence of these two ideas but they should be placed in their correct historical contexts. Many researchers view Globalisation and Americanisation as being conceptually distinct. They do however have a common objective, namely the homogenization of the globe. In addition to these questions, the researcher seeks to address the questions that many people around the globe are asking concerning the impact of the global proliferation of the capitalist model and its effects on their cultural identities. Globalization continues to generate controversy with regards to the rise of a global culture which is increasingly Americanised. This paper strives to outline and critically assess the impact of globalization on African culture and to postulate strategies to combat Americanisation and Globalisation.

**Keywords:** Globalisation, Americanisation, culture, Africa.

## INTRODUCTION

American norms, values and practices are being conveyed across the Atlantic as the suitable mode of behaviour for Africans. As a consequence of this cultural migration, Africa's rich culture is being degraded and is viewed as inferior by many Africans'. The changes brought about by globalization make it very difficult to summarize benefits or problems as both exist in abundance. It is clear that Africa's languages have been dislocated from her social existence. Whilst more nations now have access to information, communication and trade with greater ease, many developing nations are left further behind. Globalisation is in many ways an inspiring

process, which tends to open otherwise stagnating minds to new ideas and experiences, which in turn potentially strengthen universal values. Unfortunately conflicts often arise between the protecting of local cultural values and globalization which incorporates Americanisation. Daniels, Radebaugh and Sullivan (2004), assert that a universally applicable definition of a society does not exist, but the word 'nation' is acceptable since it is within a nation that people usually have common attributes which are perpetuated via tradition, rituals and symbols. Nation states generally have a single culture or a range of several cultures and subcultures within the

geographical boundaries which they control. Such societies have groups of people which thus share common sets of values, norms and beliefs and therefore are said to possess a common culture.

The culture of any nation has a historical basis and is passed on from one generation to another. As the environment in which each generation finds itself changes, culture which is learned is thus also affected. Generally, culture is symbolic as it is based on the symbolization of things as they are used in behavioural patterns that a group of people can understand. It is thus also shared, and people from the same culture share similar understandings on values, beliefs, attitudes and norms, and behave in a similar manner. Culture is inherently therefore a relative thing but is also adaptive as it is subject to change and primarily deals with how the past tends to interact with the future. Culture is then about shared behavioural patterns of identity and how social values are transmitted. Today, the Internet and Hollywood facilitate cultural transmissions and promote especially consumerism while also spreading individualism and other such symbolic meaning systems as religion, across all the nations. This results in an increasingly homogenized culture, based mainly on Western an especially American culture. In Africa, where once rich traditions and culture were observed and where a myriad of legends, beliefs and artifacts have existed which define things 'African', these are now playing second fiddle to the incursion of the cash nexus. African elites have become as secular as their Western counterparts and their wealth is a grave testimony to the usurpation of their culture by Americanisation in particular. Their ineptitude is now manifest as they pander to the whims of America and the roller-coaster of Globalisation. There are many elements which impact on the values and norms of a particular culture and these elements are to a large extent influenced by American culture in particular. These are shown in figure 1 below:

### **A brief background of Globalisation**

Globalization is defined as *"the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa"* (Giddens, 1990).

Globalization is more generally defined as a phenomenon that speeds up and intensifies economic interaction amongst peoples, multinational corporations and the governments of diverse nations.

Awake states that due to Globalisation, "people living around the globe are linked more deeply, more intensely, more immediately than ever before" (Awake; 2005). The expansion of global linkages is not a new concept as the organization of political, economic and social life on a global scale, and the growth of a global consciousness,

began in ancient times and can be traced to the trade links between the Sumerians and the tribal groupings in the Indus Valley Civilization in third millennium B.C. as well as the conquests of Alexander the Great who attempted to Hellenize the known world and consolidate the world society.

Prior to this, in the prehistoric period of 10000 BCE – 3500 BCE, hunter-gatherers in Africa, China, India, New Guinea and the Fertile Crescent began to make contacts which were later continued by centralized patriarchal social structures led by chiefs and priests. In the pre-modern period of 3500 BCE-1500 BCE, trade links were formed between various countries like India, Egypt, Mesopotamia and China. Later there were also connections with Greece, the Roman Empire and there were also trade links between the Parthians, Romans and the Chinese Han Dynasty. New technologies diffused through the areas of contact.

From 650-850 CE the expansion of Islam further created trade relations and routes with the west Mediterranean region as well as with the Indian sub-continent. The Rule of the great Mongol leader Genghis Khan from 1100 CE also gave rise to new trade routes traversing Asia and Europe. Trade relations in the early modern period of 1500 CE – 1750 CE led to the travels of Marco Polo and the development of many new trade routes. The 1650s period of global exploration by the Portuguese and the Spanish in particular and the expansion of the slave trade all promoted globalization in a primitive form which ultimately resulted in more integrated economic and industrial systems across the globe. Since more and more people began to travel to various destinations across the globe, it led to more communication between people and a greater intermingling of cultures, traditions and languages.

Early explorers like Diaz, Vespucci, Columbus and Vasco da Gama, sailed through the oceans in search of new territories with which they could establish trade link or colonize and so the pre-globalization era emerged. The modern period of 1750 CE – 1970 CE was ushered in by the American Revolution (1776) and French Revolutions (1789) gave rise to the modern state. By the early 1800s the Industrial Revolution was in progress and it was at this time that colonialism merged modernity with globalization and this period also resulted in the creation of international mercantile law.

The Industrial Revolution led to huge increases in the quantity and quality of many products which led to higher exports and better trade and business relations and nations across the globe became the consumers of the European market but colonialism also brought oppression and external unwanted political and socio-economic control by the mother countries over their conquered territories. The industrial technologies of the period such as the factory idea, railways, telegraph lines, gatling gun, and steam ship facilitated the early development of the modern globalization era which the Internet now leads.



**Figure 1.** Adapted from Hill, C.W.L. 2007, International Business, Competing in the global marketplace, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition.

Due to all the global travels there was an incessant constant mixing of philosophies, ideas, languages, traditions and customs between the locals and the foreign conquerors or traders and inhabitants. Colonialism made huge impacts on agriculture, trade, the environment and culture on a global scale. The Great War (1914-1917) had a devastating effect on the global economic environment and this led to the Great Depression in 1929 and the Gold Standard crisis in the early 1930s.

Globalization, as we recognize it today, although it has been unfolding for millennia, came into existence after the Second World War (1939-1945) as world leaders strove to break down trade barriers between nations. This was further promoted by the United Nations Organization (UNO) created after the war. Even though its foundation can be traced back to the political economic options inaugurated by the Bretton Woods agreement in 1944 (Korten, 2001), modern globalisation is more recent: Bretton Woods simply set the foundation for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, by establishing, in the IMF's words, a method of "global surveillance activities" (IMF 2007).

The period of de-colonization from roughly 1966, led to nations seeking their own economic systems as they formed trade relations with the rest of the world.

Globalization in the contemporary period (from 1970) has in essence being a continuous process through which different societies, economies, traditions and cultures begin to integrate with one another globally

through all means of communication and the interchange of ideas and today the World Wide Web has intensified this integration. This technological advance of the Internet is what makes it very different from the past globalization process. In the twentieth century, the world-system reached its geographic pinnacle with the extension of western driven capitalist markets and the state system to all regions of the globe. The rise of the United States as a hegemonic power has also led to globalization increasing and gave way to Americanisation. Nsibambi (2001), defines globalisation as: "a process of advancement and increase in interaction among the world's Countries and peoples facilitated by progressive technological changes in locomotion, Communication, political and military power, knowledge and skills, as well as interfacing of Cultural values, systems and practices". He stresses that Globalisation is not a value-free, guiltless, self-determining process but it is rather an international socio-politico-economic and cultural infiltration progression facilitated by the policies of Western governments, multi-

national corporations, international agencies and a range of Civil society organizations. Globalisation seeks to enhance America's status. Consequently it is necessary for America to position herself economically, politically, technologically, ideologically as well as militarily so as to empower her to dominate the globe. Cultural manipulation and is thus a critical target for Americanisation. Consequently cultural values in Africa are lost as American homogenization of culture takes root.

There are also differences in that today there is more free commerce and trade and many double taxes, tariffs, and capital controls have been abolished. Cultures and traditions now extend across the nations and infrastructure has developed rapidly in many nations which are now also housing Trans National Corporations (TNCs) and Multi-National Corporations (MNCs). The demise of the Soviet Union and communism has also led to attempts to forge a single global market. The creation of a World bank and the World Trade Organization have also led to the growth of a common platform to settle trade and commercial disputes and world exports have improved significantly but unfortunately not to the benefit of all role-players. Many scholars are of the opinion that in the modern age, the internet has led to globalization. Greater interaction between the nations of the world and the sharing of ideas, culture and traditions are intensifying at an alarming rate which impacts directly and indirectly on globalization. Domestic, regional, continental and global trade links are intensifying in scope and nature. Globalization is the result of a series of processes operating at the same time in a wide range of dimensions that impact on each other to a lesser or greater extent.

Globalisation has to an extent liberalized many national economics by its creation a global market place in which virtually all nations directly or indirectly contribute. Within this scenario, many major investors and Multi-National Corporations (MNC's) have become very powerful players.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has defined Globalisation as: *"The growing economic interdependence of countries worldwide through the increased volume and variety of cross border transactions in goods and services and international capital flows, and also through the more rapid and widespread diffusion of technology."* (Dandago, 2002). Within this scope, Globalisation and Americanisation are entrenched in the notion of *The New Economy*, through which especially the United States of America aims at profit maximization at all costs. Within this modern world-system is a world-economy which is considerably greater than any political entity and it is economically linked in a capitalist world-economy in which what is of paramount importance is the accumulation of private capital, which is most often obtained through exploitation of weaker nations that are rich in natural resources, in production

and sale for profit in a global market. It is a world driven by the accumulation of capital through eventual commodification of everything. The militarily and politically stronger states relative to others, tend to serve the interests of the economically powerful classes, TNCs and MNCs and find ways to absorb economic losses, and constantly seek to maintain the servitude and dependence of peripheral areas such as Africa and parts of Asia and South America.

*"World society models shape nation-state identities, structures, and behavior via worldwide cultural and associational processes . . . As creatures of exogenous world culture, states are ritualized actors marked by intensive decoupling and a good deal more structuration than would occur if they were responsive only to local, cultural, functional, or power processes"* (Meyer et al. 1997). It thus is apparent in recent literature that Globalisation is a term which is used to describe virtually anything from the Neolithic period to World War Two, which tends to focus on changes taking place in the primarily the economic and political spheres. While Globalization has existed historically in one form or another, its current 'form' is vastly different. Followers of globalization as a process are recognizing more and more that Globalisation also has a significant impact on local cultures.

### **What makes Globalisation useful?**

Globalisation increases economic interaction amongst nations and promotes capital mobility in terms of international monetary flows also by means of foreign direct investment. It brings greater wealth especially to multinational corporations and new markets are created but it causes chaos as developing nations are exploited by more developed nations. So it is a source of repression as well as a catalyst for global movements of social justice and emancipation (Global Policy Forum, 2009). It brings domestic markets more in line with forces operating in global markets and it removes a plethora of administrative barriers to the international movement of goods, services, labour and capital.

Globalisation, which is the putting into practice of corporate power is an elusive concept, must be distinguished from globalism. Globalisation implies a set of social processes that seem to alter the current social condition by seeking to weaken nationality so that one global postmodern 'nation' may emerge. Globalisation is then an integrative global process, a set of processes working at the same time on different levels and in diverse dimensions, which intends to result in convergence, greater development and ultimately lead to less global conflict. It is by nature an uneven process in that people in different parts of the world are affected by it in often similar or different ways and at different times. Cultural aspects are positioned at the nucleus of

globalization and within this ideology, multinational corporations are free to control events in a nation without any limitations except possibly by the control of other, more powerful, multinational corporations. It is inevitable that new social networks and exchanges are created and these rapidly intensify and cut across cultural and other boundaries as social relations are stretched.

The technological enthusiasts like Friedman (1999) and Fukuyama (1992) would have us believe that a borderless world in a trans-nationalized global economy is what is needed. Robertson (1992) and Held (1999) see both forces of unification and fragmentation in globalisation. Hirst and Thompson (1996) believe that nations retain control of their economies although less tightly. Many variations exist in globalization, but most developing nations experience an increase in poverty and innovation and growth has not been fashioned to supply the interests of the majority. Consequently, where America is involved, globalisation is the view of many writers, akin to Americanisation which is basically a form of Westernisation (Amin 2004; Mosler and Catley 2000). Globalisation theoretically has many benefits and it employs free trade, deregulation, privatization, promotion of capitalism and other tools to corporatise the public sector in nations across the globe. In some cases there are rewards, in other cases only further oppression and hardship.

### **What is Globalism?**

Manfred B. Steger distinguishes between globalism and globalisation (Steger, 2002; 2005) and states that three different typologies exist for globalism. The first type is market globalism, followed by jihadist globalism and justice globalism. He considers market globalism to be the dominant contemporary ideology. By justice globalism, he refers especially to the WTO protests in Seattle in 1999 which serve to highlight the emerging social justice movement. Steger uses the 9/11 attack in New York to illustrate the catastrophic effect that jihadist globalism can have, and he highlights the fact that Al-Qaeda under Osama Bin Laden were motivated to perpetrate acts of terror against what they perceived to be a global neo-colonial type of "Americanization" of the world and were justified in their actions. Neo-liberals often associate globalism with the idea of "complex interdependence" between all nations and where each tends to benefit in a sort of mutualism (Keohane and Nye, 2001). There are conflicting opinions as to the value of globalism. Kaplinsky (2005), uphold the view that globalism leads to greater inequalities between countries where the rich get richer and the poor become poorer. Rapley (2004) takes this a step further and states that globalism leads to global chaos and increases the risks of global conflagration which is really of no benefit to anyone.

Globalism in a sense describes the reality of the world as being interconnected, while globalization relates to the speed at which global connections intensify. It describes global networks. Globalism is thus the principal and fundamental network, while globalization refers to the attenuation of distance on a global scale. Culturally speaking, ideas, images and information are transmitted, such as in the proliferation of religion.

### **Impacts on local cultures**

*"Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another... the interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influence a human group's response to its environment"* (Adler 1983). People are from dissimilar cultures if their ways of life as a distinct group are appreciably dissimilar, to others. Culture is inherited and dynamic and needs to adapt (Jean, 2002) but this does not mean that since cultures are embodied in certain unique identities that there should be no pursuit for common values. Each culture is in itself an attempt to arrive at the collective, but none should dominate as Americanisation strives to do. We increasingly encounter a plethora of African civil-society organizations representing the cultural sphere, including the physical environment, religion, human rights, labour standards, species preservation, rural life, women's rights, etc that are seeking a voice in the ever present arena of Globalisation. While culture is a broad concept concerned with *"symbolic construction, articulation and dissemination of meaning"* (Steger 2009, 71), it focuses in the main on language, music and artistic images.

As far as culture is concerned, globalization strives for a complete revamp of local cultural productions, which may have been previously linked to regional and state markets and is now very often left to the mercy of corporate development. This is usually a condition that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank link to their developmental support packages for especially poorer nations. As trade barriers are in a sense forcibly removed by the haves, the local have-nots lose millions of jobs under the Globalization guise of development, including jobs in the cultural arena. The result is the flooding of local markets with what are essentially American items of mass consumption and so the United States asserts itself as a cultural superpower. Cultural practice is core to modern Globalization.

The Globalisation of the production and distribution of goods and services is, to many nations, a welcome move as access is gained to American manufactured products that people would not otherwise have had. There is nonetheless a major concern in especially developing nations that the resulting changes brought about by Globalization in fact gravely threaten the viability of locally made products and thus the livelihood of the

people who produce them. The Internet and technological innovations in particular, have allowed the symbolic systems of meaning such as consumerism, to spread globally.

Thomson (2001), states that the catalysts for Globalization include economists, politicians, and corporations which promote policies encouraging free trade, free investment, deregulation, and privatization, with the promise of economic growth. While this is true to a degree, many of these are open to corruption and tend to make the plight of the poor worse rather than promote their advancement. While globalization does far more than simply increase the availability of foreign-made consumer products and stifle local producers, it simultaneously expands international trade in cultural products and services. This allows music, cinematographic films and publications to reach new audiences. The problem arises that while globalization imparts an image of itself as an all encompassing ideology which will inevitably lead to a cultural global rainbow, it is in practice homogenizing popular culture by inculcating an ethos of a Western, mainly American, cultural industry, which also has roots in Britain and western Europe. The increasing trade in cultural products is thus increasing the exposure of all societies to foreign cultures and this in turn impacts on local cultures, values, and traditions. This is often in a negative way which allows a foreign culture to seem to be superior in some or other way and thus to severely undermine local cultural identities. While culture continuously changes, it nonetheless continues to give a community a sense of identity, dignity, continuity, and a sense of belonging and security and binds a society. The varied customs and traditions regulate the lives of the people living in any given society.

### **Americanisation and South African day to day life**

The younger generation of teenagers in South Africa, have for the most part abandoned their African culture and language, and often religion, and try to be 'hip' by imitating their mainly American rap artist role models who for the most part, display an acute lack values and act immorally on television shows and who promote promiscuous behaviour especially in the lyrics of the music they write. Many of higher socio-economic status have expensive motor cars and wear designer clothing. The African cultural spirit of *Ubuntu* which cherishes practices and values whose sole purpose is to uplift social responsibility amongst citizens has been all but discarded. So caring for others around you in what was initially part of society's responsibility and seen as a critical part of the family unit function, has been eroded as a cultural practice and replaced by the notion of ego-centrism and individualism which the paradigm of neo-liberalism promotes. Another serious omission evidenced

in the behaviour of modern South African youth is respect for elders, which for centuries has been the most important value in all of Africa's cultures. Africa's own developmental paradigm is challenged daily as youngsters spend hours in front of the television where they absorb mainly American ideals and values. Hours are also spent on the internet and in chat rooms, and on cell-phones, and almost no time is spent on reading worthwhile books or studies. It is clear from conversations with African university students that they do not have any meaningful idea or knowledge of their own cultures. Most could not be bothered with the many cultural rituals and belief systems in their societies. Even more alarmingly, their indigenous languages are replaced by English. Despite the fact that South Africa has eleven official languages, English is the language of choice. Unlike their parents, most urban youth have a condescending attitude towards their families in the rural environment, who are far more in tune with indigenous cultural systems. The "Coca Cola culture" and "McDonaldisation" have altered the food choices of urban youth. They traditionally ate healthy food including meat, chicken, maize and vegetables which is now replaced by fast food from MacDonald's and other fast-food outlets. Consequently, many younger Africans have a serious obesity problem. Americanisation has brought some positivity into Africa such as technological advance. The problem is that in the process indigenous culture is slowly being eroded. Americanisation is undoubtedly leading to the cultural homogenisation of African society and to a global culture of consumerism in which the poor become poorer and the richer become richer. Africa has in a sense been robbed of the opportunity to define their own socio-political and economic choices. It is predominantly the African elites who benefit from Americanisation while the impoverished majority struggles to simply survive.

### **Consequences of Americanisation**

The globalization of culture that is currently happening, to a very large extent represents an "Americanization" of global cultures and it is therefore in practice not merely an attempt to homogenize world culture. While in some cases ethically sound values on issues such as human rights and democracy are spread via Americanisation, the process undoubtedly results in American hegemony being extended globally, usually to the detriment of indigenous culture. Americanisation, as Susan Strange (1996) observes: "*can refer to anything from the Internet to a hamburger. All too often, it is a polite euphemism for the continuing Americanisation of consumer tastes and cultural practices.*" Thomas Friedman (1998) has stated that: "*globalization is in so many ways Americanization: globalization wears Mickey Mouse ears, it drinks Pepsi and Coke, eats Big Macs, does its computing on an IBM laptop with Windows 98. Many societies around the world*

*can't get enough of it, but others see it as a fundamental threat."*

Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2009) asserts that the United States drove globalisation from roughly 1945 to 2000, as Americanisation, but that after 2001 a truly global mixture of cultures has prevailed. This is not evident in the South African scenario. American Corporations (MNCs) state that they are not the means by which Americanisation spreads. They view their activities in neoliberal markets as merely a form of 'indigenization' through their adaptation to the local cultures in countries in which they operate. Saskia Sassen stated in 1996, that: *'The most widely recognized instance of Americanisation is seen... in the profound influence U.S. popular culture exerts on global culture'*. Americanisation is essentially American globalisation as it also affects the elements which impact on the values and norms of a particular culture. Through Americanisation, US legal standards, military power and especially cultural industries begin to dominate other nations (Schröter, 2005).

Cultural Americanisation is a critical area of concern since cultures and traditions comprise the core of human nature. Culture determines how a region develops its individual independence free from colonial 'overlordship'. It is vital to preserve African culture that is sensitive to the economic plight of all people, the 'have-nots' and the 'haves'. In the South African context, culture encapsulates an open process comprising values, skills, norms, crafts, indigenous knowledge, and material items, which are transmitted down from one generation to the next. Americanisation causes generational ruptures which ultimately lead to the undermining of the relevance of popular culture and ultimately cultural loss. American capitalist culture with its huge hegemonic power, gradually erodes local cultures and contributes to an Americanisation of culture. South African elites strive for an increase in the rate of integration into Americanisation as this benefits them individually, but the masses are affected negatively. Wherever one travels globally, one encounters Coca-Cola and Pepsi advertisements, McDonalds, Starbucks, Nike etc. By utilizing their advantage of being the world's main superpower, the United States forces her culture on countries that do not wish to be "Americanized." Since the late 1980s American capitalism has rapidly enveloped the entire world. Not even China, India and Russia are impervious to the expansion of American culture.

How American owned companies impact on South African cultural identities is noticeable especially with regard to food which is in an integral aspect of the culture. American restaurants and hotels undoubtedly manipulate the traditions and habits in societies where they operate, McDonald's is a case in point. The sociologist George Ritzer in his book *The McDonaldization of Society*, states: *"the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of*

*the world"*. Today McDonalds has increased its operations and now includes no less than 30 000 restaurants across the globe. *McDonaldization*, is a direct result of globalisation and, in the final analysis, influences local habits and traditions as consumers gradually abandon indigenous healthy food and opt to rather purchase nutritionally inferior fast food. At the end of 2008 McDonald's reported a 80% global profit rise and even greater growth in 2009, reaching an all-time high in 2010. Ironically this was at a time when millions more people across the globe began to suffer from malnutrition as a result of 'belt tightening' due to the global economic crisis. Unfortunately many other fast-food restaurants were obliged to close down during the same period. This emphasizes the resilience of American culture which is unrivalled globally.

Such restaurant chains also influence tend to negatively influence the traditions and customs in countries where they are situated. Starbucks, the American coffee chain, is by all accounts also seeking opportunities in Africa, and in no time at all we will find them dominating local markets in a similar fashion to McDonalds. Figure 2 shows the extent of global Americanisation of McDonalds and Starbucks operations (Google images).

Gradually African culture becomes absorbed into an Americanised neo-colonial culture and this degrades local culture.

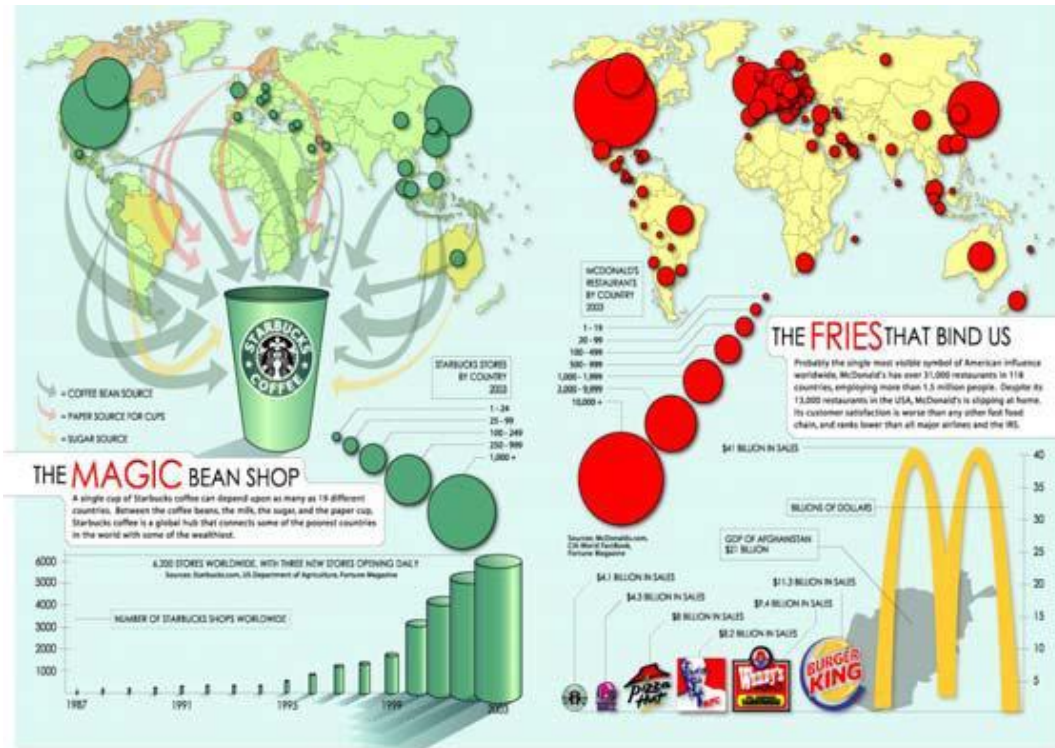
It could be argued that Americanisation enhances cultural awareness but in reality, the homogenizing consequences of globalisation on local cultures often produce a very negative reaction amongst people. The result is an anti-American backlash. It is for example relatively common to see the American flag being torched by Islamic and other groupings on news broadcasts on television in an attempt to reassert their traditional cultural identities, in what they believe to be an attack on their uniqueness.

### **Why the American market dominates**

The United States is one of the three richest nations in the world and plays a major role in cultural globalization because it has a market of 300 million consumers, making it one of the largest markets in the world. It also accounts for nearly 25 percent of global economic output. The United States has the world's thirteenth largest GDP per capita, with a per capita GDP of \$46,000 and is the world's third largest country in terms of population. In the 1980s, Milton Friedman advocated a global, free market 'shock doctrine' (Klein, 2007).

The US Presidents Nixon, Ford and Carter respectively each played a role in promoting the idea of 'trade liberalisation', but Reagan presidency in a policy termed 'Reaganomics' made the deregulation explicit and inflexible. This doctrine promoted the idea of Structural





**Figure 2.** McDonalds and Starbucks operations across the globe.  
**Source:** Princeton University <http://homework.uoregon.edu/pub/class/hc434/consumption.html>

adjustment loans (SALs) to the developing nations of the world. These SALs were the means through which the US could: *“blast open Third World economies once “the Reagan Administration came to power with an agenda to discipline the Third World”*” (Bello, 1999).

The George H.W. Bush and William Clinton presidencies sped up the process and aggressively promoted it so that Americanisation took root in many nations (Halliday, 2000). This process was not always greeted with enthusiasm in the United States. On November 30, 1999 the World Trade Organization (WTO) convened at the Washington State Convention and Trade Center in Seattle, Washington, United States. The negotiations were eclipsed by massive and street protests referred to as the Battle in Seattle, which were in opposition to Americanisation and globalisation in the United States. There were roughly 40, 000 demonstrators violently protesting against a world meeting of the organizations which are usually associated with especially economic globalization (such as the WTO, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank). (Seattle Police Department Report, 1999). Further global opposition to Americanisation and globalization was stifled after 9/11 and the subsequent ‘War on Terror’, which immediately sidelined debate over globalization and Americanisation (Lipschutz, 2009) and American globalization immediately transformed into military conflict

which included the propagation of further US cultural hegemonic ambitions (Barkawi, 2006). Steger (2005), maintains that: *“the remarkable merger of Clintonian neo-liberalism and the Bush administration neoconservative security agenda marked the birth of imperial globalism”*.

Some of the targeted American companies during the Battle of Seattle included McDonald's referred to as *“slave-wage fast food peddlers responsible for destruction of tropical rainforests for grazing land and slaughter of animals”* and Starbucks who were termed *“peddlers of an addictive substance whose products are harvested at below-poverty wages by farmers who are forced to destroy their own forests in the process”*(ACME Collective, A communique from one section of the black bloc of N30 in Seattle).

In efforts to quell American cultural domination, a number of countries like France and Germany are striving to slow Americanization down by imposing higher taxes and tariffs on all foreign companies and investors. Such actions make life tougher for American companies. In certain quarters, Americans believe Americanisation is wondrous triumph. Charles Krauthammer writing in *Time* magazine, stated: *“America is no mere international citizen. It is the dominant power in the world, more dominant than any since Rome. Accordingly, America is in a position to re-shape norms, alter expectations and create new realities”* (Lapham, 2001).



## **Promotion of English as the main global language and US Pop Culture**

According to linguists, more than half a billion people around the globe speak English as either a primary or secondary language. Furthermore, approximately one billion people have some understanding of English. Mandarin Chinese is the only language that has more primary and secondary speakers, but only English has a global spread. Many African languages are dying as a result of Americanisation and so therefore do local cultures. Paa Kwesi (2005) states that arrival of colonialism steadily eroded the place of African languages in African economies by affording the greatest kudos to school-education in colonial languages such as English and French and so the valuation of colonial languages above African languages became more and more entrenched. It is not uncommon to discover Africans who cannot communicate in their mother tongue. Many parents, especially those in the elite strata of African society prefer that their children speak English as they believe that this is the only suitable linguistic vehicle in the modern world. It is critical that if African culture is to be developed on the continent, African languages must be the core. To educate students in only English, is to perpetuate neo-colonialism and Americanisation. It is not necessary to speak or learn in only the English language in order to make scientific and technological advances. African languages are linguistically rich and should become the medium of transformation alongside English if necessary, but they should certainly not be discarded. English language fluency must not be mistaken for intelligence.

The rapid commercialisation of African culture has a rather disquieting impact on Africans. What once was a way of life is now nothing more than an artifact. This is primarily due to the continuous barrage by American movies and television, of music and of new images, new music, new clothes and new American values. Americanisation and Globalisation have resulted in the extinction of about 22,000 indigenous cultures in the last decade and approximately 90% of the world's languages will disappear in the next century (Akande, 2002). Africa must therefore defend against Americanisation of African culture in the name of globalization. Scott, (2001), states that a major aspect of Americanisation is American cultural supremacy and in this case it is a threat to national cultures and identities as it rapidly erodes them. Language not simply a means of communication but is rather the vehicle via which culture is transmitted. Consequently, language and culture have a great role to play in the moulding of the unique identity of the nations concerned. Essentially, languages and the cultures which accompany them determine those unique elements of an individual's identity. The US movie industry has a lot to do with the dissemination and spread of English and American culture, as Hollywood products are "exported,"

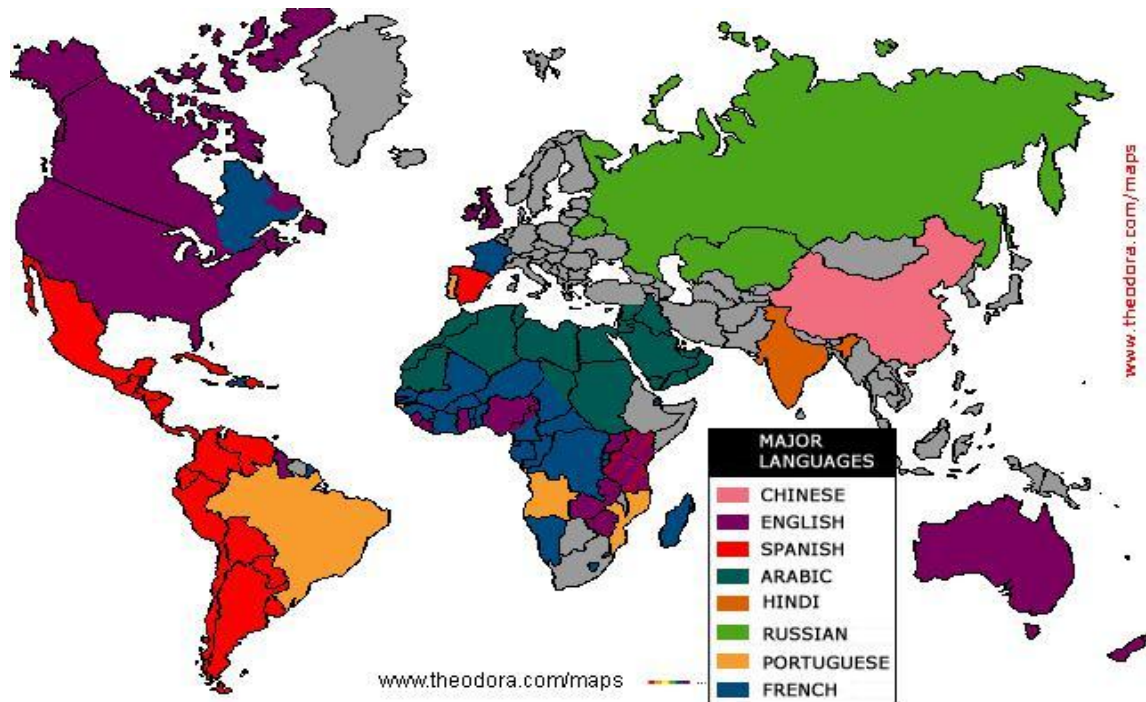
or viewed worldwide by huge global audiences. American movies dominate movie theater screens around the world. "Pop culture" is in reality a form of Americanization, because the United States is by far the biggest producer of popular culture products including movies, television programmes, newspapers, and music. It also includes fast foods and clothing, which are also part of entertainment and consumer items. Entertainment comprises the largest industry in the United States. The market size and wealth of the US Movie industry has given movie producers, television programme producers, and even popular journals, the opportunity to penetrate all countries and thus threaten their native cultures and supports the proliferation of Americanisation and consumerism globally. Ironically, Americans are concerned over the proliferation of other languages in America, due mainly to the rapidly influx of immigrants into the United States. So while Americans are sensitive to cultural issues on the home-front, they vigorously promote Americanisation abroad.

Television also influences the spread of American culture as the hyper-consumerism and material wealth portrayed in many shows, creates the impression that all things American must be 'good' as they lead to personal wealth. In terms of the spread of American political agendas, networks such as CNN epitomize the global news network as it is viewed in over now 200 million households in over 212 countries, and provides viewers with mainly American viewpoints on global issues. It is undeniable that American globalization is very evident in today's world and with it come not so moral ideas. Movie after movie promotes the notion of premarital sex. Violence is portrayed as a normal reaction to any given situation. It is not surprising for other nations to be concerned about their own domestic entertainment industries which are regarded as 'inferior' by their viewers. Of greater concern is the effect of the perception of promiscuity on local cultures where HIV/Aids are rife. American movies, television, music and literature are not simply just another product, they are indigenous cultural breakers. Globalization has empowered foreign companies to dispense American cultural products, including movies, television shows, music and literature at will, to the detriment of indigenous cultural products. As foreign multi-national corporations earn greater profits by promoting and selling U.S. products, these products become readily available globally and so Americanisation grows and grows.

Africa is the second largest continent in the world in both area and population. It has an area of more than three times the size of USA. In 1990, her population was 642 million and represented 12% of the world's population. Africa has fifty-one nations with roughly one thousand different languages spoken and as many distinctive ethnic groupings. Africa is probably the most linguistically and ethnically diverse continent and is endowed with huge natural and human resources, as well

Language	Estimated speakers globally
Mandarin Chinese	1,075,000,000
English	514,000,000
Hindustani	496,000,000
Spanish	425,000,000
Russian	275,000,000
Arabic	256,000,000

**Figure 3.** Six most spoken global languages Source: *Ethnologue*, 13th Edition.



**Figure 4.** Major languages. www.theodora.com/maps

as vast cultural, ecological and economic diversity. In terms of natural resources, Africa is the world's richest continent (Williams, 1997), and yet she has always been regarded as backward and perceived as the "Dark continent".

### Impact on Africa

Americanisation has highly contentious security implications for African nations. While opportunities abound for some nations, others are seriously disadvantaged by the liberalisation policies that accompany Americanisation. From 1980-2000, the gap between economic development among African countries and the US widened considerably. It is accepted that 20 percent of the earth's population live in advanced industrial countries and account for 86 percent of the

world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), while the 80 percent who live in the poor countries account for a mere one percent (Bogomolov, 2000).

Globalisation has many positive, innovative and dynamic aspects, but it also many negative, disruptive and marginalizing features (UNDP HDR, 1999). Americanization of Africa and the rest of the world, leads to the proliferation of an American paradigm for cultural, economic and political development. This is clearly the result of the huge gap between the United States and its nearest rival, namely China, in each and every global sphere, whether economic, military, technological and cultural. The power of America influences the outcome of many international issues. She dominates the United Nations Organisation, and the World Trade Organization, and World Bank, and is able to badger the IMF. During the Cold War, the world was bipolar and since the demise of Communism, Americanisation has played an almost

imperial role in the world. America decides what is important across the globe and propagates market forces and democracy, without regard to the historical and cultural uniqueness of countries. The result is that Africa has been greatly affected by the homogenizing aspects of Americanisation. American hegemony reinforces the promotion of unequal actors at all levels in African society both local and national, and also globally. This ensures political, economic, and social conformity of behaviour in host nations and so increases American power globally.

Africans, especially from the middle-classes, are developing the materialistic and egotistical values that were previously not associated with African culture. Such a shift in focus is the result of the cultural bombardment of Americanisation in Africa through language, movies, television, the media and music as well as structural changes in the world economy. African people viewing Hollywood productions suddenly seek materialistic goods previously absent in their traditional societies (Akande, 2002). The cultural domination of Americanisation that goes hand-in-hand with globalisation is resulting in many African countries rapidly losing their cultural identity. As a result of this they interact with other cultures on an unequal basis. While globalisation instills awareness of other cultures and their creative endeavours, encourages the important transaction of spreading of ideas and values and eases communication across the globe, the process leads to African cultures being diluted at the expense Americanisation. This is often fraught with promiscuity and immoral values which taint what were moral African societies. Globalisation diminishes and marginalizes all local ways of life (Jeremy, 2004), and it is in a sense a 'declaration of war' on other cultures. It is also a confrontation between Americanisation and local cultures in which America is waging a war to remake the world as it wishes (Bartholomew, 2006).

The conclusion of the Cold War resulted in a relative decline in the strategic value of Africa which has substantially reduced Africa's international negotiating power. Africa has become unable to act effectively in the international arena and lost a sense of autonomy due mainly to the hegemony of America. This has worked in opposition to democracy and economic development in Africa. Apart from its inherent inability to act decisively due to lack of real power based on economic values, Americanisation has created greater problems for Africa.

An outstanding characteristic of an Americanised culture is that it follows the "one size fits all" idea. This is the archetypal American middle to upper class family in a capitalistic economic model in which consumerism dominates and traditional cultural values are meaningless. Consequently as cultural processes are homogenised a large segment of the world's population dreams of traveling globally and living a life of apparent luxury as epitomised by American movies and television. McDonaldisation and the Coca Cola culture lead the way. Samuel Huntington has attacked Western groups for

promoting culturally destructive behaviour and argues that values are specifically linked to nations in which they originate. American cultural constructs should not be thrust onto other nations as this is highly pretentious, immoral, and hazardous for America in the long run. World culture is rooted in European tradition based on the cogent structure and content of mediaeval Christendom, the state system which was formulated in 1648, and the Enlightenment which promoted globalism in science and philosophy. It's immediate precursors are to be found in the nineteenth century when especially public officials in the West, private organizations, and intellectuals, expounded ideas of state sovereignty and the notion of individual human rights, that became universally accepted. These ideas extended across traditional cultural boundaries and a common world culture developed in which became institutionalized across the globe but in many areas lacked a global consensus such as in the area of individual rights, for example. The world was not totally homogeneous as varied conditions resulted in varied interpretations of certain principles and this led to conflict and this is still the case today (Conversi, 2009).

"...the effect globalisation has had on culture is immense and diverse. It has affected people's cultural behaviours in different ways. People have had to change their living ways. The loud echoing advertisement rhythms of the famous Coca-Cola drinks can be heard across boundaries in towns, cities and townships and even in remote rural areas where drinking water is a problem to get..." (Muyale-Manenji, F, 1998).

World culture undoubtedly exerts force in the direction of isomorphism and very often the institutionalisation of world models leads to structural similarities. The result is that many nation-states implement similar constitutional structures and educational methods amongst other aspects. But since many nations of the world are likely to fall short of what are supposedly the best global standards set by Americanisation, and world culture promotes the idea that new social problems must be exposed and addressed. Cultural conflict is the most common apparatus and the result is that many movements develop, whose sole objective it is, to de-Americanise, hence protests in which American flag-burning takes place. Americanisation thus provokes resistance as in the rapid spread of Islamic fundamentalism which is diametrically opposed to Americanisation which gives other countries a false sense of the American way of life and, in the final analysis, results in hatred growing towards the U.S. and threatens its power. Americanisation was most likely the main reason for the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

The conflict between Americanisation and Islamic culture reached its zenith on September 11, as terrorists attacked the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Wahington DC. This widened the gulf

between American and Islamic culture and resulted in the U.S. Patriot Act, which was passed by President George W. Bush. The act reduced civil liberties in America as the law enforcement agencies were empowered to monitor all telephone calls and intercept e-mail, so as to obtain information into all financial, medical and other records of U.S. citizens. In a country where civil liberties are prized, this was a turnaround. Many American commentators placed the blame for 9/11 squarely on Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda, whereas in reality Americanisation is the guilty party. According to some observers, the U.S. has lost already lost its hegemony and can only flaunt its *'theatrical micromilitarism'* through the *'war on terrorism'* (Todd, 2003).

American companies and multi-national corporations which are representative of Americanisation are to blame and the world is now in a situation where "Jihad vs. McWorld" (Barber, 2009). There is currently a war on traditional values and a Jihad (holy war) against Americanisation which is: *"bureaucratic, technocratic, and meritocratic, focused on the administration of things—with people, however, among the chief things to be administered."* It is creating a world in which cultural values and traditions are being eroded. Those opposed to McWorld, the Jihadists, are bent on promoting local identity and a stronger sense of community and solidarity in their countries. Americanisation promotes global cultures and society with its preferred values and norms and supports global governance and market globalism under the control of the WTO, IMF and World Bank. It purports to liberalise and integrate world markets and professes that no one is in charge of globalisation and that everyone stands to benefit from it. In reality, governments become the lackeys of multi-national corporations which destroy indigenous culture and enhance political instability in the drive to dominate the globe under the guise of imposing Western-style democracy. America is desperate to retain her power and even under President Obama, continues to expand its military so as to retain hegemony, and in the process incurs massive deficits and reinforces its imperial overstretch (Shor, 2010). Acculturation of the world to America is a vital tool in reinforcing her hegemony, under the guise of liberalisation.

The Hollywoodisation of America's war efforts by its portrayal of conflict in Iraq and elsewhere illustrates the power of movies in promoting Americanisation (Knight, 2003). The U.S. tries first and foremost to exercise global dominance and hegemony through military imperialism and war. She is however: *'battling to maintain its status as the world's financial center by making a symbolic show of its military might in the heart of Eurasia, thereby hoping to forget and have others ignore America's industrial weakness, its financial need, and its predatory character'* (Todd, 2003).

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AFRICAN CULTURAL SURVIVAL

In order to combat Americanisation, African universities must focus on knowledge production which will satisfy the needs of African society. It is therefore essential that African universities do not simply imitate American and other Western universities as these promoted Imperialism and cultural traditions. African culture has been devalued and degraded and it is clear that the wealthy elites promote this degradation, as they seemingly are unable to promote African culture. In order for African culture to develop and take their rightful place in the world it is essential for African languages to be taught alongside English in an equal status environment. The maintenance of English is however important as long as it remains the principle language of international business. If such steps are not taken the global cultural homogenization of the world dominated by American values will become the norm and immoral action as portrayed by Hollywood and the pop culture will continue. It must be emphasized that culture encompasses not only language, arts, music, attitudes, values, dance, foods etc, but must also include science and technology. The latter play a critical role in the development and dissemination of culture. In this area, Africa is found wanting, and this aspect has led to its weaker position in the global pecking order. It is crucial that Africa invest heavily in developing its scientific and technological skills and collaborate extensively with developed nations.

Once technology is globalised this promotes the Globalisation of production as well as finance, by prompting the diffusion of information and lowering the costs involved in linking markets on an global scale. This in turn increase the number of consumers globally. Africa is gradually being transformed into a dumping ground where her diverse peoples are consuming an profusion of products such as DVDs and CDs, that have little if at all any connection with their daily struggle for survival. It is in this way that African culture is being eroded by Americanisation and Globalisation (Akindele *et al*, 2002).

Globalisation should in essence highlight that people are indeed different and should be respected for their cultural diversity in a spirit of mutual benefit and coexistence. Africans in particular should not be regarded as lesser beings and must claim their rightful place in global affairs and seek as a priority, to develop an agenda for cultural equality. As cultures are dynamic, it is possible for the 'valuable' aspects of Americanisation to be adapted and incorporated into 'mainframes' of indigenous cultures. Positive aspects of Americanisation and thus Globalisation must be modified and adapted to suit African needs. Such inclusions should not place African culture at a disadvantage or expose it to foreign domination. A multi-cultural world is unavoidable and

should be embraced, especially as it promotes freedom for the oppressed peoples of the world (Jaja, 2008).

Neoliberalism supports American cultural domination and not surprisingly, American constructs. While a globalised world seems inevitable African nations should not lose sight of the local aspects of culture which are invaluable, such as *Ubuntu*. Social responsibility must play the dominant role in society and materialism and consumerism should be downplayed in educational offerings. Culture is dynamic and traditional and its erosion need not be a given. It is equally important that the cultural exclusion of indigenous people of all races should be abhorred. Traditional knowledge deserves to be recognized globally as it impacts positively on individuals and has for centuries shaped Africa's economic and social fabric. African knowledge should thus be 'part and parcel' of educational offerings from the primary school level through to higher education.

## CONCLUSION

Given the complex nature of Globalisation and Americanisation and the contingent perceived characteristics of each, there are several limitations of this study which suggest that opportunity exists for future research to improve and refine the argument that Globalisation and Americanisation are a 'hand in a glove'. The former is a version of the latter. Indigenous culture in Africa and elsewhere is a victim as America's culture assumes gradual control. The U.S. dominates the globe through especially cultural Americanisation which is promoted by Hollywood, television, literature and pop culture. Local cultures in Africa have not been left unscathed by Americanisation and globalisation. Some survive, while others have been totally appropriated. Culturally Americanisation and globalisation have not been equitable in Africa. A critical impact of Americanisation and globalization in Africa is the commercialization of African culture. The production and consumption of cultural goods and services are increasingly becoming mere commodities. Traditional ways of life are becoming products, rather than something inimitable Africans create to suit their own unique needs and circumstances. The 'civilizing process' which results from the spread of Americanisation and its consumerism is destructive for African culture. There is in many countries in Africa an embittered rejection of Americanism but economic realities preclude action against it. America's mission is to dominate the globe and she is fascinated with military power which ensnares her priorities and stretches her resources over and over again (Kolko, 2006), consequently it would be wiser to break down the cultures of other nations in an effort to promote its agenda.

The Americanisation of mass culture has thwarted African development but there appears to a growing challenge developing in the guise of 'indigenous' practices and products through development of "*vernacularization, domestication and hybridization*" (Appadurai, 1996, p.81). It is very difficult to protect local African culture from the homogenizing effects of Americanisation and globalization as these are inexorably linked with other agendas, such as the political suppression of ideas and economic protectionism. Mega-corporations, especially American, promote neo-liberal rhetoric in Africa that spreads the notion of supporting the ideals of the popular masses and they strive to destroy down the traditional barriers of both local cultures and national communities to their agendas (Steger, 2002). Researchers could explore the impact of the Internet, especially social media, on Globalisation and Americanisation and how the United States uses these tools to further impact on the policies of other nations for its own benefit. It is undeniable that Americanisation dominates our lives and indeed our thoughts. This is due to American dominance of world financial arrangement. She dominates, controls and manipulates the global financial institutions even when she is bankrupt. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) which determine and control global trade are heavily influenced by the USA. The US dollar is the standard currency of the world despite the rise of the Euro. McDonalds hamburgers and Starbucks coffee remain the favoured treats for many around the world.

The American experience of Globalisation, presents us with a number of positive aspects that can transform other countries for the better. In many nations, there is no freedom for millions who live under tyrannical oppression, as is the case in Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe. In such a situation, America's liberal tradition is a notable example worthy of emulation. Where people are deprived of basic freedoms, Globalisation drives them on to seek redress from untenable situations and obtain true liberty as is evident in the United States. Globalisation, thus, to a large extent, mimicks Americanization in that all people across the globe can become truly global citizens. Unfortunately Globalisation also presents detrimental forces that can negatively impact on politics, stability, traditional cultures and values in especially African nations. The promotion of democracy around the world, for example, causes many of the poorer echelons in society to seek democracy and freedom as preconditions for their economic development, as has been the case in the Arab Spring which has affected life in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Syria. What is paramount for Africa, is its growth in science and technology, without which it can never be a serious global competitor. Africa's technological dependence on the developed world, must be reduced.

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